



Report of the Bolton Digital Television Trial

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Executive Summary and Key Findings

The aim of the Bolton Digital TV Trial was to investigate what type of support would be needed at digital switchover by people aged 75 and over (75+). We wished to know what issues they would have when installing and using digital TV equipment, how many would need help, and how this could best be provided. We also wished to learn more about the likely costs of supporting people aged 75 and over through digital switchover, including how many homes would need aerial upgrades

The findings of the Trial will help to inform the development of the Support Scheme for those aged 75 and over and people with significant disabilities, but the Trial was not designed to be a prototype of that scheme.

The Trial identified 99% of eligible participants in the target area, but this process took longer than originally planned. This was because names and addresses were not available to the Trial Team, and it was necessary to write to all homes, promote the Trial locally, and wait for people to respond. For efficient and timely delivery of the Support Scheme it would be helpful if relevant agencies (e.g. DWP, TV Licensing, local authorities) were in a position to assist by sharing some information. However, it will still be necessary to promote the benefit of the Scheme to the general public because everyone who may be eligible may not be known to the relevant agencies.

Otherwise there were no major issues, and the Trial was delivered within budget.

Following are the key lessons from the Trial:

1. **Elderly and disabled people like digital TV – especially Freeview**

Elderly and disabled people are at home a lot, they watch TV a lot, and they like extra channels from the BBC, ITV etc. Digital TV offers a genuine 'quality of life' benefit for them. Both the Ferryside Trial and the Bolton Trial achieved a high take-up rate and a positive response from participants.

2. **Clear and accurate information is essential**

Information needs to be provided to the target group, but also to the general public, most of whom are capable of installing a Freeview box and can help themselves and any members of their family (as well as others in the community who need help).

The Trial identified the following key issues that should be addressed in future communications to the elderly and to the general public :

- that they do not need a new TV set. This is the biggest concern for many people;
- communications must explain clearly the various digital platforms to choose from, including the comparative costs and benefits of each platform, but in a 'platform neutral' manner;
- people need to work out what type of equipment is most appropriate for them;
- highlight common 'simple' installation problems and how to deal with them;

- highlight common 'user' problems and how to deal with them;
- highlight that a new aerial may be needed, and provide advice on how to find a reliable aerial installer (and for people living in rented or leasehold property, whether or not this may be the landlord's responsibility).

3. Elderly and disabled people need equipment that is suitable for them

Elderly and disabled people require digital TV equipment that meets their specific needs. This includes having clear graphics and a legible Electronic Programme Guide (EPG), and most of all, a well-designed remote control with large, clearly marked buttons.

Availability of equipment that is simple to use will also help people with disabilities. For people with hearing difficulties it is particularly important that subtitles can be accessed easily. Audio-description is a key benefit for people who are vision-impaired, but the facility is not currently available on most Freeview receivers,

4. Over two-thirds of elderly people were able to INSTALL their digital equipment themselves or with help from close family and friends

Not all 'vulnerable' people need help. In Bolton, where installation help was made available only as a 'fallback', family and friends successfully installed the equipment for 69 per cent of the elderly participants. Only 31 per cent needed help from Trial engineers.

5. Elderly people need time to adapt to USING digital TV

Digital TV is different from analogue. As well as help with installation, many elderly people need help and 'user support' to get used to their new digital box.

The best source of this help and support is family, friends and others from within the community. However, for those who have no family and/or are socially isolated, the Support Scheme needs to be able to provide a 'safety net'. This help and 'user support' needs to be available for at least six weeks after the equipment has been installed and is working properly.

The Support Scheme will need to work with voluntary and community organisations in each area, in order to devise an appropriate plan for providing such support locally.

6. Working with Local Authorities, the Voluntary Sector and Charities

Local Authorities have a key role to play in helping elderly people switch to digital. They already help elderly and disabled people, and can disseminate information, offer re-assurance, and call in outside help if eligible people need more support. In Bolton, the local authority provided excellent advice and offered practical help by operating the Trial Helpline.

In many places, voluntary organisations and charities visit and support people who would be eligible for a Support Scheme when digital switchover occurs.

In Bolton, Community Service Volunteers (CSV) and the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) were very helpful, but the level of assistance from local organisations will vary enormously depending on local priorities and resources.

In some places they may be able to offer advice, but no practical support.

Local volunteers working in the community are a vital support for those who have no family or are socially isolated. Local volunteers could play a significant role as a user support team, helping elderly people use their new digital equipment.

7. Delivering the Equipment

Delivery of equipment for a Support Scheme needs to be managed so as to take account of the special needs of the target group.

Many elderly and/or disabled people can take a long time to answer the door to accept a delivery, and they may not be able to come to the door at all. There is limited value in leaving a card with small print and a phone number to ring back, especially if the delivery company's phone is answered by a machine.

8. Aerials

In the Bolton Trial, only 6.8% of participating homes needed new aerials (but this may not be typical of the nation as a whole – see para 8.1).

9. Identifying eligible participants

It was difficult and time-consuming to identify those eligible for the Trial, because information from relevant databases (DWP, TV Licensing) could not be shared.

Local Councils, the voluntary sector and charities can all help identify some target groups, but they too are not permitted to share information.

If holders of such information were in a position to assist in identifying eligible people it would be far easier to ensure that a Support Scheme could be implemented speedily and effectively. However, a marketing campaign and recruitment drive will be needed as well, because many eligible people may not be listed on any of the above databases.

10. The Helpline was a vital tool in the success of the Trial

The Trial Helpline (operated by Bolton MBC) was an effective tool for dealing with general queries and keeping participants up to date. For example, many people preferred to register by phone, thus avoiding the need for home visits.

Mastercare operated a separate Technical Support line. This was cost-effective, and allowed skilled technical operators to focus on technical issues. However, telephone technical support is not the ideal solution for the elderly, who prefer an engineer to call if there are technical problems.

A Helpline for older people needs to be answered by a person, not by a machine, and ideally by someone with an accent familiar to the target group.

11. A Support Scheme needs to begin six months before local switchover

Implementation of a Support Scheme needs to start 6 months before switchover at each main transmitter site (excluding any period for publicising the Scheme).

12. Managing the Support Scheme

The key challenge when implementing the Support Scheme will be to bring together three separate strands of activity :

- central control of marketing messages and the provision of information
- regional co-ordination of technical resources for installation and aerial work
- local co-ordination of 'user support' resources within each community.

1. Background

1.1 Digital Switchover

In September 2005, the Government confirmed that the UK will be switching to digital-only television transmission. This change is called digital switchover and is the biggest change in broadcasting since colour TV was introduced in 1967.

Switchover will allow more people to access digital services. About 70% of UK Households get digital TV already. The Government wants everyone to enjoy the benefits of digital TV, with a greater choice of affordable digital options.

After digital switchover, households will get all of the channels they receive today as well as extra digital channels from public service broadcasters (e.g. BBC 3, BBC 4, ITV2, ITV3, E4, CBBC, Cbeebies, BBC News 24). Most people will also be able to receive extra free and pay-tv channels from commercial broadcasters.

The digital switchover trial in Wales demonstrated that people, including the elderly, embrace digital television when they see what it can deliver.

Switching to digital will enable today's ageing analogue terrestrial broadcasting network to be replaced by a new and more efficient digital network, freeing up broadcast spectrum that could be used for new services such as high definition television (HDTV) or broadcasting to mobile phones,

1.2 'Targeted Help' Support Scheme

By the end of 2005 more than two-thirds of UK Homes had chosen to install digital television (all platforms) at their own cost. In most cases people will not yet have converted all of the sets in their home, but it does appear that digital television is an attractive concept in principle, and that digital equipment is affordable for most households.

However, the 'Ferryside switchover trial' in Wales showed that a minority of people will struggle, not to afford the costs of a digital set top box, but to select, install and use the digital equipment¹. In particular, there is a need to ensure that elderly and disabled people are not disadvantaged as a result of the switchover from analogue to digital television signals.

People in the '75+' age group can experience difficulty in installing a set top box because of sensory or cognitive impairment or an inability to manipulate wires and connections in the tight space behind a TV set. Similar problems may be faced in households where at least one person has a severe disability. In many cases, family members, friends or carers will provide help, but some people may have no choice but to pay for help, increasing their switchover costs significantly.

The 'Ferryside trial' also demonstrated that the need for help is not limited to installing the equipment. Many elderly and disabled people need guidance and reassurance in using their new digital equipment for a period after installation.

¹ Report of the Ferryside and Llansteffan Digital TV Trial, published June 2005 (DCMS website)

The Green Paper on the future funding of the BBC (March 2005) announced that some people would be offered help in installing and using digital television. This principle was confirmed by the Secretary of State in a speech at Cambridge in September 2005. The proposed eligibility criteria are set out below:

Scheme Criteria

Help in adapting televisions for Digital Switchover (DSO) will be available to all households:

- where one person is **aged 75 or over**
- where one person is eligible to receive **Disability Living Allowance** or **Attendance Allowance** (including CAA paid under the war pensions or industrial injuries schemes)
- (if they do not otherwise qualify) where one person is **registered blind**.

