

Update on plans for the ‘Digital Switchover’ in CSW region

As you may already be aware, the UK’s telephone network is changing. By the end of 2025, most phone providers will have moved their customers from landlines served by the old analogue Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) to new upgraded services which use digital technology. This is commonly referred to as the ‘Digital Switchover’.

Why is this happening?

The PSTN or ‘copper landline network’ is nearing the end of its life. It is becoming increasingly unreliable and more expensive to maintain. The new digital network will provide a more resilient, reliable, sustainable and energy-efficient phone service for decades to come.

It will also provide customers with other benefits including clearer calls and extra features that will include blocking most scam and nuisance calls, offering customers better protection against fraud.

When is this happening?

Around 90% of all Warwickshire residents and businesses currently receive their service from one of the ‘big four’ fixed landline providers: BT (BT Business & BT Consumer Group), VMO2, Sky and TalkTalk.

VMO2 have already completed the switchover for the vast majority of their Warwickshire customers, while those in the Atherstone area of North Warwickshire due to be migrated in August 2024.

The situation with Sky and Talk Talk is slightly different. As most of their customers do not receive their phone services via the PSTN network that Openreach is switching off, there isn’t the same requirement to switch their phone lines over.

As for BT Consumer Group – the largest provider of residential fixed line phone services in the UK, they will start the migration of customers to their Digital Voice network in the Solihull and Warwickshire areas in February 2024.

They have a number of drop-in sessions planned across the region in the coming weeks to address any issues or concerns that customers may have about the switchover process. More information on events in your area can be found by visiting: [Digital Voice Events](#) | [Digital Home Phone](#) | [BT](#)

Each of the phone service providers has extensive plans in place to notify affected customers well in advance of their switchover date. This includes providing them with easy to understand step-by-step instructions of what they will need to do on the day to ensure the transition is as smooth as possible.

Drawbacks and further advice:

One of the main drawbacks of the new digital network is that differences between the two technologies means that there is a risk that devices that currently rely on the old network – such as telecare devices - will not necessarily work when switched over to the digital one.

All telecoms providers have plans in place to provide extra support to their more vulnerable customers and all have now signed up to a charter agreeing that they will not migrate vulnerable customers over to the new digital network until they are sure that a compatible telecare solution is in place.

However, if you think that you or someone you know may be affected by this, we would advise that you to get in touch with the phone service provider to ensure they are aware of the situation.

Another drawback is that your new digital landline may not work if there is a power cut. Openreach are working with the government and the power networks to help make the digital phone network more resilient in the event of any power outages.

Those with access to a mobile phone are advised to ensure these are sufficiently charged so that in the event of a blackout, calls – including those to emergency services - can still be made.

Battery back-up solutions can also be purchased and OFCOM has stated that if an 'at-risk' customer does not have any other means available, their telecoms provider must offer a solution to allow calls to be made to the emergency services. Your phone service provider will be able to provide more information on this.

Finally, it is worth noting that BT Business are following a totally separate migration rollout plan for their customers compared to BT Consumer Group. If you are a BT Business customer, we suggest you contact them to discuss the migration of your phone services to the digital network.