



department for
**culture, media
and sport**

Equality Impact Assessment

Digital Switchover

December 2008

Our aim is to improve the quality of life for all through cultural and sporting activities, support the pursuit of excellence, and champion the tourism, creative and leisure industries.

Contents

Introduction.....	4
Switchover policy.....	4
Who will be affected.....	5
Equality Impact Assessment.....	6
Developing the policy.....	7
Assessing the impact of the policy.....	15
Measures taken to lessen the impact on vulnerable consumers.....	16
Help for those outside the Digital Switchover Help Scheme.....	18
Further consultation and monitoring.....	20
Conclusion.....	21

Introduction

1. In September 2003, the Government announced its commitment to switching off the UK's analogue terrestrial television network as soon as it was practical to do so. A cost benefit analysis (CBA) carried out by Department of Trade and Industry (now the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR)) and Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) economists indicated that this should produce quantifiable net benefits to the UK; both for consumers and the UK economy. The CBA was first published in September 2003 and updated for publication in February 2005.¹
2. In September 2005, the Government confirmed the timetable for the switch to digital television. Between 2008 and 2012, television services in the UK will transfer completely to digital, television region by television region. This is in line with the European Council's conclusions of December 2005 that all European Union Member States should switch to digital by 2012.
3. This Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been undertaken jointly by DCMS and BERR to supplement the assessment of equity and fairness on groups particularly affected by switchover that formed part of the Regulatory and Environmental Impact Assessment (REIA) published jointly by the then DTI and DCMS on 15 September 2005.²

Switchover Policy

The benefits of switchover

4. Digital television is more efficient than analogue and can carry many more services. It will also bring digital terrestrial television (DTT) signals to the 20% of the population who live in areas that cannot currently receive the digital equivalents of the analogue services because of spectrum limitations, giving them all the channels they get today and extra television channels. Broadcasters will then be able to plan future transmission arrangements without having to factor in the additional costs of simulcasting in analogue. Switchover will therefore enable spectrum to be released for other additional purposes such as wireless broadband applications, improved mobile telephony services and mobile TV.
5. The benefits of switchover can only be fully realised if the analogue signals are phased out completely. It is therefore inevitable that consumers who have not enabled their television set to receive digital signals will lose access to television services after switchover.
6. The switchover process requires all television consumers to ensure their television equipment is capable of receiving a digital signal. The Government worked with broadcasters and industry to develop a strategy that would minimise costs to consumers as far as possible. The

¹ DTI/DCMS Cost Benefit Analysis of Digital Switchover 18 September 2003 and 10 February 2005

² The REIA is available at
http://www.digitaltelevision.gov.uk/consultations/con_ria_timingods.html

Government considered that the wide availability of low cost digital conversion equipment together with a clear and effective communications and information strategy would mean that switching to digital television was affordable for the vast majority of households. Furthermore, giving consumers sufficient notice and time to make the adjustment would also help as consumers would be able to make the switch a part of on-going spending decisions, for example, when choosing a new television set.

7. The intended outcomes of Digital Switchover therefore are:
- a. greater coverage of digital services;
 - b. freed up spectrum space for other services, for example, more television services in standard or high definition, local television, wireless broadband and many others leading to greater consumer benefit; and
 - c. realised benefits to public service broadcasters from efficiencies and long-term cost savings on terrestrial transmission.

More information about the policy and its benefits is available on the Government's digital television website at www.digitaltelevision.gov.uk/policydev/pdev_home.html

Who will be affected by digital switchover?

8. Consumers receiving analogue television services who have not converted their set to receive digital signals by the time switchover occurs in their region will lose access to television reception. To avoid this, households will need to ensure they obtain, install and learn how to operate the necessary equipment to enable their analogue television set to receive digital signals or buy an integrated digital television set.
9. Landlords and managing agents responsible for communal television systems in multiple dwelling units will need to consider whether the system in place needs adaptation or an upgrade in order to receive digital television. Also, organisations responsible for the provision of televisions in the public sector, such as educational establishments, hospitals and prisons will need to ensure that those television sets are capable of receiving digital television.
10. The following have been identified as key stakeholders in the switchover process:
 - All consumers of analogue television services;
 - Digital UK³ – the independent, non-profit organisation leading the process of digital switchover in the UK;

³ Digital UK was set up in April 2005 to implement the Government's policy of digital switchover. You can view the Digital UK website at: www.digitaluk.co.uk

- BBC and other public service broadcasters, multiplex operators, network operators, platform operators and the Supply Chain – manufacturers of TV equipment and retailers of it;
- DSHS Ltd, the 100% owned BBC subsidiary responsible for the delivery of the digital switchover help scheme.
- Ofcom;
- DCMS, BERR and other Government Departments, in particular the Department for Work and Pensions and Department for Communities and Local Government;
- Public Sector bodies with responsibilities for the provision of television, e.g. barracks, prisons and hospitals; and
- Charities, voluntary organisations, community organisations and consumer groups including the Consumer Expert Group and the Ofcom Consumer Panel.

