

Changes to telephone landlines

The UK's telephone network is being upgraded, which means that landline services are changing. You can still have a landline in your home, but the technology that powers it will be different.

This means that in future, landline calls will be delivered over digital technology called Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), which uses a broadband (internet) connection.

For most, switching over will be straightforward, but some people may need new equipment or support to make the changes.

The decision to upgrade has been made by industry, not Ofcom (the telecommunications ombudsman) or the UK Government. However, Ofcom does have rules that telephone suppliers have to adhere to, in order to protect customers in power cuts, and to require phone companies to provide access to emergency calls.

When the changes are happening

This change will be happening across the country and for most networks the move to digital landlines will be complete by December 2025 (though this may be delayed to 2027).

Your supplier will let you know when they are moving you.

For example, BT who are rolling it out region by region, will begin making the change in Oxfordshire in spring 2024. If you already have a broadband connection, you may only need to plug your phone into your broadband router or use an adapter to connect your phone and router together.

Contact your telephone supplier and let them know if you:

- Have a disability or any other needs that mean you will need extra help with this change
- Don't have a mobile phone or if the mobile phone signal at your home is too poor to ring for emergency services

Your telephone supplier may be able to delay changing your system or provide additional help during the change.

What effect the change will have on your phone number and bill

You will be able to keep your current phone number.

Your supplier will be able to offer you a telephone plan at the same cost you currently pay, or you can choose to upgrade your service, if you wish.

What effect the change will have on personal alarms and telecare

This switchover may affect some telecare devices and other equipment such as pendant alarms.

Carium is the supplier for people who have an alarm fitted by Oxfordshire social services. New Carium devices are already digital and will work after the switchover. If you have an older device Carium will get in touch with you to swap it for a digital version.

If your device is not from Carium, we suggest that you take the following steps:

- Contact your **personal alarm or telecare device supplier** to check if your device will be affected. If you need to upgrade your device, they may be able to provide this for free or they may need to charge a one-off fee
- Whoever your **telephone supplier** is, make sure they're aware that you have a telecare alarm and will need extra support during the switchover

What effect the change will have on home-security alarms

If you have a home-security alarm, such as a burglar alarm, which uses your telephone line to alert you when the alarm is triggered, you will need to contact your alarm provider to check if your device will be affected by the digital switchover. If you need to upgrade your device, they may be able to provide this for free or they may need to charge a one-off fee.

What effect the change will have during power cuts

The new digital landline system will rely on electricity from your household electrical socket, so will not work during a power cut. You can use a mobile phone as a 'back-up' way of getting in touch with people.

Checking your mobile phone signal in various areas of your home would be sensible to ensure you can make a call should you be in bed, for example. You may wish to change your mobile phone provider, if another service has better signal in your area.

If you live somewhere where you rely on your landline (for example you may have not have a mobile phone, or experience poor mobile signal), then your landline telephone supplier will offer you a 'resilience solution' to make sure you can still make emergency calls during a power outage.

Ofcom rules for telephone suppliers currently state they only need to ensure you have access to emergency calls for 1 hour, though most suppliers are providing solutions which will last on stand-by for up to 8 hours.

Solutions may be in the form of:

- a basic mobile phone (if you have a suitable signal in your area). You will not need to pay for a separate mobile phone contract.



example

- a 'hybrid' phone – this looks like a normal landline phone with a plastic aerial on it. The phone detects a power cut and switches to using its built-in SIM and battery, like a mobile phone would. You will not need to pay for a separate mobile phone contract.



example

- a backup battery unit, so that your phone will work normally during a power cut for up to 8 hours



example

What effect the change will have on how you make calls

When you pick up your phone, you will not hear a dial-tone.

When you make a call, you will need to use the full phone number including the area code for **all calls**. For example, when calling Oxford City Council, you will need to enter **01865 249811**, even if you live in Oxford.

Be aware of scams

We have been made aware that scammers are calling people claiming they need to hand over bank details as part of the switchover, or they will be disconnected.

The digital switchover is free of charge, and councils and their care alarm providers and contractors will NEVER ask for personal or financial information over the phone. If you've come across a scam or any fraudulent activity, please report it to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040.

More information

For more information on the digital switchover please contact your telephone provider.

For many telephone providers you can dial 150 from your phone to speak to them, or you will find their contact details on bills and paperwork you have received from them.

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