Help will be provided for a small charge (linked to the costs of the equipment provided). The charge will be waived for those receiving income-related benefits:

- Pension Credit
- Income Support, or
- Job Seekers Allowance

Help will consist of a full service (equipment, support for installation and use) for the conversion of "one TV set per qualifying benefit unit". There will also be user support, some of which could be provided by informal networks involving local groups, charities and volunteers.

Registered blind people will be provided with equipment that will enable them to receive the audio description tracks that are broadcast as an enhancement to public service channels.

The Scheme will operate on a "platform neutral basis". All those who are eligible and have a choice of digital platforms; digital terrestrial (Freeview), digital satellite, digital cable or DSL/broadband TV, will be able to choose whichever platform they prefer. The Scheme will assist them to a value equivalent to the cost of the cheapest platform option available to them.

It has been confirmed that the BBC will help to fund the Support Scheme out of Licence Fee income.

As at the end of April 2006 the details of the Scheme are being considered by Government. Two key questions are:

- How extensive should the Scheme be, and
- How should the Scheme be operated ?

The Bolton Trial offers some guidance in addressing this second question.

1.3 Trial Objectives

The objectives of the Bolton Digital TV Trial were as follows :

- To devise and test a process for providing support to elderly and disabled people in installing and using digital TV equipment, and identify some of the practical implications of administering a Support Scheme

- To investigate what level of support is needed, and the extent to which it is actually needed (not all eligible households need support). Some can be 'converted' with telephone support. Others will require an engineer to call and install the equipment
- To investigate how many participating homes would require aerial work in order for digital terrestrial television (DTT) to operate effectively
- To understand what type of help locally-based organisations (such as local authorities and charities) might be able to provide during switchover, in particular in relation to :
 - identifying and contacting people eligible for help
 - providing help with the installation and operation of digital television reception equipment
- To test communications with the public as to delivery and content (including simple installation instructions) ; and
- To test some cost assumptions in relation to a Support Scheme.

It was not an objective of the Bolton Digital TV Trial to act as a prototype for any future Support Scheme nor to switch off analogue services, nor to disable analogue services in participating homes. This second idea was considered, but as most households eligible for a Support Scheme at DSO will have access to analogue and digital signals for some months before analogue signals are switched off, it was more appropriate to leave analogue in place whilst participants became used to using their new digital equipment.

1.4 Planned Support

The basis of the Trial was to supply eligible homes with appropriate digital TV equipment for one TV set.

In addition, the Trial would offer installation advice and/or an installation service where needed.

Where the TV aerial or connecting cables needed to be repaired or replaced, this work would be carried out by a contractor engaged on behalf of the Trial.

Finally, all participating homes should be contacted in order to check that the digital equipment was working, and that the participant was able to use the equipment. Follow-up visits would be arranged where further help was needed.

DTT (Freeview) was the cheapest option for the majority of households, so all of the above support would be offered free of charge to all participating eligible households who opted for the DTT (Freeview) offer. The Trial provided a flat-rate contribution to those participants who chose to convert via other digital options (see para 4.5 below).

1.5 Management

The Bolton Trial was managed by a Steering Board comprising representatives from the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) and the BBC. A representative of Digital UK was invited to attend as an observer.

The Steering Board met monthly. One meeting was held in Bolton, so that members could see the Trial area and meet local volunteers. All other meetings were held in London.

A Project Manager (based outside the area) was contracted by DCMS to oversee the Trial.

DCMS also contracted a Local Co-ordinator to handle local press and PR matters. This role evolved to co-ordinate the work of the local volunteer group and to liaise with Mastercare (who were contracted after a competitive tender to provide equipment and technical support) in order to help resolve any issues arising from the delivery and installation of equipment.

We took an early decision to manage the Bolton Trial 'at arms length' from participants, and to communicate with them by letter and telephone as far as possible, in order to simulate the likely reality of DSO.

This is different to the approach adopted in the Ferryside Trial, which took place in 2004-05 when public awareness of a proposed digital switchover was virtually non-existent. It was both necessary and appropriate to offer more support initially to those taking part in the Ferryside trial than might be expected in a full switchover scenario.

After the September 2005 announcement that Switchover would take place in 2008-2012, and a significant amount of media coverage, we have been able to adopt a different approach in Bolton:

- We did not establish a 'base' in the area
- There were no opportunities for participants to see equipment being demonstrated
- There was no 'Trial Support Team' presence
- The only contact point for participants was the Trial Helpline, and
- The only direct contact with participants was through the Local Co-ordinator who met with a small number in order to help resolve some ongoing issues and to find case studies for reporting purposes.

1.6 Funding

The Trial was funded jointly by DCMS and the BBC, who together made available a total budget of £300,000 for the work, including associated research work commissioned from Ipsos.

Please refer to Section 10 for information on the costs incurred.

1.7 Timetable

The Bolton Trial was announced at the end of June 2005. Work started in July, with a planned implementation period from mid September 2005.

The initial letter to all households in Hulton Ward, Bolton was sent on 14 September. We needed more time than originally anticipated to identify most eligible participants (see para. 3.2) but by the end of October more than 300 '75+ households' had come forward and were being registered for the Trial.

The initial wave of equipment delivery was undertaken at the beginning of December 2005, with smaller waves in early January and early February as more participants came forward.

In addition, some others were invited to participate from January 2006, including people with visual impairment, hearing difficulties, mobility issues and learning difficulties.

By the end of February 2006 we were satisfied that the vast majority of the `75+ households' in the Hulton Ward of Bolton had been identified and had been offered participation in the Trial.

The following broad lessons can be drawn from the Bolton Trial :

- If the holders of relevant public sector databases (e.g. TV Licensing and DWP) were allowed to help identify potentially eligible participants this would greatly reduce the period needed to implement a Support Scheme; in Bolton this took more than three months (although this process can happen in parallel with delivery and installation work).
- At least three months is needed to implement the delivery and installation of boxes to a large group of elderly participants after they have been identified. This includes necessary aerial work (there were relatively few aerial issues in Bolton – see Section 8). However, in more marginal areas this could well take longer.
- Many elderly people take time to adapt to new technology. The Bolton Trial experience demonstrated that the acclimatisation period is at least six weeks after equipment has been installed and is working (see para. 9.1 below). This implies that a Support Scheme needs to start six months before the date of DSO at each transmission site so that eligible people can be identified, suitable equipment delivered and installed, and any aerial issues resolved.
- A minority of people will need user support for a longer period (see para. 9.1.3) but it is not practicable to wait until they too are ready; it is better to ensure that they have ongoing support, ideally from family and friends, who are closest to them.

2. Identifying the Area

2.1 Selection Criteria

The Hulton Ward of Bolton Metropolitan Borough was selected as the Trial area by a process that took account of the following criteria :

- An easily identifiable area, with clear boundaries, ideally within an urban environment, and with a total of 400-500 eligible households
- Socio-economic characteristics – either a representative UK sample or a slight bias towards the elderly/ disabled/ low income groups
- Good digital terrestrial reception, allowing for some set-top aerial reception
- Digital satellite and (ideally) digital cable also available
- An early region in the regional timetable (to simulate DSO awareness)

2.2 Hulton Ward, Bolton

Hulton Ward is shown on the map attached as **Appendix A**. It lies to the north west of Manchester, on the west side of the town of Bolton, extending as far as the boundary with Wigan Borough. Hulton comprises approx..6,000 households, as well as a large number of small commercial premises and the usual public buildings (schools, community centres, surgeries).

The M61 motorway bisects Hulton Ward from east to west. It represents more than a physical boundary.

To the north of the M61, St Helens Road leads into the Bolton urban area, with predominantly traditional terraced streets leading off the main road as far as Morris Green, and some 1960s/1970s social housing around Deane. Towards the top of the hill beyond Morris Green there is a strong Asian community. The only significant example of recent housing development is a large executive estate off Hulton Lane.

To the south of the motorway, the village of Over Hulton sits on either side of Newbrook Road, down the hill as far as Atherton and the boundary with Wigan Borough. Over Hulton is an established village comprising mostly detached and semi-detached traditional (1930s onwards) dwellings. It sits between the wooded parkland of Hulton Park to the west, and an area of semi-rural farmland to the east, and offers a very different environment from the urban terraces to the north.

In Hulton Ward we have a mixed social environment within an urban/suburban area, and c.450 '75+' households.

2.3 Television Reception

Bolton receives an excellent digital terrestrial signal from the main transmitter site at Winter Hill, although there are the usual small pockets of difficult reception conditions because of trees or high buildings.

The most difficult areas for terrestrial reception are at the lower end of Over Hulton, at the bottom of the hill (where very long aerial poles have been installed on some properties), and at the top of the village where the signal may be affected by woodland screening.

As in most parts of the UK, digital satellite is almost universally available.

Analogue cable is available in Hulton Ward. Regrettably, initial indications that digital cable would also be an option turned out to be incorrect. The implications of this are discussed in Section 4.6.

3. Identifying the Participants

3.1 Target Groups

The Trial was originally planned to test a process of 'Targeted Help' for the 'elderly', defined as '75 years of age and over'.

Subsequently the Trial was extended to include a small number of other participants, namely people suffering from serious disabilities in relation to:

- Vision
- Hearing
- Mobility
- Learning.