The Equality Impact Assessment

11. DCMS and BERR, as public authorities, are subject to general duties for disability, race and gender equality. DCMS published its Equality Scheme in 2006, with revisions undertaken in 2008⁴. BERR's published Equality Scheme sits alongside its Race and Disability Schemes, and provides a framework by which it seeks to meet its obligations under all three duties⁵. Moreover, the Departments recognise that the benefits of ensuring that all Government policies are formed so as to minimise the adverse impact on particular groups and therefore we aim to go beyond our statutory obligation and show, where appropriate, the same commitment for sexual orientation, religion and/or belief and age equality. EIAs are therefore an important mechanism for ensuring that we give due regard to equality in our decision-making and activities and determine whether or not we are meeting our goals and targets for all members of the community. As such, the Departments have carried out a full EIA to analyse the effect of digital switchover on those groups identified as being vulnerable as a result of the switchover policy.

12. The Equality Impact Assessment is a two-stage process:

Stage 1: to screen all new policy or legislative proposals for relevance to race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion and/or belief and age equality;

⁴ More information on the Department's equality duties can be found at: http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/publications/3492.aspx

⁵ <http://www.berr.gov.uk/about/strategy-objectives/how-we-work/equality-schemes/page35704.html>

Stage 2: to fully assess those policies with an impact on identified groups and amend the policy as necessary to ensure that there is no unjustifiable adverse impact on those groups. This may include consulting on the policy and monitoring its effects as it goes into operation.

13. As part of developing its policy on digital switchover, the Departments carried out a Regulatory and Environmental Impact Assessment (RIA). This was published in September 2005 and formed the basis of what would have been stage 1 of the EIA process. The Departments have therefore used the findings of the ERIA to move to stage 2 of the EIA process. This full EIA is the result. This EIA:
 - a. reassesses the findings of the RIA in more detail against the six equality groupings;
 - b. identifies the consultations that have taken place;
 - c. identifies the evidence gathered; and
 - d. identifies the changes made as a result of the above, with the inclusion of the Digital Switchover Help Scheme.

Developing the Policy

Overview

14. From 2001–2005, industry and the Government worked together on the digital switchover initiative through the Digital Television Project. A Digital Television Action Plan⁶ was developed that identified the various tasks to be completed to enable Government to make decisions on the timescale for switchover and the way forward.
15. As the forward to the Action Plan explains, in drawing up the list of tasks, the Government placed consumers' needs, legitimate expectations and welfare at the centre of the Plan. Key tasks for Government included consultation with representatives of viewers and an assessment of the full range of human factor issues including access for more vulnerable groups. The Government commissioned reports and entered into consultation with interested parties to determine who those more vulnerable groups might be and what type of assistance they would require. The following summarises the consultation research carried out:

⁶ Information about the Plan is available at http://www.digitaltelevision.gov.uk/publications/pub_actionplan.html

Initial Consultation and Research

Scientific Generics

16. The then Department of Trade and Industry commissioned Scientific Generics to carry out research into consumer attitudes to digital television. Three substantial studies were published in 2003 and 2004:

- 1) *Digital Television for All*, published in September 2003, noted that people with sensory impairments or cognitive or other disabilities may face additional costs to access digital television equipment suitable for their needs and that the prevalence of cognitive, sight and hearing difficulties increases significantly with age. The research found that around 2 million people over the age of 75 (or 48% of those over 75) would not be able to purchase, install and use a set-top box without assistance. If this help was not available from friends and family members then those unable to install digital equipment may have to pay someone for this service. The costs of this service may range from £50 - £100.
- 2) *Attitudes to Digital Television*, published in January 2004 and based on consumer research in June 2003, identified a group of 6% of consumers who said they would never get digital television. Of these, 52% were over 55 and there was a bias towards social grades C2DE (working classes). They were also more likely to have disabilities, particularly hearing impairments or special needs.
- 3) *Attitudes to Digital Switchover* published in March 2004, showed that at that stage less than 20 % of respondents aged over 75 had switched to digital television compared to around 45% - 50% for other age groups. Of the 5 % of respondents who said they would never get digital television, around half said that they felt sad at the prospect of not being able to watch television. They believed that they would not be able to convert because of the costs and complexity of digital TV. 60% of respondents who said they would never get digital television were retired.

