

Message from Jill Haynes, Dorset Councillor, Chalk Valleys Ward

Switch off of analogue telephone lines.

People may have seen a small amount of information about the intention by Openreach to change all landlines to digital by 2025. There is no national publicity about this changeover, but it will have quite a big effect for some people. I should point out this is nothing to do with Dorset Council but as your local councillor I thought would give you some of the facts about what is happening.

Many of the analogue exchanges across the country are coming to the end of life and cannot be replaced. Openreach has made the decision that rather than continuing to do expensive short term fixes they will switch the whole country to a digital system in the next two years. Some areas have already had the switchover, but it is going to start in Dorset in the summer of 2024.

What will happen.

You will receive a letter from your land line provider informing you of the upcoming change. For some people this information will be from BT, but many others use alternative providers like Sky for example. The only phone connection which will work in your house after the switchover will be the main line connection to your home. You will also need an electrical socket next to the phone. Additional phone sockets in your home, e.g., by bedside tables, will not work unless you have a wireless connector. One of these will also be provided free but if you have more than two phones you will need to pay for the additional wireless connector (about £10 we are told)

The first letter will be followed by a parcel with the router and confirming the date of the switchover. On that day your analogue landline will stop working and you must connect your phone via the router. This is done by plugging the router into your main phone line and also plugging it into the electric socket. You then plug your existing phone into the back of the router. There will be instructions in the box. But if you do have concerns, it is wise to get a relative or neighbour you trust to give a hand.

Those who may find things difficult will be people with only a landline and no internet connection. The digital connection for your phone will be at the same price as you pay now for your landline. You do not need a computer and you will not need to be on the internet. The change will also affect those who have a landline connection for a house fire alarm or burglar alarm. Each separate landline connection will need a separate router and electricity supply, you should be contacted directly by your service provider in these cases. It will also affect those using telecare (the red button to call for help). Again, if this is the case you should be contacted direct by your provider.

The changeover will provide much better clarity of calls but there is a downside, the phone will not work without a power supply. This means if there is a power cut the phone will not work. For those who need it for medical reasons there is a battery backup, but this only works for about 4 hours. People may need to consider a mobile phone as well, but these of course need to be kept charged and not sit in a cupboard! The mobile phone signal from the mast will also stop working if there is not power.

Finally, but very importantly this change has started to bring a large number of scam calls. **PLEASE DO NOT** pay anyone over the phone or at the door to supply you with this new equipment it is provided for free.

There is no need to do anything at the moment , you will be contacted in due course.