3.2 Identifying the Elderly – Data Protection Issues

Most individuals aged 75+ are known to The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and their details are recorded on systems operated by DWP. TV Licensing has a database of UK households occupied by at least one person aged 75 or over, as they are eligible for a free TV licence.

Local authorities have partial databases of elderly people. Charities are aware only of their own clients and members.

In any event, because of legal restrictions on the use of social security and TV Licence data (e.g. Section 123 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992) we were not allowed to access any third party data. Thus the first major task was to identify eligible participants within Hulton Ward. The most reliable and up-to-date information available to us was an estimate by Bolton MBC that there were 461 '75+ households' within the Ward out of approx 6,000 homes in total based on 2001 census data.

A letter was sent to all households in Hulton Ward, using an address list sourced from a recent postcode database, purchased commercially. The letter invited people aged 75+ to complete and return a simple form 'expressing interest' in participating in the Bolton Digital TV Trial. As an alternative they could call the Trial Helpline, operated by Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC) and give their details over the phone.

This 'self-selecting' approach was successful – eventually. It was a very good outcome that 457 people aged 75+ expressed interest, which almost matched the Council's estimate of the total in the Ward. However, the process took 3-4 months from start to finish. The fact that considerable time was lost in identifying participants needs further thought. It would be a significant impediment to the efficient implementation of a Support Scheme for DSO. It may be that people will come forward more quickly at DSO, knowing that analogue is to be switched off, but the Ferryside experience showed that some will wait until the last minute, putting an additional strain on available resources for managing a Scheme.

If relevant databases could be used to allow people to be contacted direct in the early stages of the process this could reduce the period needed to implement a Support Scheme, and would reduce the risk of elderly and disabled people losing television services.

3.3 Validation of claims by the elderly for Support

Because respondents were 'self-selecting' we needed to check that they were eligible to participate in the Trial. DWP assisted by matching the dates of birth stated on the 'expressions of interest' or registration forms, to their records. This was an effective method of validating claims for the Trial.

The number of 'invalid' claims received was very small, perhaps because of simple, clear communications and a well-briefed call centre.

3.4 Other participants

56 per cent of elderly participants questioned by Ipsos (para. 9.7) claimed to have at least one disability (Hearing 33 per cent, Vision 14 per cent and reduced mobility 26 per cent).

In addition, participation in the Trial was extended to encompass other people identified after taking advice from relevant charities and Bolton MBC. Not all were elderly, and the majority lived outside Hulton Ward but within the Bolton area and included a small number of people with vision-impairment (15), hearing-impairment (10), mobility issues (10), and learning difficulties (6).

4. The Offer to Participants

4.1 Assumptions

Starting assumptions were as follows :

- A Support Scheme should provide digital television on one TV set in the home (which need not be the 'main' set)
- Platform neutrality should be maintained as far as possible, including neutrality as between free and pay platforms
- Participants should be permitted to choose from all of the available digital options; participants selecting satellite, digital cable or an iDTV would be compensated to the equivalent value of the lowest cost option (DTT set top box option) for the majority of households.

4.2 Options

4.2.1 DTT (Freeview) Set top box option

The lowest cost option for most households in the Bolton Trial was the DTT Set top box option, which included :

- Delivery of a Freeview (DTT) set top box
- Installation of the box if required
- Any necessary aerial repair / replacement work.

It was essential that the equipment was of good quality, robust, and able to deliver all basic functions including MHEG (digital text).

In addition, taking account of lessons learned from the Ferryside Trial, and the particular needs of the 75+ target group, it was also deemed essential that selected equipment should offer:

- On-screen graphics and an EPG that were well designed and easy to read
- A well-designed remote control, with large buttons, clearly and legibly marked with words or symbols denoting their functions.

An independent consultant was asked to recommend suitable DTT (Freeview) receivers from the wide range of equipment commercially available in mid 2005. In the event, two DTT (Freeview) set top box models were selected : the Humax F2-Fox T (which had been used successfully in the Ferryside Trial) and the Philips DTR 100.

Participants were allocated their DTT (Freeview) box at the discretion of the Trial. Having chosen the DTT (Freeview) option they were not offered a choice of set top box. The Trial team took this approach because:

- Participants would have been required to work through a second set of decisions (information on the various platform options was already complex and difficult to explain in simple terms)
- It made little difference in terms of functionality for the user
- It improved the administration of the scheme
- All equipment could be ordered in advance from both manufacturers.

This is the same approach as that adopted by the satellite and cable platforms, which do not offer their customers a choice of receivers.

From the perspective of the participants, allocating boxes in this way caused no problems and there were no questions or complaints.

A distinction needs to be made between:

- (i) procurement of equipment by the Trial (through its contracted distributor), where competition is necessary, and
- (ii) allocation and delivery of equipment to individual participants, where other platforms do not offer the consumer a choice of equipment.

For the elderly (and anyone buying equipment for them) there needs to be greater public awareness of the relative merits and suitability of different models for the particular target group. The BBC and DCMS are currently considering a detailed specification for receivers suitable for a Support Scheme, after taking account of recommendations from the Consumer Expert Group and the 'D-Book' technical standards published by the DTG. Such receivers will also be suitable for others seeking quality equipment that is simple to use.

4.2.2 DTT – Freeview and Top-Up TV option

Alongside Freeview, DTT also carries pay-tv services provided by Top-Up TV, but to access this service requires a different digital set-top box with a special slot for the Top-Up TV card.

The Trial offered its standard contribution of £100² towards the cost of a Top-Up TV set-top box but would not pay any ongoing subscription charges, nor provide any further help or support in addition to the contribution. Participants were advised to contact Top-Up TV for details of their services and support.

4.2.3 DTT (Freeview) iDTV option

Participants were advised to contact their local retailer if they wished to buy an iDTV.

If a participant wished to take this option the Trial would provide the contribution of £100 [See Note 2] towards the cost, but would not then be able to provide any further help or support. All arrangements would need to be made between the participant and the retailer of the iDTV.

4.2.4 Digital satellite – freesat from Sky option

Sky offered the 'freesat from Sky' service. For a one-off payment of £150 the participant would receive standard satellite receiving equipment plus standard professional installation and support, provided by Sky. The Sky engineer would demonstrate the use of the remote control and navigation of the electronic programme guide, and the participant would have access to Sky's 24 hour customer service and technical support.

The participant choosing this option would get access to over 200 free-to-view channels and radio channels, plus some interactive services, without paying a monthly subscription.

² Note : The £100 contribution was an estimate – see para 4.5.

All Sky digital boxes support audio-description and subtitling.

With this option, the Trial would contribute £100 [See Note 2] towards the initial cost.

4.2.5 Digital satellite – Sky subscription option

Sky also offered a free Sky box and free standard installation for subscribers to any Sky digital subscription package. This would give access to the widest choice of channels including the free-to-air TV and radio channels, the full range of interactive services, and the further option to access the Sky Sports and Movies channels. Subscription packages during the Trial period ranged from £15.00-£42.50 per month.

In addition, participants would be eligible to take a Sky+ box to record digital satellite programmes without the need for videotapes or timers, at extra cost (free for subscribers to two or more premium channels).

With this option, the Trial would contribute £100 [See Note 2] towards the 12 month subscription, but would not cover ongoing subscription costs.

4.2.6 Digital cable option (ntl)

ntl as the provider of digital cable in Bolton offered a package of digital cable services, including over 150 TV channels as well as telephone, internet and broadband services, all for a monthly charge.

In addition, at extra cost, ntl offers extra TV channels including Sky channels, and in the future, access to a library of programmes and movies.

ntl would provide professional installation and support for its service, which did not need an aerial or dish, but would be accessed through a digital box connected to a cable running beneath the street outside.

The information provided by the Trial pointed out that ntl digital cable services might not be available everywhere in Bolton.

The Trial would contribute £100 [See Note 2] towards the initial cost of the digital cable option, but would not pay the ongoing subscription charges.

4.3 Mastercare

Following a competitive tendering process, Mastercare (part of Dixons Group) was contracted to provide the following services for the Trial :

- Sourcing of DTT (Freeview) receivers
- Delivery of DTT (Freeview) receivers (this work was sub-contracted to a reputable carrier)
- A technical helpline, supported by Mastercare's national technical call centre in Nottingham
- Trained engineers to install DTT (Freeview) receivers where participants were unable or unwilling to make arrangements to install their own
- Repair or replacement of aerial installations (through a sub-contractor).

Mastercare ensured that both the technical helpline support and installation support could be provided in English, Urdu and Gujarati (being the languages commonly used in and around the Trial area).

4.4 Visually-impaired

In addition to the two 'basic offer' receivers we needed a standard DTT receiver with audio-description functionality for the benefit of participants suffering from visual impairment

Currently, the only standard DTT receiver that offers audio-description and spoken channel identifiers is the Netgem iPlayer-AD. On RNIB advice the Netgem receiver was provided free of charge to visually-impaired participants, together with an installation service (where required) and user support.

As an alternative, visually-impaired participants were entitled to switch to digital via one or other of the digital satellite options (see para. 4.5). Digital cable turned out not to be an option because of lack of coverage (see para. 4.6).