17. The full reports are available on the Government's digital television website at:

www.digitaltelevision.gov.uk/publications/pub_dtv_for_all.html

www.digitaltelevision.gov.uk/publications/pub_attitudes_to_dtv.html

and

www.digitaltelevision.gov.uk/publication/pub_attitudes_to_switchover.html

Taken as a whole, the research carried out by Scientific Generics clearly identified a number of groups who may, because of age and disability, have higher costs compared to other groups in relation to switchover.

Consumer Expert Group

18. In order to understand the possible impact of digital switchover on consumers in more detail, a Digital Television Consumer Expert Group (CEG) was convened by the Government in June 2003. The CEG consists of leading representatives from a variety of consumer groups and charities. The Group continues to advise Government and current members are:

- a. Royal National Institute for Blind People;
- b. The Royal National Institute for Deaf People;
- c. Action with Communities in Rural England;

- d. Sense;
- e. The National Consumer Council;
- f. Age Concern;
- g. Help the Aged;
- h. TAG (formerly Telecommunications Action Group);
- i. Voice of the Listener and Viewer
- j. Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Organisations
- k. Citizens Advice
- l. Wireless for the Bedridden.

19. It is also open to the CEG to take advice from consumer groups and charities not represented on the Group and from other bodies if they consider that they need additional expertise. The CEG's initial findings were published, in September 2004, in the report *Persuasion or Compulsion? Consumers and Analogue Switchover*. The main findings were that:

- steps were needed to ensure converting to digital television is affordable to all households including those on low and fixed incomes;
- some measures should be put in place to assist low income and special needs groups to switch to digital television, including clear criteria identifying those who will be eligible for assistance under a help scheme and should provide them with assistance for the full costs of converting one set;
- before the switchover date was announced, 70% of households should have adopted digital television for their main television set; and
- the profile of switchover generally needed to be raised through a public information campaign on both consumer issues and switchover policy.

20. The Group concluded that it was not appropriate to set access criteria, but before switchover was announced, specific plans should be in place to address the needs of disabled people before switchover actually takes place. The Report recommended that there must be a choice of fully accessible digital TV receivers for all platforms and all digital equipment should include basic access features and that outstanding issues associated with electronic guides and menus, remote controls and connectivities must be resolved.

21. The full report is available on the Government's digital television website at: www.digitaltelevision.gov.uk/publications/pub_consumer_expert.html.

22. The independent advice and the recommendations made by the CEG in their reports formed part of the ongoing consultation with stakeholders throughout the Digital Television Action Plan.

Ofcom Report on progress towards switchover

23. In April 2004, Ofcom published their report to Government on the progress towards switchover over the next decade, including the main challenges that could prevent a full switchover to digital TV. On the issue of affordability, Ofcom found that even if the adoption rates for digital TV are very high, the transitional cost of conversion to digital may remain a significant barrier for some households and risk leaving a few households excluded from TV after switchover. At the time of the Report, the penetration of digital TV increased with household income, so Ofcom concluded that the transitional costs of switchover would predominantly fall on the poor.
24. Ofcom considered that these transitional costs need not be a great barrier to switchover: the cost of a basic converter box in 2004 was already less than half the cost of the annual licence fee; the relative burden was likely to diminish over time as the cost of converters falls; and digital penetration was likely to rise significantly before switchover. Ofcom considered that by the time of switchover, a residual affordability problem is all that is likely to remain for the initial conversion of households' primary sets to digital TV.
25. Ofcom recommended that at a later date, the Government should consider the costs and benefits of offering limited financial assistance to particular groups, similar to the free licence fee scheme for over 75s. To reduce the danger that some households might wait until the last minute in the hope of receiving financial support, any scheme should be available to all households in a designated group rather than just the remaining analogue households.
26. The report is available at http://www.ofcom.org.uk/research/tv/reports/dsoind/dso_report/

Ofcom Consumer Panel

27. In 2004, the Government also commissioned a report from the independent Ofcom Consumer Panel to:
- consider whether specific measures were needed to help particular groups;
 - advise on which groups and what type of help was a priority; and
 - advise on how help should be provided.
28. In their report, *Supporting the most vulnerable consumers through switchover*, published in November 2004⁷, the Panel expressed its belief that what people need is practical, on the ground help. The Panel considered that the conversion of a single set in a household ensures continued access to television and that those who are most likely to be vulnerable are people who need help in effecting the practical changes that digital television adoption requires and

⁷ The report can be found at http://www.digitaltelevision.gov.uk/publications/pub_cp_dso_report.html

who have no-one to turn to for support. The Panel concluded that DSO presents the biggest challenges for those who are socially isolated and that social isolation will be related to age, various kinds of disability and to low English literacy.

