

Video transcript: Preparation for the Digital Switchover

Lizzie Edwards, Chair, West Midlands ADASS Digital Network: This is a great example of something where West Midlands ADASS have supported local authorities in the region to come together to think through a problem and come up with ideas.

We're now able to share the resource is that we've developed as a region with other local authorities across the country to make sure that everywhere is thinking about the digital switchover.

I certainly know from contacts outside the region that some local authorities aren't as aware of the digital switchover as we now are in the West Midlands so it will be really helpful for them to have access to these resources.

I first heard about the digital switchover from the network in around October 2021.

Excerpt from WM ADASS Digital Network video from October 2021 meeting. Marc Greenwood, then chair of the network: " We've invited colleagues from the TSA and NHSX to talk to us about plans for the digital switchover and what we as local authorities can do now to support our residents with that switchover process".

Lizzie Edwards: The telephone companies will actually switch the telephone network from analogue to digital, so that means that local authorities and telecare providers need to make sure that people's telecare works with the new digital network.

Excerpt from WM ADASS Digital Network video from October 2021 meeting. Tim Mulvey, TSA: "The challenge is that the majority of the critical alarm connectivity in the UK relies on this analogue technology, the traditional phone line in the home".

"If you move that connectivity to digital, the reliability starts to suffer. It means that people have to redial a few times to get through. Best case scenario things will continue to operate as is, but we're going to see more failed calls over this period of time, as the network becomes more and more digital".

"We've still got 50% of alarm receiving centres unable to receive digital alarm calls because the supplier hasn't released that, and that's a major concern".

Excerpt from WM ADASS Digital Network video from October 2021 meeting. Marc Greenwood: "There's a significant safeguarding risk isn't there, I mean every time there that is a failure then that could be somebody who is in genuine need of help - is that is what you are suggesting?

Tim Mulvey, TSA: "That's what I'm suggesting. You've also got the risk where currently the devices are powered through the telephone exchange, they also have a battery backup. If you take that analogue unit out of the phone line, and you have to plug it into the back of the router, then all of a sudden that router becomes the single point of failure. So if there's

a mains failure in the property then it doesn't matter about the battery backup in the unit itself, because it can't get to the outside world.”

Lizzie Edwards: As local authorities, if you are working with telecare providers that you have a contract with, you need to make sure that they are ready for this changeover and that the technology that they use actually works with digital.

So that'll mean getting touch with them and making sure likewise that they're getting in touch with members of the public that receive their technology and also they're making the changes needed in the background.

There's a lot of residents that are going to be impacted by this change, so for example it might mean that people who self-fund their telecare need some support ,and the adult social care department might not know about those people. Therefore it's really important for local authorities to think about how they communicate with all of their residents to make sure they're ready for the change.

The digital switchover isn't happening all at once, so there isn't a specific date that we're aiming towards. In Solihull where I work, some parts of the borough have already switched from analogue to digital. The aim BT have is to switch off their analogue signal by 2025.

I became chair of the West Midlands ADASS digital network in spring 2022, and in July that year we had a session from Rethink Partners who were working with the Local Government Association.

Lots of attendees were concerned about what they heard about the digital switchover. Not everyone knew about it, and not everybody knew the significance of it. We talked about potential safeguarding concerns and what we might do next.

West Midlands ADASS commissioned Rethink to support us as a network to hold a task and finish group to look at how we communicate the digital switchover to residents.

Rethink supported two different workshops. The first workshop was held in October 2022 and during that workshop we looked at who did we need to communicate with, and what different communication channels did we have available to us as local authorities.

Everyone who attended was asked to go away to basically come up with a bit of a communications plan to discuss at the next workshop. All attendees also looked at the number of people receiving telecare in their areas, which different telecare providers they use, and how many people would be affected.

Then in November 2022 we shared our ideas, we shared how people were affected, which communication channels we were going to use. Rethink were then able to come up with a template. Solihull filled out the template and we were able to share that with the rest of the West Midlands ADASS network. There is now a SharePoint channel where there's also lots of other good digital resources.

West Midlands ADASS Digital Network are going to keep the digital switchover on our agenda: this is a rolling programme that continues until 2025.

The video ends with the following information as text:

- Managing the implications of digital switchover is an ongoing challenge for local authorities
- Continuity of service to telecare users depends on many stakeholders
- The process of switchover is being led by industry primarily BT and Virgin Media O2
- Households will be contacted directly by their phone provider when scheduled for switchover
- Information about what's happening and what to do is coming from many sources.....

There follows visual references to recent relevant documents about switchover, including:

Telecare Stakeholder Action Plan

Published by DHSC December 2022

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/telecare-stakeholder-action-plan-analogue-to-digital-switchover/telecare-stakeholder-action-plan-preparations-for-the-analogue-to-digital-switchover>

The Digital Shift and its Impact on the Telecare Sector in England

Study Report by FarrPoint November 2022

<https://www.farrpoint.com/news/digital-shift-and-telecare-report>

Consumer attitudes and experiences of migration to Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services in the Salisbury and Mildenhall Openreach trial areas

Published by Ofcom September 2022

https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0020/244136/research-migration-to-voip-openreach-trials.pdf

Digital Switchover

Published by Local Government Association

<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/cyber-digital-and-technology/digital-switchover>

UK transition from analogue to digital landlines from DCMS published 6 January 2023

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-transition-from-analogue-to-digital-landlines>