4.5 Trial Contribution

The explanatory leaflet sent to all participants identified the digital options (copy attached – Appendix B). Anyone interested in an option other than a DTT set top box was asked to contact the relevant platform operator or retailer and to make their own arrangements, maintaining a direct customer relationship between the participant and the platform operator or retailer, without any Trial involvement.

The lowest cost option for the majority of households in the Bolton Trial was the DTT set top box option. Based on an initial estimate of the notional 'average direct cost per home' of providing this lowest cost option, the 'Trial contribution' was calculated as follows:

Freeview box	£ 55.00
Delivery	£ 10.00
Installation	£ 25.00
Aerial work for 10 per cent of homes	£ 10.00
Total	£100.00

Thus, participants selecting another option were entitled to a £100 contribution.

The majority of participants (91 per cent³) chose the DTT (set top box) option. This was consistent with the Ferryside experience. In both cases, significant time and effort was invested in communicating all the digital options. In Bolton there were difficulties in providing digital cable (see 4.6), but an iDTV or digital satellite would be suitable options for elderly people. However, the DTT (set top box) option was completely free.

4.6 Cable Homes

Households receiving television services through cable systems (analogue or digital) will not be affected by terrestrial DSO unless they have a second set served by an aerial. However, we wished to test a process for a Support Scheme in an area where participants would have access to most of the digital platforms (DSL is available only in limited areas), including digital cable, in order to provide participants with a good choice.

³The separate report prepared by Ipsos at para 5.1 refers to 99% having had Freeview installed. The Ipsos percentage relates only to the participants who were interviewed by Ipsos, not all participants.

Of those who registered for the trial, 17 were already customers of ntl, served by analogue cable. Most of these lived in small blocks of council flats, built in the 1960s and served by analogue cable. Over the years, some residents had also installed a terrestrial aerial (with or without landlord's consent), sometimes for a second set. Without details of the equipment installed in each home we were not able to differentiate between 'eligible' and 'ineligible' analogue cable customers.

Even if a Support Scheme relates only to one TV set, it would have been helpful to know what other sets are installed in the home. This is relevant in particular to cable homes, and is useful information where aerial problems are encountered.

Communications about a Support Scheme need to make clear whether or not homes already served by cable are eligible, or whether they are eligible only if they also have a second TV set that relies on an existing terrestrial aerial. This was not made sufficiently clear in the Trial information, where the emphasis was on providing simple explanations when communicating digital options.

To establish eligibility for a Support Scheme it is better to check first whether cable is connected, and then make further enquiries to establish whether there is any equipment in the home that will be affected by DSO. If not, then that household does not need to come within a Support Scheme.

In Hulton Ward, most of the analogue cable customers indicated that they would take digital cable, but when they contacted ntl it transpired that digital cable would not be available at the participant addresses. This caused customer confusion although the reference to digital cable in the explanatory leaflet had made clear that digital cable might not be available in all parts of Bolton.

Some analogue cable customers with a second TV chose the DTT (Freeview) option (as they were entitled to do). However, their elderly neighbours with analogue cable on just one TV set were unhappy because they were not to be provided with digital TV, and this resulted in some complaints of discrimination. As the numbers were very small, they were brought into the Trial at a later stage on a discretionary basis provided that they had access to a terrestrial TV signal.

4.7 Existing digital homes

Responses to Ipsos' initial questionnaire (October 2005) suggest that in Bolton, 30.5 per cent of '75+' households claimed to have digital television on at least one TV set. This estimate may be too high. It includes 20 households who claimed to have digital cable, which was not generally available in Hulton Ward. Excluding cable, 23.8 per cent already had either Freeview or digital satellite.

Ipsos data also tells us that 71 per cent of 75+ respondents own more than one TV, and that 88 per cent of existing digital boxes were fitted to a main set, and 12 per cent to a second set.

Eligible households who had already taken up digital television would be entitled to Trial support in respect of a second set. There were several examples of requests for second-set support, and this caused no particular issues, although a small amount of aerial work resulted from installations to second sets.

We had expected claims for retrospective help from people who had installed digital equipment at their own cost during the months prior to the start of the Trial, and who might have waited had they known that the Trial was being planned. In the event, there was only one claim for

retrospective help, from a gentleman who took out a Sky subscription package more than a year before the Trial started, and who felt that he was entitled to the Trial contribution. This claim was turned down.

4.8 Take-Up

Table 1 (below) summarises the take-up of digital television by eligible '75+ households' and some other data relevant to the Bolton Digital Television Trial:

Table 1

Bolton MBC estimate of '75+ households' in Hulton Ward	461			
Total '75+ households' identified	99.1%	457		
Participants		86.2%	394	
Freeview 'basic' offer			90.6%	357
iDTV upgrade			1.0%	4
Total Freeview			91.6%	361
ntl cable (but digital cable not available – participants opted for Freeview instead)			4.3%	17
Sky freesat			2.8%	11
Sky subscription			1.3%	5
Total Sky			4.1%	16
			100.0%	394
Households with just one TV set, who already had digital TV on that set		5.5%	25	
'75+ Households' that adopted digital TV in Hulton Ward		91.7%	419	
Refusals		3.1%	14	
Households who elected not to participate in the Trial – 'not interested'	10	2.2%		
Elderly person suffering from serious illness who preferred not to be disturbed NB: (This will need sensitivity at DSO)	4	0.9%		
Households not contactable after their initial enquiry (poss not 'refusals' – they might be away from home, or may already have digital TV – see para 10.5)		5.2%	24	
		100.0%	457	

5. Volunteer Support

5.1 Rationale

Digital TV is different from analogue. It carries more channels and on-screen information, and it offers new concepts such as electronic programme guides.

As a result there are more buttons on the remote control, which can sometimes cause confusion. Some elderly people are slow to adapt to these changes, and need 'user support' as well as help in installing a set top box correctly. Ideally, user support needs to be provided for them at home, using their own equipment.

It is unlikely that any retailer, however conscientious, can be expected to provide this level of user support. A team of engineers working on a Support Scheme will be tasked with installing as many receivers as possible within a very limited time. It will be difficult for them to provide anything more than basic instruction on using the equipment.

Key requirements will be the availability of clear and simple instructions, publicity to raise public awareness of user issues frequently encountered, and the availability of equipment that is easy to use.

For most people the best and most readily accessible source of support will be their own family and friends. However, there will be some people who cannot rely on such support, perhaps because they have no family or are socially isolated.

The Registration Forms completed by participants in the Bolton Trial revealed the following information:

Table 2 – Support available for elderly people at home

Total Respondents aged 75+				457	100.0%
Didn't state whether living alone	67				14.7%
Living alone		225			49.2%
Not living alone			165		36.1%
Friends / family visit 'often'	3	151	91	245	53.6%
No frequent friends / family visits, but carer / home help support – 'often'	0	4	5	9	2.0%
Receiving regular visits	3	155	96	254	55.6%
Not receiving regular visits	64	70	69	203	44.4%
Lower risk (not living alone)			69		15.1%
Higher risk (living alone / no info)		134			29.3%

Of the 44.4 per cent who claimed that they have no regular visitors, 15 per cent do not live alone. Many will receive visits 'sometimes' from family and friends, and from other support services (e.g. Meals on Wheels, medical services).

The key lesson from Table 2 is that approx. 30 per cent of elderly people may not be able to rely on regular visits from someone else to help them if they experience user difficulties with digital equipment. Therefore, when planning a Support Scheme, it would be helpful:

- To make enquiries (as in the Bolton Trial) to identify this 'at risk' group at an early stage, and
- To ensure that they are contacted from time to time in order to ensure that all is well. Such contact can be by telephone in most cases.

The fact that an elderly person (or an elderly couple) does not receive frequent visits from family, friends (etc) is not an indicator that they necessarily need help. There appears to be no clear link between the 29.3 per cent in Table 2 and the percentage of elderly participants who needed an engineer to install a digital box.

Within the community, the charitable and voluntary sectors, as well as the more formal care services provided by or on behalf of local authorities, are all able to help by disseminating information, checking that elderly and disabled people can use their equipment, and calling in outside support where appropriate. Carers or social workers are not expected to fix set top box problems, but it would be helpful if they were aware of the importance of checking that all is well, and to know who to call if an elderly or disabled person is experiencing problems.

The type of support described above was a feature of the Ferryside Trial, where there was a high level of awareness of switchover issues, and many instances of neighbours helping and advising one another within a village environment.

For the Bolton Trial, where there was no 'switchover environment', we needed to ensure that there would be a small local team to help during implementation, and to provide user support after the Trial had been completed.

We took the decision to recruit the Bolton support team from existing charitable and voluntary organisations helping relevant groups in Bolton.

5.2 Recruitment of Volunteers

The objective was to recruit a small team of support workers or volunteers to provide support, reassurance and basic 'troubleshooting' for elderly participants who were unable to obtain help from friends, family etc.

The initial assumption was that the charities sector would be able to play a leading role in a Support Scheme. In the event, it transpired that well-known charities representing relevant target groups could not offer practical help because they had no available local resource to provide the required support. (The RNIB was a notable exception – see 5.3 below).