29. The report recommended that:

- the body charged with implementing the switchover should develop a process - working closely with the voluntary sector and Local Government - to identify people in need of help through switchover and provide a scheme offering practical support;
- that financial assistance should be offered to people currently eligible for television licence fee exemptions (people 75 and over or registered blind) to meet the costs of one off purchases of equipment;
- that significant and rapid attention must be paid to the particular requirements of people with disabilities, especially those with vision and hearing impairments in order to ensure that suitable equipment at reasonable cost will be readily available; and
- there needed to be a public information campaign for digital switchover.

The full report is available on the Government's digital television website at: http://www.digitaltelevision.gov.uk/publications/pub_cp_dso_report.html

Digital Switchover Trials

30. From November 2004 – March 2005, the Government, broadcasters and digital multiplex operators, working closely with the transmission contractors, Intellect (representing receiver manufacturers) and Ofcom conducted the Ferryside Digital Switchover Technical trial. The purpose of the trial was to assess the technical issues for broadcasters and consumers associated with the switchover process.

31. Quantitative and qualitative research was carried out in phases throughout the trial to assess any difficulties households had with installation, the amount of information and assistance people needed and their attitudes to digital television generally. The qualitative research looked more specifically at how digital switchover would impact on elderly and/or disabled members of the communities.

32. Key findings of the quantitative research were that 35% of those aged over 65 required assistance with installation and 43% of those aged 75 and over and/or disabled did not even consider attempting the installation themselves. Qualitative research involving two phases of in-home interviews with 8-9 households showed a mix of capabilities and experience with new technology, that only one person had installed the equipment and that most people found it easier to be shown how to operate the system rather than relying on written instructions.

DCMS Taking Part survey

33. In 2005 DCMS commissioned the *Taking Part* survey that collected information about engagement and non-engagement in culture, leisure and sport and this included information on the take-up of digital television. The survey involved over 28,000 face to face interviews and showed that 75% of all adults live in a household where the main television has been converted to digital. This falls very significantly for those over 75, to just 45.6% but the take up rate for adults between 65 and 74 is much closer to the national figure at 65.6%. This

confirmed previous research that help should be directed to those consumers who are aged 75 and over.

Further research following the announcement of the Digital Switchover Help Scheme

34. Following initial consultation and research, the Government announced, in September 2005, that a help scheme would be put in place during switchover to help the most vulnerable groups through that process. Research and consultation has continued since that announcement to ensure the scheme targets the appropriate individuals. This is developed in more detail at paragraph 55.

The Bolton Digital Television Trial

35. The Bolton Digital TV trial took place between July 2005 and February 2006 and was a partnership between the Government, the BBC and Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council. The purpose of the Trial was to investigate what kind of support would be needed at digital switchover by people aged 75 and over. The trial included a small number of people suffering from serious disabilities in relation to vision, hearing, mobility and learning.

36. The aim was to identify:

- what issues they would have when installing and using digital equipment;
- how many would need this help and how it could best be provided; and
- the likely costs, including how many homes would need aerial upgrades.

37. The vast majority of people (93%) who took part in the Trial thought that switching to digital TV was easy and they liked watching it. The Trial highlighted the importance of support from family and friends in installing and using equipment and the need to give older and disabled people time to adapt to using new technology.

38. More information about the Trial and the results of the research are at http://www.digitaltelevision.gov.uk/publications/pub_boltondigtv.html

The Ofcom/Digital UK Switchover Tracking Survey

39. In April 2006, Ofcom and Digital UK launched the Switchover Tracking Survey. The Tracker surveys more than 8,300 households to provide information about switchover in relation to consumer awareness, understanding, attitudes, intention to convert and whether a household has converted one or all of its television sets. The sample includes a full range of consumer groups including:

- people aged 65 and over;
- disabled people;
- those living in rural areas;
- black and minority ethnic groups;
- those living alone;

- low income groups; and
- those living in rented accommodation or multiple dwelling units.

The Tracker also gives a break down by sex and age.

40. Results for Quarter 2 2008 show that 83% of UK households have converted at least one television set to digital. Amongst disabled consumers the take up rate is 80% and amongst the over 75s is 60%. Amongst men, the take-up rate is 87% and amongst women 80%. Amongst Black and Minority Ethnic households, the take-up rate is 77%. This again helps support Government's previous research and continues to indicate that the Digital Switchover Help Scheme is being correctly directed towards those consumers most in need of assistance

Consumer Expert Group

41. The CEG continues to deliver regular feedback through quarterly meetings with the Government, Digital UK and the Digital Switchover Help Scheme. The Ofcom Consumer Panel and the Ofcom Advisory Committee on Older and Disabled People also attend.

