

LANDLINES ARE GOING DIGITAL

The UK's traditional copper telephone network is being switched off. Many homes have already moved to a digital service, with calls carried over the broadband connection rather than the old phone line, and the rest must move by **31 January 2027**. Openreach, which runs the network, has confirmed that there will be no extension to this deadline.

For most households the change is simple: you keep your number, and your phone works much as it did before. There are, however, a few extra steps to take if you rely on a care alarm, don't have a mobile phone, or get a poor mobile signal at home.

WHAT CHANGES

- Your phone plugs into your broadband router instead of the socket in the wall. If that's inconvenient, your provider can supply an adapter.
- You keep the same phone number, and the switch itself shouldn't cost you anything.
- You'll need to dial the area code for every call, including local ones.
- Phone sockets elsewhere in the house will usually stop working. A cordless phone, with its base plugged into the router, is the simplest way to have a phone in more than one room.
- A phone plugged into the router won't work during a power cut, as explained overleaf.

HAS YOUR LINE ALREADY BEEN SWITCHED?

If your phone already plugs into your broadband router rather than the socket in the wall, it's most likely been switched already. If not, your provider should write to you, usually around four weeks before your switch date. If you haven't heard anything yet, it's worth contacting your provider now rather than waiting, as lines that haven't been moved in time are expected to be transferred to a temporary emergency service with limited features.

POWER CUTS AND CARE ALARMS

IN A POWER CUT

A digital phone depends on your router, which needs mains electricity. During a power cut, or if your broadband stops working, a phone plugged into the router won't work, and that includes calls to 999. So it's wise to keep a charged mobile phone to hand.

If you depend on your landline, for example because you have no mobile phone or the signal at home is poor, your provider must offer you a back-up solution free of charge, such as a battery unit that keeps the phone working for at least an hour. Some providers, BT among them, also offer a phone with a built-in mobile connection. Ask your provider what's available.

CARE ALARMS AND PENDANTS

Many personal alarms use the phone line to call for help, and some older models don't work reliably on a digital line. Phone providers have agreed not to switch customers who use a care alarm until a working, compatible alarm is confirmed to be in place, but they can only do so if they know about it.

1. Tell your phone provider that you have a care alarm. BT and Virgin Media customers can call **150**.
2. Tell your alarm provider, or your council if it supplies the alarm, and ask whether it will work on a digital line.
3. If you're buying a new alarm, make sure it's designed for digital lines, as some older-style models are still on sale.
4. Test the alarm as soon as the switch is complete, and contact your alarm provider straight away if it doesn't work.

DOES A RELATIVE HAVE A CARE ALARM?

If so, it's well worth checking that both their phone provider and their alarm provider know about it before the switch takes place.

OTHER THINGS TO CHECK

If you don't have broadband

You don't need to take broadband. BT offers a landline-only service that needs no new equipment, keeps your call package and line rental the same, and works in a power cut just as your phone does today. Other providers have their own arrangements, and you shouldn't have to pay more simply because you don't take broadband.

Burglar alarms and other equipment

Anything else connected to your phone line, such as a burglar alarm that calls a monitoring centre, a fax machine or a card payment machine, may need to be changed. Check with the company that supplies it before your switch date.

Beware of switchover scams

Scammers are calling people claiming to be from BT or Openreach, saying the line must be upgraded and asking for payment, bank details or access to the computer, sometimes threatening to cut the phone off. Genuine providers don't charge for the switch, and they'll never ask for your bank details or for access to your computer over the phone. End the call and contact your provider using the number on your bill. Our **[Guide to Spotting Scams](#)** explains more.

WE CAN HELP

We can make sure your router and phones are set up correctly, help you choose and install a cordless phone so you can take calls in every room, and check that your broadband is reliable enough for your phone to depend on it.