We held discussions with Bolton MBC Social Services, and with the Bolton branch of Age Concern. Both organisations supported the objectives of the Trial in principle, but neither was in a position to offer volunteer assistance because of a combination of conflicting priorities, limited resources, and possible concerns about legal liabilities.

However, the Bolton branch of Community Service Volunteers (CSV) were able to suggest names of several suitable individuals who were already involved in volunteer and community work in Bolton, and who formed the core team of local volunteers for the Trial.

On the advice of CSV the volunteers were unpaid (other than reimbursement of expenses).

Volunteers were co-ordinated by the Local Co-ordinator / PR Manager, and this process worked well. The time commitment from each volunteer varied. No-one was expected to work regular hours, but to help when necessary.

The availability of older (retired) volunteers was especially valuable, as they were already involved in work with the elderly and very effective in communicating with the 75+ participants. Two volunteers were non-drivers, but operated very effectively on the telephone.

A younger female volunteer was fluent in Urdu and Gujarati, a valuable asset in an area where there is a substantial Asian community.

Public liability insurance cover was arranged for the local volunteers at the cost of the Trial.

DCMS arranged for each volunteer to be screened by the Criminal Records Bureau before starting work on the Trial.

5.3 RNIB Volunteers

We were pleased to receive a proposal from RNIB reminding us that existing teams of volunteers offer IT support to visually-impaired people or assist with the RNIB's 'Talking Books' Scheme. These volunteers are technically literate and have experience of dealing with visually-impaired people in their homes. It seemed that they might play a useful role in helping visually-impaired people adapt to digital television.

This helpful suggestion led to an arrangement whereby visually-impaired people who participated in the Trial would be supported principally by the RNIB Volunteers, with Mastercare providing technical support and arranging any necessary aerial work.

5.4 Training

Two training days were arranged at the Sharp complex in Manchester, with the support of Intellect and RNIB. George Fullam (Intellect) and David Harby (Consultant, DCMS) led the technical sessions, with Clive Miller (Consultant, RNIB) advising on good practice when dealing with disabled people.

Sessions were organised as follows :

- Mastercare Engineers and five local volunteers attended joint and separate sessions which covered :
 - the reasons for undertaking the Trial
 - an explanation of how DTT works
 - practical demonstration of how to install the DTT (Freeview) set top boxes provided by the Trial
 - aerial issues, and
 - user issues commonly encountered by elderly people.

- the RNIB Volunteers attended a similar session, with particular reference to the needs of the visually-impaired, and installation of the Netgem set box (which offers audio-description functionality). This session was supported by RNIB.

Both sessions were valuable. Feedback from local volunteers confirmed that they felt much more confident after the training day, and had gained a clearer understanding of the purposes of the Trial and how they could help.

The 'basic training' needed for Trial volunteers to be able to help elderly people use digital set top boxes was neither lengthy nor complicated. Key objectives were :

- to gain a general understanding of how digital TV works
- to know what simple problems are most commonly encountered by users, and how to deal with them
- to highlight the importance of taking time to sit with elderly people, and help them to use their digital equipment
- and to know who to call if a problem cannot be resolved easily and quickly.

5.5 Guidance for helping people with disabilities

The RNIB consultant offered the following guidance to engineers and volunteers dealing with people who suffer from disabilities :

- People arrange their home environment to suit their circumstances. If you need to make changes, ask permission first. This is most important for visually impaired people who may have set lighting levels carefully. Care is needed before opening or closing curtains, or turning lights on or off.
- Don't move things around unless people are aware of any changes you are making or have made. Keep people informed of exactly what you are doing and why. Put things back exactly where they were before.
- Be careful of where you put things down. For example, don't leave anything in the middle of the floor where someone might fall over it.
- If you arrange to ring someone at a specific time, make sure that you keep to that time. They may have organised a sighted or able-bodied person to assist them. If you don't keep the appointment, their time will be wasted.
- Use a password scheme or security number to authenticate yourself. Showing an identity card to a blind person is not helpful.
- Appointments can vary in length considerably, depending on the technical challenges presented, and the ability of the customer to understand the instructions given to them. It is difficult to plan several appointments with exact times. Time-slot windows are a better way to manage this.
- Some disabled people rely entirely on the goodwill of their family, friends, neighbours and, in fact, anyone who comes to the door. You need a clear policy on how much help you are able to offer in other areas of their lives.

- Whatever the quality of a product, the nature of the installation, training and demonstration makes an enormous difference to the perception of the product, and people's willingness to adapt to using it.
- Instructions should be available in a range of formats, including: audio cassette, CD, and large print. This could reduce the need for phone calls to clear up issues.
- For people who are hard of hearing, be creative in your methods of communication. Don't just shout. Many deaf people can lip read if you face them and speak slowly and clearly. Show them what you are doing, and what results are achieved.
- Call centres need to be aware that a caller may not be able to see the TV screen or the remote control, or to reach around the back of the set. Establish with callers exactly what actions they are able to perform. They may prefer to call back later when they have been able to arrange for someone else to help.

6. Communications

One of the key objectives of the Bolton Digital Television Trial was to “test communications with the public (i.e. people 75 years and older), with regards to the most appropriate delivery and content, including simple installation instructions.”

The Trial Team worked closely with DCMS Communications Division to develop an over-arching communications strategy, building on its experience of managing the DCMS Digital Switchover Information Campaign. A Communications Manager based in Bolton was employed to oversee the implementation of the communications plan and respond to the day-to-day communication issues.

6.1 Overview

- **Local Helpline** – operated by Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council’s callcentre. This was essential to the success of the Trial as participants felt comfortable having a local person to speak to. The Helpline also provided an easy, inexpensive, one-stop local number that people could call with any query they might have.
- **Volunteers** – five individuals were recruited locally to help on a casual part-time basis. The majority were retired people, and all were already involved in voluntary work locally.
- **Installation Helpsheet** – facilitated successful installation of equipment by family and friends for the majority of participants.
- **Pre-Trial Research** – specific research helped to inform the appropriate tone and type of communication for the elderly. This approach proved to be fundamental to communicating successfully with participants.
- **Working with key stakeholders** – especially with the Local Authority, which helped to facilitate the identification of eligible participants and advised how best to communicate with the elderly.
- **Local Communications Manager** – was able to respond quickly to issues and facilitate local interest and awareness at a grass roots level.

6.2 Initial awareness of the benefits of digital TV amongst 75+ people

Research by Ipsos prior to the Trial found an initial lack of motivation to switch to digital amongst 75+ respondents. This highlights the need for effective communication to this group as to the benefits of digital TV, and to allay any concerns over what the switchover process will involve.

The method of communication preferred by this group is a personalised letter.

6.3 Target Audience

The Trial set out to test a process of providing support for the elderly, defined as people 75 years and older (75+) living in Hulton Ward, Bolton. Therefore the majority of the communication activities were aimed at this target group.

Subsequently the Trial was extended to include a small number of other 'vulnerable' participants, namely people who have serious vision, hearing, mobility or learning issues. Not all were elderly and the majority lived outside Hulton Ward but within Bolton Metropolitan Borough.

The main 'elderly' target group provided further insights into disabilities. Many older people experience visual, hearing and mobility issues, all of which were considered as part of the general communication activities directed at the elderly.

Ipsos' initial research identified that 56% of elderly participants claimed to have a disability, namely hearing 33 %, vision 14% and reduced mobility 26%. (Some elderly people mentioned more than one disability).

6.4 Communications Objectives

There were 5 communications objectives for the Trial:

1. To allay fears about the Trial – such as security concerns – that the elderly target group may have.
2. To secure participation in the Trial – whilst ensuring that Trial communications did not raise expectations among those who were not able to participate.
3. To educate the target group and the local community about digital switchover and to set the context for the Trial. This helped to ensure that there was some understanding of the initial letter sent to all Hulton residents.
4. To encourage and manage local and national media interest about the trial, so as to promote the above objectives while protecting the privacy of participants.
5. To ensure that all communications were effective, clear and appropriate for the target group throughout the Trial period.

6.5 Communications Strategy

There were four aspects to the communications strategy for the Trial :

1. **Re-assurance** – Pre-trial research identified some concerns of 75+ people in relation to switching to digital TV. This research also tested some of the initial communications materials. These findings informed all of the communication activities and helped to determine the most appropriate materials and tone of language to be used.
2. **Encourage participation** – The Trial team worked with community organisations in Bolton to identify the most appropriate ways to target 75+ people in a sensitive manner and encourage them to participate in the Trial.
3. **Local support** – Providing ongoing support and reassurance to the participants, through the Helpline, the local Communications Manager and the local volunteers.
4. **Education** – Raising awareness of switchover and digital TV generally amongst the 75+ group and the general public in Hulton Ward.

6.6 Key Messages

- Digital television brings you many benefits – such as a greater choice of channels, and access to more services through the TV set.

- We will help you go digital – we will provide you with assistance and clear information at every step of the way.
- You may well have nothing to pay to convert to digital TV, depending on what digital choice you make.
- Elderly people in the Hulton Ward, Bolton have been selected to test the process to help 75+ people switch to digital television.
- Digital television is coming to the UK and all households will need to be prepared for digital switchover. This will happen between 2008-2012. Bolton will be switching in 2009 and every home will need to be ready. By participating in the Trial, residents will be able to start enjoying the benefits of digital TV well before switchover.