42. The CEG has published two reports that assisted in the development of the Digital Switchover Help Scheme. Government wanted to ensure equipment provided by the Scheme was designed with the users need in mind and the first of these reports, *Digital TV equipment: vulnerable consumer requirement*, published in March 2006, set out the core receiver requirements for consumer equipment that the Group considered best suits the needs of older and disabled people. The second report, *Supporting vulnerable groups through switchover*, published in July 2006 set out the Group's views as to the nature of the support package being offered and made a number of recommendations. The CEG reports are available at:

www.digitaltelevision.gov.uk/publications/pub_dtvconsumer_mar06.html and
www.digitaltelevision.gov.uk/publications/pub_vulnerable_consumers.html

43. In its report on *Supporting vulnerable groups through switchover*, the CEG recommended that the opinion of the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) should be sought on how best to identify for the targeted assistance scheme, the people with disabilities who are not currently claiming Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance.

The Disability Rights Commission

44. The DRC advice to Government in December 2006 expressed concerns over the scope of the Digital Switchover Help Scheme. In particular, the Commission considered the eligibility criteria too restrictive and that many disabled people – those who do not claim disability benefits or who are not registered visually impaired risk exclusion and disadvantage as a result. They considered disabled people from black and minority ethnic communities may be particularly disadvantaged along with groups such as people with mental health problems, people with learning disabilities, cancer patients and people with autistic spectrum disorders. This advice was thoroughly considered and helped in forming the basis for further assistance to be provided outside the Digital Switchover Help Scheme. Further discussion can be found at paragraph 57 and the measures taken outside the Digital Switchover Help Scheme are explained in more detail at paragraph 77 onwards.

Digital UK/Ofcom Advisory Committee on Older and Disabled People research

45. In April 2007, Digital UK and Ofcom Advisory Committee on Older and Disabled People published research jointly commissioned from i2 Media to explore what difficulties disabled, older, isolated and low income people may experience as a result of digital switchover. Participants also included supporters of these groups.
46. Main themes to emerge were that:
- participants were aware of the change to digital TV, but few understood all the changes they would need to make;
 - financial hardship, low levels of support, low confidence with technology and low motivation characterise consumers most likely to be in need of support to manage switchover;
 - with motivation and support most were as well placed as the general population to benefit from digital switchover;
 - there is a need to improve supporters' understanding of the practical steps needed to convert to digital TV;
 - family members provide a key support role;
 - training and resources are key to leveraging support from voluntary organisations; and
 - social service departments have a key role with service users facing the biggest challenges.
47. This research helped inform the development of future switchover communications and help. The research report is available at http://www.ofcom.org.uk/research/tv/reports/dsoind/dso_research/

Ofcom Consumer Panel

48. In December 2007, the Ofcom Consumer Panel published their research study on *Going digital: supporting consumers through digital switchover*, commissioned to understand the experience of vulnerable consumers as they 'go digital'. Key findings of the report were:
- participants in the mainstream, low income, MDU resident and under 75 groups mainly require information and the help line would support their needs;
 - the over 75s, disabled people and technically unsupported participants need to receive more specifically targeted information, and therefore require face-to-face support;
 - a strong sense that existing social networks and support groups should be used to supplement the proposed help line as a means of contact with vulnerable groups; and
 - in general, help with affordability is seen as less of a priority by participants, but would be beneficial for some groups, in particular those already receiving financial support for television.
49. The Panel made a number of practical recommendations for improving the current provision of available information and support, most of which Digital UK has already implemented. The full report is available at <http://www.ofcomconsumerpanel.org.uk/information/documents/Goingdigital031207.pdf>

Research into communal systems and digital television

Multiple dwelling units

50. Private sector and social landlords provide and maintain communal television systems for tenants and leaseholders. These systems avoid the need for individual aerials which may be less effective due to the location and position of the building. Landlords and letting agents will need to upgrade these systems for digital reception in consultation with tenants.

51. At the time of the announcement in 2003 that the Government was committed to digital switchover no reliable data existed about the proportion of communal television systems that are used in flats and other multi-dwelling units. DCMS commissioned research from NOP World, published on 4 February 2005⁸, which suggested that communal systems cover around a third of social sector properties and that around 20% of social landlords had upgraded their systems to digital. Discussions with bodies representing private sector landlords suggested that progress to update communal systems in that sector is lower, but this probably masked considerable variation between different regions and different types of landlords.

Residential care and nursing homes

52. The vast majority of residential care and care homes provide some form of television service to residents. Typically a care home provides television sets in communal areas and allows residents to install sets in their own rooms. In some homes these sets may be connected to a communal aerial system. Again, no information was available on the use of television in care homes or on the number or state of communal systems and further research was commissioned.

53. In October 2007, DCMS published a report⁹ on research commissioned from BMG into the extent to which residential care and nursing homes had prepared for switchover. More than 90% of care homes have a communal system and 67% reported that all the residents had access to a television in their own room served by the communal signal.

