

Analogue to Digital Switchover and Telecare

All telephone lines within the UK are migrating from traditional copper analogue lines to digital ones and the deadline for this is June 2025. This is led by industry (the telephone providers) due to the costs of maintaining the analogue lines. The original deadline was for December 2025, however, BT have extended this deadline to the 31st January 2027. It is important to note though that the other telephone providers have not extended the 2025 deadline, just BT.

The switch to digital lines has an impact on telecare and we need to swap over all analogue devices to ones that are compatible with a digital telephone line (broadband) or which operate over the mobile signal. It is important to note that at this time, connection over broadband is not yet possible as the technology at the supplier end is not yet able to connect in this method. We expect this to be operational in the coming months but this is not something that we have control over.

We have a programme to swap over all analogue units with digital ones and are currently rolling this out, which will happen over the next 18 months. We are continuing to focus on those who have already moved onto a digital line and those who live in areas of very good mobile signal. 46.5% of all clients in Argyll and Bute currently have a digitally capable telecare device. This currently breaks down as follows:

- Bute – 62%
- Cowal – 53%
- Helensburgh and Lomond – 45%
- Islay and Jura – 35%
- Kintyre – 38%
- Mid Argyll – 48%
- Oban and Lorn – 37%
- Mull – 25%
- Tiree, Coll and Colonsay – 60%

We have mapped out every telecare client in Argyll and Bute against the Ofcom mobile signal checker to make sure that we are putting in the right solution at the right time for clients. For our telecare clients who live in areas of poor mobile signal, we are deliberately not switching analogue units at this time until a connection over broadband is available to ensure that telecare clients are still able to receive a working telecare service.

If people do go to a digital line but live in an area with no mobile signal, we have a work-around solution that enables them to still have telecare whilst we await connection via broadband/the digital line. This is currently being utilised by 17 clients

across Argyll and Bute. However, there have been a couple of occasions where this has failed (with Sky customers) and as a result, we are no longer able to provide a telecare service until connection over broadband is possible.

BT have committed to not switching vulnerable customers including the elderly and telecare users until the end of the switchover period or until we can confirm to BT that the client has a working digital telecare solution in place. Like other local authorities/HSCPs across Scotland, we have signed a Data Sharing Agreement with BT so that they can ringfence the phone numbers of telecare clients and ensure they are not migrated ahead of schedule. Our advice to anyone at this time who lives in an area of poor mobile signal and requires telecare is to tell BT that they require an analogue line for telecare as the mobile signal is poor and that they require to be left until last in terms of migrating over to a digital line.

We communicate regularly through newsletters to all telecare clients and ask them to make us aware if they move to a digital line. When it comes to changing the device over to a digital one as part of the roll-out, the TEC team will be in contact with the individual or their families where appropriate to make the arrangements to switch the device in advance.

For people who live in an area of poor mobile signal and where there are no current plans for fibre broadband, BT have recently launched a new product which utilises the copper line from the exchange to the property and the digital switch occurs within the exchange. This was launched in March 2024 and BT have acknowledged that this is currently planned to be a temporary solution, (current end date is 2027). We have asked BT what the solution will be once this date has passed with no answer as yet.

We will continue to support both analogue and digital telecare devices for as long as required and will not be insisting that people have to be on a digital line in order to receive telecare if they still have an analogue line in the property.

Our key ask of all partners supporting telecare clients is to:

- Inform the team if someone has moved to a digital line so we can ensure their telecare is working – 01546 605517
- Remind telecare clients to do a monthly test call to ensure it is working and let us know if any issues
- Ask clients to ensure the telephone provider knows they have telecare to try and avoid any forced migrations unless the client wishes to move to a digital line

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