6.7 Pre-Trial research

Pre-Trial research enabled us to learn more about elderly people's awareness of digital switchover and their interest in digital television, and to examine how appropriate communication could help to overcome barriers and stimulate interest and participation in the Trial by 75+ people.

The research comprised of a mix of mini focus groups and individual interviews and was undertaken during July 2005 in Hounslow – Feltham and Staines. It was considered inappropriate to use the Trial area itself as this could affect the results of the later Trial. Fourteen participants were interviewed in total.

The following key issues were identified, and the work helped inform the communications approach for the Trial:

- This group had a very limited understanding of digital TV.
- There was a need to allay their fears and try to work around their natural resistance to change.
- They had concerns about the cost of converting and who would be paying.
- They identified the need for specific help, usually from someone they already knew and could rely on, such as their own family, close friends or support groups (e.g. local church). However they still welcomed the idea of 'official' help as a 'back-up'.
- Care is needed so as not to overload these people with detailed and overly technical information, especially about the various digital options.
- Information needs to be clear, concise and in a large font, preferably in a written linear format rather than tables or graphs.
- Association with known and trusted organisations such as the BBC, the Local Authority and Age Concern undoubtedly offered reassurance that information was genuine. Further to this, the logos of Bolton MBC, Age Concern and the BBC were used on Trial materials.

6.8 Communications Activity

6.8.1 Initial communication activities

Before the Trial team started to communicate with the Triallists, a number of activities took place to raise the awareness of the Trial and to encourage take-up, as well as raise awareness of switchover and digital television in general.

(a) Local Communications Manager

Key to this, and subsequent success on a local level, was the recruitment of a local Communications Manager, who managed local communication issues, responded to breaking issues and provided on-going local support.

(b) Contact with local stakeholders

Contact was made with various stakeholder groups in Bolton to ensure that local groups that were trusted by the elderly were aware of the Trial and could endorse it if asked. We were also keen to encourage key stakeholders to actively promote the Trial to their older clients.

In particular, the Trial team worked closely with Bolton MBC and RNIB to help ensure that communications materials were appropriate, and expressed in a tone that would be trusted by the target groups within the community.

The local Communications Manager attended a Bolton Age Concern lunch club event and addressed 150 older residents. Members of the Trial team also attended the Hulton Ward Area Forum, to address residents, encourage take-up and inform local Councillors about the Trial.

The Council also agreed to run the Trial Helpline, being the most appropriate and trusted local organisation to provide this service.

Contact was also made with Asian Elders; Bolton At Home (Council Housing services); CSV (Community Service Volunteers) and the Sutton Housing Trust (a large housing association).

(c) Promotional materials

Posters were produced advertising the Trial. These were translated into English, Urdu and Gujarati and displayed in community venues and local businesses frequented by older people. Venues included community groups, local shops, schools, libraries, churches, mosques, colleges and clubs.

Care was taken not to promote the Trial too heavily outside Hulton Ward, however an advertorial was placed in the local Council's monthly newsletter Bolton Scene, that is distributed to every household in Bolton. This was a cost effective method of delivering the message at a very local level. Bolton Scene is widely read by older age groups and is kept to hand as it contains useful phone numbers, councillors' surgery information etc.

Local media were also contacted including the Bolton Evening News and the 'Asian Leader', as well as local magazine for the Asian community, APNA, as it was considered important for the local press to be aware of the Trial and to understand what it was setting out to achieve, as well as to encourage eligible residents to participate. The Bolton Evening News continued to monitor the Trial and publish articles through the duration of the Trial.

6.8.2 Trial Helpline

The Helpline was a key element in the success of the Trial. It allowed the participants to contact the Trial team direct, and allowed the Trial team to respond quickly to emerging issues.

Bolton MBC agreed to allow the Trial to use its call centre 'Access Bolton' as the Trial Helpline, and a dedicated local number was allocated to the Trial.

It was very helpful that elderly participants' calls were answered by a person (not by a machine) with a local accent, local knowledge and experience of dealing with elderly people. Urdu and Gujarati speakers were also readily available. Several residents were also given the number of the local Communications Manager, who was in daily contact with the Helpline team.

- During the main period of the Trial (mid-September 2005 to early February 2006) the Trial Helpline handled a total of 595 calls averaging 5mins 24secs each (call time: 2mins 32secs and the administration and follow-up work: 2mins 52secs).
- Based on the total universe of 75+ households in Hulton this amounted to a call-rate of 0.3 calls per home per month during the Trial period.

As the Access Bolton operators were used to dealing with a wide range of 'technical' issues arising from the Council's own business (e.g. housing repairs), they were able to cope easily with the basic technical knowledge required to handle calls about digital television and were able to help many older people over the phone. This saved time and technical resource.

More detailed technical questions about Freeview boxes were forwarded to Mastercare's Technical Support Line, who would then contact the resident directly. Other unresolved enquiries were forwarded to the local Communications Manager for a response and resolution. Some enquiries came from relatives on behalf of the older residents.

It is important to note that the Trial Helpline' (Bolton MBC) and the Technical Support Helpline (Mastercare) undertook two very different roles.

The Trial Helpline acted as the general enquiries line, dealing with initial enquiries about the Trial, eligibility, when boxes would be delivered and a 'first port of call' for user issues.

Mastercare's call centre is staffed by specialist technical support advisors, with a technical database containing detailed information on most types of electrical products sold in the UK. Their role was to offer technical help in relation to Freeview boxes, in order to save the cost of an engineer visit.

This was an efficient and cost-effective approach, as it avoided using a specialist technical support line to deal with general queries.

In addition, Sky operates its own call centre, which supported those Trial participants who chose the Sky subscription or 'freesat from Sky' options.

6.8.3 Identifying participants

Because of legal restrictions the Trial team did not have access to publicly-owned databases to identify eligible participants. Therefore a letter was sent to each household in Hulton Ward (c.6,000 households) asking residents who were 75 years or older to identify themselves and indicate whether they would like to participate in the Trial by completing and returning an 'Expression of Interest' form.

The Trial Helpline team was able to answer queries from the public, as well as help eligible people to complete Expression of Interest forms over the phone.

This form required details of the respondent's date of birth, which was subsequently verified by the Department of Work and Pensions in order to confirm eligibility.

6.8.4 Registering participants

The next step was to send a registration form to eligible residents who had expressed interest, together with a leaflet explaining digital switchover and the available digital television options for the Trial, identifying the free option and the various contribution options.

In line with the pre-trial research, the leaflet presented this information in a large font, and as simply as possible, having regard to the requirement for platform neutrality.

Feedback on the leaflet indicated the following:

- Leaflets should be printed in a larger size such as an A4 size, as this would be easier to read and harder to lose;
- Different digital options should be presented on separate pages;
- Pictures should be used wherever possible to demonstrate the different digital options (i.e. DTT, satellite, cable);
- Information should be conveyed as simply as possible, especially where there are free and pay options within the same platform;
- A clearer comparison of the costs and benefits of the various options is needed, ideally within a section that brings all these details together as a direct comparison, rather than referenced separately in order to be platform neutral.

As these were key documents for the Trial, a copy of the Leaflet is attached as **Appendix B**, and of the Registration Form as **Appendix C**.

6.8.5 Volunteers

A volunteer team was set up to assist those participants who needed help and who could not rely on family or friends.

Their first task was a telephone 'follow up' to potential participants who had not registered after initially expressing interest. The volunteer team found that very few householders did not want to take part in the Trial, but several were confused or put off by the official form and leaflet, and the complexity of the various digital options.

Volunteers who made these calls to residents were able to take time to explain and listen in a way that encouraged several elderly people to take up the opportunity of digital television where otherwise they might well have said no. It was helpful that most of the volunteers were themselves retired and lived locally. 'One-to-one' conversations helped to reassure residents who were undecided.

The volunteer team, local Communications Manager and Helpline operators were able to complete registration forms for many elderly people over the phone. This added significantly to the overall number of participants. In some instances the Communications Manager spoke to relatives of older residents to explain the purpose and effect of the Trial.

Most of the registration work was handled successfully on the phone. It was expected that volunteers would need to make many home visits to register elderly participants, but this was not necessary. A small number of home visits were made but the vast majority of participants (91.9%) provided a contact telephone number and were happy to be called by the Trial team.

6.8.6 Delivering equipment – Security Numbers

A system of security numbers was devised in case elderly participants might be concerned about allowing unknown couriers or installers into their homes.

A unique 4-digit security number was allocated to each participant so that they would be able to check that any visitors claiming to represent the Trial were genuine, as well as allowing the Call Centre to check that anyone calling on the participant's behalf was doing so with their authority.

This simple system worked, and there were no reported instances of difficulties with unauthorised callers. This replicated the same security system used successfully in the Ferryside Trial.

6.8.7 Installing equipment – Installation Helpsheet

The Installation Helpsheet was probably the Trial's single most important communication tool, because it impacted directly on the ability of participants (or their family or friends) to self-install Freeview set top boxes. A copy of the Installation Helpsheet is attached as **Appendix D**.

The vast majority of participants selected the Freeview option. A key question in the Trial was whether participants could 'self-install' Freeview boxes, either by themselves or with the help of family, friends or neighbours.