54. It also showed that 34% of homes reported upgrading their communal system for digital television reception and 11% were in the process of doing so. Most homes that had not yet switched did not feel that they would need help to do so, but would like advice on the approach, finance, switchover and a list of recommended contractors. The Report concluded that family and friends also need to be sufficiently informed so as to be able to support and advise residents about switchover.

Assessing the impact of the policy

55. The Government recognised that the impact of this policy on consumers would not be evenly distributed and would have the potential to affect vulnerable groups more adversely, as borne out by the research outlined above. This potential impact was likely to be felt at the point of installing the necessary equipment to convert to digital television and with using digital television equipment.

56. The evidence collected indicated the policy had the potential to impact most adversely on people aged 75 and over and those with severe disabilities. There was no evidence to indicate that women would be more likely to be disadvantaged by switchover than men. The

⁸ The report is available at
http://www.digitaltelevision.gov.uk/publications/pub_communal_tv_systems.html

⁹ The report can be found at
http://www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/rands/research/rcnh_readinessfords.htm

initial research and discussion considered above led the Government to conclude that there was a compelling case for providing help to those most disadvantaged and so, alongside the announcement confirming the timetable for switchover, the Government announced the Digital Switchover Help Scheme in September 2005 to mitigate these adverse effects.

57. There is obviously a need to balance the scope of the Digital Switchover Help Scheme with the cost and complexity of providing assistance, especially as the Scheme is paid for through the licence fee; it is therefore essential that we are able to predict its costs. In order to do this we need objective criteria which enable us to quantify the eligible groups. We recognise that within those groups many will not in fact need help and similarly that there may be others outside those groups who may have difficulties. In many cases, such as social inclusion, research has shown that targeted information is needed rather than specific help, and the work of Digital UK – and in particular its proposals for helping more vulnerable groups outside the scope of Digital Switchover Help Scheme – will be important in ensuring that such groups are able to switch successfully.
58. Much consideration was given to the correct place to draw the line for eligibility and we believe that the criteria we have adopted for the Digital Switchover Help Scheme identify the main groups who may have difficulty with switchover. The Government recognised that some individuals with low English literacy development or for whom English is not their first language, younger pensioners and individuals with less severe disabilities may also need assistance and we have worked with Digital UK in order to provide help to those outside the Digital Switchover Help Scheme.

Measures taken to lessen the impact of switchover on vulnerable consumers

59. Having considered the evidence to date, the Government introduced a scheme of support and assistance for the vulnerable groups for whom it was identified the switchover process was likely to be most difficult.

The Digital Switchover Help Scheme

60. When the Switchover Help Scheme was first announced, its scope was that help would be provided to individuals who are:
- aged 75 or over;
 - in receipt of attendance or disability living allowance; or
 - registered blind or partially sighted.
61. At the time, the Government recognised that care homes may require special arrangements and after further consideration concluded that it was reasonable to take the view that anyone resident in a care home is likely to have difficulty in making the switch. The Government announced on 14 October 2008 the extension of the Scheme eligibility criteria so as to include everyone normally resident in a care home.

62. At the time of switchover in their region, those eligible will receive practical support and guidance through the switchover process by receiving help in acquiring and installing equipment required to receive digital television.
63. The detailed operation of the Digital Switchover Help Scheme was developed in association with the BBC and Department for Work and Pensions. This work considered the most effective way of delivering help to vulnerable groups in the home and the appropriate structure of the assistance, given the region by region profile of switchover. This work drew upon the lessons from the small scale trial scheme conducted in Bolton and on the further consultation and research recorded above, in particular the two reports from the CEG.
64. Under the Digital Switchover Help Scheme, consumers will have a number of options and so may choose how they wish to convert to digital, whether via free or subscription services. The basic charge for assistance will be £40, or free if the applicant, their spouse or parent (who is in receipt of child benefit for the eligible individual), is in receipt of pension credit, income support or jobseekers' allowance. An assessment will be made of the most cost-effective option for each individual; where an eligible individual chooses a different option, they will be obliged to meet any additional costs (for example, a subscription charge for pay television packages), although the scheme will make a contribution to their costs based on the average costs of providing the most cost effective option.
65. The core receiver requirements, a short description of the Digital Switchover Help Scheme Agreement and the Government's formal response to the CEG report on *Supporting vulnerable groups through switchover* are available at:
http://www.digitaltelevision.gov.uk/publications/pub_dig_help_scheme.html
66. In November 2006, the Government announced plans for legislation to enable those eligible for help to be contacted directly. This should encourage people to take up the offer of help by making the process simple compared with having to apply following being given general information about the Scheme. The Digital Switchover (Disclosure of Information) Act 2007 allows the Department for Work and Pensions, its Northern Ireland equivalent, and the Veterans Agency to share social security and war pensions information with the BBC during digital switchover. It also enables local authorities to disclose information from their registers of blind and partially sighted people. The information is used to identify people who are eligible for support under the Digital Switchover Help Scheme so that communications can be targeted at the right people.
67. Details of the Digital Switchover Help Scheme are set out in the Scheme Agreement between the Department and the BBC¹⁰. The Digital Switchover Help Scheme is funded through the television licence fee and estimated costs are £603m. Under the terms of the Agreement, a Policy Review Group, chaired by the DCMS, has been set up to continue discussions on policy matters relating to the Scheme.
68. The DCMS chairs an Emerging Technologies Group (ETG) that looks at ways in which equipment provided by the scheme can be improved as technologies develop over time, so that the usability needs of eligible people can be met within the budgetary confines of the

