

Help from Hovingham with Scackleton Parish Council regarding “Digital Voice”

The telephone system currently uses “analogue” technology which in-use since the invention of the modern telephone. These phones use power supplied from the exchange over the copper wires at the same time as the dialling and voice signals.

The system is now being updated to “Digital Voice” where your phone will use digital signals for dialling and voice, and not get any power from the exchange. **IT DOES NOT** mean the copper cable to your house will be replaced by fibre; this may take place in the future, but is not required for the update to take place.

Digital Voice will enable better, more reliable, voice quality, a new voicemail system, which can take messages when the line is engaged and enable multiple calls to take place at the same time.

Customers will be updated by their supplier when their update is scheduled; they will be provided various options depending on their circumstances and current equipment. They will also have option to request a deferment of up to a year, all users will be updated before December 2025.

There are many sources of information available on the update however, care should be taken to ensure their independence and applicability to your situation. Below is a copy of help from “Age UK” website which we hope you will find informative and useful.

Help from Age UK website

BT has now started to contact a limited number of customers, having paused its changeover programme, and will begin to roll out the programme on a region-by-region basis from summer 2023. However, they aren't currently switching certain groups, including:

- people aged 70 and over
- people with additional needs
- people who only have a landline (and not broadband)
- people with telecare alarms
- people with no mobile signal at home.

Other companies have also started rolling out digital systems. In some areas, changes to the network will mean that everyone needs to move to the digital system. You may also be moved to the new system if you decide to move to a new phone and broadband package.

If you haven't been moved over yet, don't worry – your phone company will get in touch with you when they want you to make the change. Throughout this page, we'll be talking about broadband and broadband companies or services. When we say 'broadband', we just mean a high-speed internet connection.

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Why are these changes happening?

The current landline network needs to be replaced because it's old and is becoming difficult to maintain. The new system uses the internet to make phone calls – this offers better quality calls as well as some additional features.

Phone and broadband companies are leading this change. The Government is supporting it. The aim of Ofcom (the communications regulator) is to make sure customers don't face unnecessary disruption or harm because of the changes.

What happens if there's a power cut?

Unlike some traditional corded analogue phones, a digital phone will only work in a power cut if it has a battery back-up, because it'll run using your home electricity. In these instances, phone companies are advising people to use mobile phones as a backup.

If you're dependent on your landline phone – for example, if you don't have a mobile phone or you live somewhere where there's no or poor mobile signal, then your telephone provider must offer you a 'resilience solution' to make sure you can make emergency calls during a power cut. This could be a mobile phone (if you have mobile signal) or a battery-backup unit for your landline phone.

This resilience solution should be provided free of charge to people who are dependent on their landline. If you're not eligible for a free resilience solution, you may be able to purchase one from your provider or another retailer – talk to your provider about the options available to you.

Useful Contacts

Age UK Helpline 0800 678 1602

BT Digital Voice 0800 800 150

(Help and Services)

Help from Age UK website (continued)

Can I keep my phone number?

Yes – in most cases you'll be able to keep your current phone number.

Will I need a new phone?

If your phone handset is very old, you might need to change it. Your phone provider will be able to advise you on this.

Will anything else be affected, like my telecare?

The switch to digital landlines may affect telecare devices and other equipment such as personal alarms and security alarms if they're connected to your phone line.

Although your telephone service provider will contact you before the switch takes place, you may want to let them know about any telecare devices that you have in advance. It's also a good idea to contact the supplier of your telecare device to check that this will work with the new system or whether any equipment will need to be upgraded. If you're buying a new device that's linked to the phone system, you should also check with the seller or manufacturer that this will be compatible.

What happens when I change to the digital system?

Your telephone provider will contact you in advance to let you know when your system's changing and what you need to do. In some cases, an engineer will need to visit to make changes.

For lots of people, the change will be straightforward. If you already have a broadband connection, you may just need to plug your phone into your broadband router or you'll be sent an adapter that connects to your phone and plugs into your router. If you have more than one phone socket with separate handsets, you may need additional adapters.

When you're contacted by your provider let them know if you have any questions or concerns about moving to the digital service, or if you need any additional help.

What if I don't have, or don't want, the internet at home?

If you already have a broadband connection, for example to connect to the internet, then the new digital landline system will use this.

If you don't have a broadband connection, your provider will supply one specifically to support the new digital system, but you shouldn't pay extra for this if you don't move over to a broadband service.

Will my new phone contract be more expensive?

BT has committed to not raise prices above inflation for 'voice only' customers until 2026. 'Voice only' customers are those who don't have home broadband. Virgin Media has also said that people won't pay more than what they already pay for their current service.

This means that you shouldn't face extra costs if you need a new simple internet connection to make calls.

Is there anything I should watch out for?

As the switchover is affecting millions of homes, this can create an opportunity for criminals to develop new scams. These scam attempts could happen over the phone, via email, or in person on your doorstep.

Remember the following scam advice when someone's contacting you about the switchover:

STOP – take a moment to stop and think before parting with your money or your personal information.

CHALLENGE – could it be fake? It's OK to reject, refuse or ignore any requests. You should never feel rushed or pressured into making a decision.

PROTECT – contact your bank immediately if you think you've been a victim of a scam and report it to [Action Fraud](#) by calling **0300 123 2040**.

Other unscrupulous people may also try to sell you equipment or get you to sign up to expensive contracts that you don't need. In these cases, it's important that you don't rush into making any decisions. You can always seek a second opinion and speak to your phone company – they should be able to advise you about what you need.