Participants who chose Freeview were provided with the manufacturer's installation instructions, which came with each set-top box, as well as the four page 'generic' Installation Helpsheet prepared by the Trial team, which provided step by step installation instructions and explained common issues not normally covered in manufacturers' instructions, such as :

- 'I don't know what a SCART plug looks like'
- 'I need to connect the digital box to the video as well as the TV'
- 'It's an old TV and there isn't a SCART socket'
- 'There's a DVD as well as a video and there aren't enough leads'.

Illustrations were also provided, as well as reassuring messages, such as "you cannot break the digital box."

Ipsos' post-Trial research indicated that 92 per cent of respondents believed that the Installation Helpsheet had been either helpful (61 per cent) or somewhat helpful (31 per cent) and 77 per cent found it easy to follow. This shows that the Helpsheet made a significant contribution to promoting 'self-installation' of Freeview boxes.

If a similar Helpsheet were produced in the future, we would suggest that consideration should be given to the following aspects:

- Installation information could be complemented with a 'troubleshooting' or 'usability' section highlighting common initial issues that people have when using their new Freeview box. The Trial found that some participants reported initial 'technical problems' that were actually usability issues, easily resolved by pressing a button on the remote control.
- Useful hints and tips could suggest helpful ways of getting used to the new equipment, such as keeping a pad and pen handy so as to note the number of a new channel that you like so that it will be easier to remember next time.

As the Trial demonstrated, clear and concise installation instructions are a very important element in enabling people to self-install their Freeview box and thus make an easy switch to digital TV.

It would be helpful if this feedback were noted by manufacturers and others involved in communicating to the public about installing Freeview set-top boxes. There is scope to develop installation guides and helpsheets to make the process as user friendly as possible.

6.9 Key issues of concern to people aged 75+

The following key issues were raised by Trial participants, and should be considered in future communications:

- A new TV set is not needed – this was the biggest concern for many people
- The choice of available digital platforms needs to be presented clearly with the costs and benefits listed in easy comparison – this is an area of potential confusion. Some residents would have liked more information on the channels available on each platform, whilst others needed additional reassurance about costs
- Common 'simple' installation problems and how to deal with them
- Common 'user' problems, such as not pointing the remote at the set top box; how to re-set the box; leaving the box on stand by; and checking that the leads are firmly plugged in
- Whether they might need a new aerial, and how to find a reliable aerial installer.

6.10 Communicating with other vulnerable groups

To identify additional participants with specific disabilities the Trial team approached relevant charities and Bolton MBC, who then nominated some potential candidates. Some charities are well placed to advise generally on appropriate communication with disabled people, and to disseminate information amongst their client group, but they may not be in a position to offer practical help at a local level.

It was useful that the first information to disabled participants came from a trusted source e.g. RNIB. This prepared people for an approach on behalf of the Trial and provided an independent third party endorsement.

Participants with **hearing or mobility issues** received the same information in the same printed format as the main 'elderly' group. This caused no issues, but we should note that 'mobility' issues can imply related disabilities (e.g. cerebral palsy) which in some cases can give rise to difficulties in communication.

For **visually-impaired** participants, information contained in the digital TV leaflet was available also on audio disk (sourced through RNIB), and in large print and Braille (sourced through Bolton MBC).

Communicating with **people with learning difficulties** presented a particular challenge. The initial approach for people with learning difficulties was made by the Council's support unit who informed residents and/or their care workers.

Most of these participants did not have a phone, and it was not appropriate to provide complex information to them in written form. Therefore a short simple letter was sent to them, asking them (or a family member or carer) to contact the Trial Team, who could then explain the Trial and how they could participate.

Where people with learning difficulties lived in supported houses, phone calls were made to the participant and to the support worker to explain the trial and installation arrangements. The support worker then explained further to the participant.

This is an area where it would be particularly helpful if the Council or community groups working with the residents could make the first introduction to the concept of digital switchover and the programme of support. It would also be helpful if communication materials appropriate for this group could be developed in partnership with relevant bodies or charities.

7. Delivering and Installing the Equipment

7.1 Options other than DTT set top boxes

Where a participant had chosen a digital satellite option, it was the customer's responsibility to arrange delivery and installation direct with Sky. (The same principle would have applied to ntl and digital cable, if available).

Arrangements for delivery and installation of an iDTV were left to the customer to agree with the supplier or retailer.

7.2 Delivery of DTT (Freeview) Set top boxes

Requests for delivery of Freeview boxes within the 'basic' offer were passed by the Trial Team to Mastercare, which arranged for a reputable UK carrier to deliver direct to each home. In the interests of efficiency, deliveries were made in four waves over a period of three months.

We did not expect issues or lessons to arise from the delivery process. In the event, the following matters should be noted :

- A courier delivering to elderly customers needs to be instructed to allow additional time for the customer to answer the door
- Where there is no reply the courier will normally leave a card so that the customer can phone to arrange a new delivery appointment. However, some elderly people are not good at dealing with multiple-choice automated phone response systems, and some requests for new appointments may be left for a long period, or never made
- Normally the courier would attempt a second delivery, and if this also failed the depot would try to contact the customer by phone. However, to avoid nuisance sales calls many pensioners have been advised to disable their phones to all calls where the incoming number is not shown, and as a result they could not be contacted from the depot switchboard
- Courier systems for tracking the delivery of items to individual addresses may not be set up to track the delivery of many items to many different addresses within a single combined order. Therefore reporting systems can take time to pick up failed deliveries (up to three weeks, in some cases)
- As a result, progress reporting becomes a laborious, time-consuming and imprecise process.

In a Support Scheme linked to DSO, large numbers of items will need to be sent to many people within a very short period. It will be important to specify suitable tracking and reporting systems, even if this results in higher cost.

Appendix E lists a number of process issues encountered in relation to delivery and installation of digital equipment.

7.3 Shared Database

In order to ensure an effective integrated system of delivery and installation support, provision needs to be made for IT development, and the creation of a shared database to be accessed by

the key organisations involved in the 'end to end' process of delivering a Support Scheme. With a small number of participants in the Bolton Trial, the Trial Team was able to work around the absence of such a facility. In a regional switchover situation, that would not be practicable.

Because of legal constraints, claimants applying to the Scheme should be asked to confirm their individual consent for their personal details held on a shared database to be accessed by all parties involved in providing support, but only for the purpose of providing support, and for a very limited period, as a condition of providing assistance.

7.4 Installation – '75+' Participants

The Ferryside Trial and the Bolton Trial both demonstrated that most elderly people do not have the confidence to install a digital set top box themselves, and will need help with installation.

However, the majority do not need an engineer to install a digital set top box. The installation process is easy. A few elderly people are quite capable of installing on their own, but if there is no external help readily available, the majority will ask a family member or friend to help.

In the Ferryside Trial, where the box and installation help was free, many elderly people asked their friends and family to help them as a first step, because this is what the Trial Team advised them to do.

The Bolton Trial basic offer also included a set top box and help with installation (if needed), free of charge. So it was possible that most participants would ask for help, and not make much effort to help themselves.

Elderly participants in Bolton were made aware that installation help would be provided free if needed. However, the letters sent to them stressed that they should ask a family member or friend to help them install the box after it was delivered, pointing out that engineer appointments needed to be booked, and would take several days.

In October 2005, when Ipsos questioned some of those who had expressed an interest in participating in the Trial, 86 per cent said they would need help. 69 per cent stated that they would 'definitely' need installation help and 17 per cent thought they would 'possibly' need help. Just 6 per cent indicated that they could manage without help, and 8 per cent 'didn't know'.

When asked who they would approach for help, participants came up with a variety of ideas: the Trial engineers and Helpline 69 per cent; family 35 per cent; friends 13 per cent; retailer 7 per cent; charities 5 per cent.

A copy of the self-help installation helpsheet (Appendix D) was sent to every participant who had selected a Freeview box, to encourage and assist their family and friends to tackle the job. This proved to be a useful and effective publication.

Mastercare engineers were contracted at a daily rate, not on a 'per call' basis, as this was more cost-effective. However, it meant that installation work needed to be planned, with individual jobs held back until there were sufficient to fill the schedule. This did not leave elderly people in difficulties, as analogue television was still available to them throughout.

The outcome was that 68.7 per cent of all those who had selected Freeview set top boxes were able to 'self-install' (mostly with help from family and friends).

Mastercare installed 31.3 per cent, mostly where there was no-one else to help, or because a 'self-install' attempt had not worked.

Ipsos' data do not include all participants, but their findings confirm this positive result. 12 per cent of respondents to Ipsos didn't need help, 58 per cent sought help from family members, and 7 per cent from friends.

Of the respondents who called in the engineers, 82 per cent needed just one call, 11 per cent two calls, and just 3 per cent needed three or more calls.

Ipsos found that 89 per cent of the elderly participants who had been helped by the engineers were happy with the help given to them. Whereas the closer involvement of family and friends resulted in a 99 per cent positive response.

It is tempting to compare the 31.3 per cent of Freeview participants needing engineer installation and the 29.3 per cent who apparently live alone and have no regular visitors (see Table 2, para.5.1). However, there is no link between the two figures. The engineers helped people where family members had failed to install correctly, as well as people who lived alone.