¹⁰ That agreement can be found at:
http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/The_Digital_Switchover_Help_Scheme.pdf

scheme. The ETG reports to the Policy Review Group. Lessons learnt from switchover in Copeland and more recently preparations for switchover in Borders highlighted the need to make some adjustments to the Core Receiver Requirements (CRR) which apply to equipment provided by the Help Scheme. A public consultation was undertaken which closed on 13 October 2008. DCMS published the **Second Edition** of the **CRR** on 11 November. These provide:

- a single set of CRR covering all platforms
- a maximum figure for energy use based on the EU Code of Conduct on Energy Efficiency for complex set-top-boxes
- mandatory one button access to audio description services from remote control handsets.

69. The ETG has also considered the inclusion of a text to speech function within Help Scheme equipment. Currently Electronic Programme Guides (EPGs) are not easily accessible to many people, including the blind and partially sighted, those with cognitive difficulties and people with impaired dexterity. Recent trials of a talking EPG developed by the RNIB appear promising and will be kept under consideration by the ETG.

Help for those outside the Digital Switchover Help Scheme

Digital UK

70. Digital UK is leading the implementation of switchover and is responsible for co-ordinating the technical rollout of digital television and ensuring consumers are equipped with sufficient information in relation to the timing of switchover in their region and the options available. Digital UK's role is to provide impartial information on what people need to do to prepare for the move to digital, and when they need to do it. This will obviously benefit those inside and outside the Digital Switchover Help Scheme.

71. Between now and switchover, Digital UK is communicating with every television viewing household in the country to ensure they can prepare for the change. Digital UK is also mounting media campaigns, which will become more intensive the nearer a region is to its switch – using billboards, newspapers, radio and television etc. Digital UK's call centre offers advice on all aspects of switchover and this is complemented by its website, where a postcode checker offers more precise information on present and post-switchover coverage and the options available for getting digital television.

Format of Information

72. Digital UK provides information in different ways to meet the specific requirements of people with disabilities, and Black and Minority Ethnic communities. Information is available in different formats and easy-to-follow picture guides, and a textphone service. Black and Minority Ethnic communities are given special consideration as language and cultural barriers and different patterns of media consumption mean that they may not be easy to reach. Digital UK are taking a number of actions for engaging with these communities including leaflets in a number of different languages as recommended by the Central Office of Information.

Consumer Protection

73. Protecting the consumer is a key element in delivering digital television switchover successfully. The digital switchover certification mark, commonly known as the 'digital tick'

logo, was launched by Government in September 2004 as a key mechanism to help consumers make the right choices about digital switchover. The 'digital tick' certifies:

- digital television equipment designed to work through switchover. At 1 December 2008, 80 television manufacturers and 17 aerial manufacturers had registered over 1,700 items of equipment to carry the 'digital tick';
- retailers who have trained their staff to answer customer queries on digital switchover, in accordance with Digital UK guidelines. Over 6500 retail staff have received such training to date. They are identified with an 'AskDigital' badge;
- aerial installers who are qualified as Registered Digital Installers under the Digital Installer Scheme¹¹ (launched in March 2006) designed to raise the professional status and skills of television aerial installers and ensure that consumers have access to competent and trustworthy aerial installation services and reliable advice; and

Organisations who have responsibility for the provision of communal TV aerials to residential properties, who can demonstrate that they have taken all reasonable steps to be able to guarantee delivery of digital services at least 3 years in advance of switchover in their region and who are licensed under the *homes set for digital* accreditation scheme¹² can use the 'homes set for digital' certification mark.

74. Additionally, the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform is working with Digital UK, the Registered Digital Installer Licensing Body and the Trading Standards Organisation to raise awareness of the Digital Installer Scheme and make sure there is consumer protection against cowboy installers. Digital UK is working with a range of existing professional organisations responsible for the provision of consumer advice and information and also those responsible for taking formal action when things have gone wrong.
75. The Digital UK website contains a dedicated section on Consumer Advice which went live on 19 September 2007. This section provides information in one place on guiding the consumer through the switchover process and on what to do if they encounter a problem. Digital UK's main partner organisation is Consumer Direct and the information included in this section was agreed with Consumer Direct, The National Consumer Council, Citizens' Advice Bureau and Age Concern.
76. Digital UK has also set up a 'property managers' guide' on its website that gives advice to landlords and tenants about digital switchover, the options for switching and what they need to do. It stresses the importance of consultation between landlords and tenants.¹³

¹¹ Details of the Scheme can be found at <http://www.rdi-lb.tv/>

¹² Details of the Scheme can be found at http://www.digitaluk.co.uk/propertymanagers/industry_updates_entry/accreditation_scheme/

¹³ <http://www.digitaluk.co.uk/propertymanagers/home/>

Digital Outreach Programme

77. Digital UK has set up a digital outreach programme to deliver information and advice to consumers who are hard to reach or potentially vulnerable during a switchover period. In December 2007, DUK entered into a contract with Digital Outreach Limited, a company set up by leading UK charities Age Concern England, Help the Aged, Community Service Volunteers and Collective Enterprises, to commission a range of support services from local and regional voluntary sector organisations and charities, initially in the first four switchover regions.¹⁴
78. The programme will offer help to those not eligible for the Digital Switchover Help Scheme and will focus on:
- older people
 - individuals with sensory, mobility and/or dexterity impairments
 - individuals with learning difficulties
 - individuals who are socially isolated
 - individuals who speak English as a second language and require extra assistance to understand the implications of switchover
 - those who experience mental health problems.

Further Consultation and Monitoring

79. The Government will continue to liaise closely with the CEG, Digital UK and the Digital Switchover Help Scheme and other key stakeholders about the impact of digital switchover on consumers as part of the Digital Switchover Programme. Noting the DRC concerns about the impact of switchover on other disabled groups, the Government is looking to expand the Group to include particular organisations representing people with learning and mobility impairments and voluntary organisations.
80. The Government will also continue to monitor the take up of digital television through the ongoing Ofcom/Digital UK Tracking Survey and DCMS *Taking Part* survey.
81. The Government monitored closely what happened during the first switchover in the Copeland area of Cumbria. Copeland switched to digital television in November 2007 enabling lessons to be learned ahead of the main switchover programme started in the Border Region in November 2008. The switchover pilot covered 25,000 homes, approx. 60,000 people. Copeland was selected because its transmitters could be isolated from neighbouring transmissions, switchover would not impact on other transmitters and it has a good cross-section of consumers, including ones living in multi-dwelling units and residential care.
82. On 24 April 2008, Digital UK published a report on their findings based on their research into consumer experiences the switchover. It includes feedback from the Digital Switchover Help Scheme contractor on the effectiveness of the Scheme. Key findings were that the vast majority concluded that switching to digital TV was relatively easy but nevertheless some

¹⁴ Information on Digital Outreach Ltd can be found at <http://www.digitaloutreach.org.uk/>

people did find the process more difficult and needed additional support either from the Help Scheme, Digital UK, retailers, family and friends or those in the community. The report is available at http://www.digitaluk.co.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/004/9670/DUK_Copeland_ReportWEBO10508

83. In February 2008, the National Audit Office (NAO) published a report, of the preparations for digital switchover [Link]¹⁵. Amongst other things, the report recommended that the DCMS should keep the level of the £40 charge under review.

Conclusion

84. The Digital Switchover Help Scheme has been developed to assist those identified to be most at risk of adverse impact, i.e. disabled people and those aged 75 and over. This work will be supported by Digital UK who will remain a continual point of contact for those requiring advice or assistance as well as proactively providing information to consumers in general and those identified as needing additional support.
85. In addition, switchover and the measures taken to lessen the impact of switchover will continue to be monitored by Government, Digital UK and others, including via the Digital UK/Ofcom Switchover Tracking Survey.
86. In considering the available evidence, it is clear that the Digital Switchover Policy will impact on some groups of consumers more than others. This potential adverse impact has been recognised and investigated and the Policy reconsidered in light of evidence gathered. It is not possible to meet the objectives of switchover without losing analogue signals and therefore all consumers will be affected. However, measures are in place, in particular the Digital Switchover Help Scheme, in order to lessen the impact on vulnerable groups. In these circumstances we believe that the overall benefits outweigh any potential adverse impact on consumers.

¹⁵ The report is available at <http://www.nao.org.uk/pn/07-08/0708306.htm>



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22
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