7.5 Installation – other participants

In relation to other participants we should not assume that everyone needs an engineer to install the equipment. In many cases a family member, partner, friend or carer can install, and also offer help in using the equipment.

Experience of dealing with the relevant group is very useful when helping people who are totally deaf, or blind, or have learning difficulties.

People with hearing difficulties were able to install digital equipment without undue difficulty. Where help was needed, this tended to be because the participant was elderly, not because of hearing issues.

As noted above (para. 5.3) we worked with the RNIB to assist visually impaired participants. 13 per cent (2 of 15) of visually-impaired participants were helped by family members, as were 25 per cent (2 of 8) of participants with mobility issues.

Engineer installation was needed for all of the people with learning difficulties, and the equipment was demonstrated to the carer as well as to the participant.

7.6 Installation – telephone support

Many technical problems encountered by people trying to install a Freeview box can be resolved very easily and don't usually justify an engineer visit. Therefore the Trial offered technical support over the phone from Mastercare's national call centre based in Nottingham.

Experience in Bolton suggests that most calls to the technical support unit did result in a subsequent engineer visit, either because the problem was more complex, or because the elderly participant insisted on a home visit.

Over a 13 week period up to the end of February (during which 353 Freeview box deliveries were made) Mastercare's Call Centre took 269 calls at an average duration of 11 min 45 secs.

The outcome of these calls was as follows :

- 20 issues were resolved over the telephone
- 147 appointments were made for an engineer to call (engineers installed 111 boxes, but some needed more than 1 visit)
- In 26 cases, aerial work was requested (but not always needed)
- In 76 cases, the calls were non-technical, or failed calls, or the customer requested a later call-back.

7.7 Installation – logistics

From the viewpoint of managing a Support Scheme, employing a large team of engineers to install equipment as fast as possible could be an efficient way of controlling the installation process. If the task were purely technical, that would be a good approach, but technical installation is only part of the task. The reality is that digital equipment needs to be operated by people, many of whom are elderly, and many of whom will take time to adapt to using new equipment.

The number of installations per day achieved by engineers will vary, depending on the nature of the area, and the amount of time the installer is expected to spend in instructing the customer how to use the equipment. Discussions with Mastercare suggest that an installation rate of six homes per day in an urban area should allow sufficient time to allow a longer familiarisation session with an elderly person. In a very rural area this should be reduced to five per day, because of the additional travel time needed.

Feedback from the Bolton Trial shows that engineer installations were carried out properly, and demonstrations of the equipment explained conscientiously, in a clear and non-technical way.

The Ferryside Trial shows that far higher installation rates are easily achieved where the installer is not expected to explain how the equipment works. However, this is not practicable unless there is a secondary level of support available locally. In Ferryside the Trial Team provided this. At DSO, local volunteers could provide secondary support, but this will not be available in every neighbourhood. The key factor for most elderly people will be support from their own family and friends.

Well in advance of DSO, it would be helpful if work were undertaken to establish what technical resources already exist in each switchover region, and how these can be enhanced in the period leading up to DSO. There will be different challenges in urban areas and rural areas:

- In urban areas the number of installations will be very large, but there should be more local technical resource, and as most people can already receive DTT from a main transmitter, this allows more time for installations
- In rural areas the numbers will be smaller but more diverse geographically, and there may be limited local resource
- For technical transmission reasons no DTT signal will be available from the relay transmitters until a few weeks before DSO, thus reducing the available time for installations to be carried out, and for elderly consumers to learn to use it. This issue will affect some urban areas as well the mountainous rural areas with which relay transmitters are usually associated.

During the period leading up to DSO, three key elements need to be in place :

- Clear information about installation and use of digital boxes should be widely available to the general public, so that 'family and friends' and 'volunteers' will be better able to help those who need help
- A substantial team of trained installers and aerial erectors will be needed to undertake service calls, not only for a Support Scheme, but also for other members of the public who need help
- Local voluntary and charitable groups need to be mobilised in order to ensure that the socially isolated are not left out of the process (whether or not they are eligible for a Support Scheme).

7.8 Rentals

In the early stages of the Trial we were contacted by a major TV Rental operator asking whether any of its customers would be affected by the Trial, and if so whether a rental company (which owns the TV equipment in rental homes) should be involved with the implementation.

This highlighted the need to ask potential participants whether or not their TV set was rented. Responses to the question on the registration form revealed that just 21 (0.4 per cent) of the 457 '75+ households' rented their TV sets, from a total of five different suppliers. Consequently, rental was perceived as a low priority issue. There were no problems in installing digital set top boxes to convert rented TV sets, any more than if the householder had plugged in their own VCR or DVD.

7.9 Re-scanning

This was not an issue in Bolton, as analogue signals were not being switched off.

For a Support Scheme it would be an advantage if equipment used in the Scheme included auto-rescan functionality. Otherwise, second visits could be needed to many homes to re-scan boxes just at the point of switchover. This could create a significant resource issue and add significantly to cost.

8. Aerial Issues

8.1 How many homes need aerial work?

Some households have defective aerials and/or connecting cables. Analogue pictures may be watchable, but digital will not work properly or at all.

In addition, the signals from some indoor or loop aerials may be inadequate to provide viewable DTT pictures, so that a standard rooftop aerial needs to be installed. This can be an issue within multi-occupied dwellings, where consent may be needed for such an installation.

A Support Scheme must be ready to address and resolve aerial issues. This will affect cost, but there is also the challenge of finding sufficient qualified aerial engineers, and ensuring that the work is carried out within very tight timescales.

Ofcom has estimated that approx. 10 per cent of homes may need aerial work, but this assumes higher powers after DSO.⁴

In the Ferryside Trial, 22 per cent of homes needed aerial remedial work⁵, although many needed renewal of defective cables, not a new aerial. Also, many aerials were wrongly polarised, with households viewing marginal analogue signals from a main transmitter (which carried the Five service) as well as strong analogue signals from the local relay (which didn't carry Five).

In addition, 23 per cent of householders who could have been viewing analogue services from the local relay were getting good analogue signals from a main transmitter. They installed a new aerial in order to qualify for the Trial and receive DTT services early. They would not have needed a new aerial at Switchover, assuming that digital coverage will replicate analogue.

The Bolton Trial was located in an area where most premises receive a strong analogue signal from a main transmitter (Winter Hill). Around 85 per cent of UK homes are in this position, whereas approx. 15 per cent rely on relay sites for their analogue signals⁶. Therefore we were interested to see how many of the Bolton Trial participant homes would need remedial work to aerials.

Only 6.8 per cent of homes participating in the Bolton Trial required new aerials in order to receive good DTT signals at current transmitted power levels.

It is intended that digital coverage after DSO will replicate analogue coverage. Extrapolating the aerial work requirements from Bolton (85 per cent of 6.8 per cent = 5.8 per cent) and Ferryside (15 per cent of 22 per cent = 3.3 per cent) this suggests that at higher DTT power levels approx. 9.1 per cent of UK homes may need aerial work. However, this excludes any 'out of band' aerial replacement requirements.

⁴ Scientific Generics / Ofcom 'Cost and power implications of Digital Switchover' 8.11.05 p.10, para 4.2.3

⁵ Ferryside Trial Report, page 33, para 6.1

⁶ Source : NGW/Arquiva estimate

8.2 Resources

The need for aerial work will affect a percentage of all households, not just those eligible for a Support Scheme. There is a need to establish what resources exist in each region to carry out aerial work, bearing in mind the time constraints.

Mastercare advise that an individual aerial erector team will be able to complete four installations per day, including a new aerial and replacement of cabling.

8.3 Power increases and user issues

Existing aerial performance should improve when transmitted powers are increased after DSO. This is helpful, but it raises a logistical issue in relation to a Support Scheme, because time is needed for elderly people to adapt to using the new equipment.

For some elderly people the period of learning and adapting to the new equipment will not start until analogue is switched off and DTT runs at higher power, because they may not receive sufficiently good DTT signals beforehand. This underlines the need to keep usability support systems in place for a reasonable period after the date of Switchover.

In areas of marginal coverage with many small relays, digital satellite offers an excellent alternative solution, as it can be installed well in advance of DSO, thus avoiding the issue noted above.

9. User issues and user support

9.1 Overview

9.1.1 In mid February Ipsos interviewed 300 of the elderly participants, and found the following positive results:

- 82 per cent claimed they had had 'no problems' with their set top box since it was installed
- 98 per cent felt that their experience with digital TV was either better (60 per cent) or not different (38 per cent) from analogue
- 93 per cent believed that the process of converting to digital had been easy.

9.1.2 However, prior to that in mid January, after digital equipment had been installed in most homes for at least four weeks, the Trial Helpline had carried out an initial telephone survey of participants to check on progress and identify any specific issues. They found a different picture: 21 per cent were happy with their equipment
5 per cent admitted that the box worked, but they didn't know how to use it.
74 per cent claimed there were 'problems with the set top box'

On further investigation of the 'problems' claimed by 74 per cent:

92 per cent confirmed that the pictures were fine

96 per cent confirmed that the audio was fine

97 per cent were able to access all channels

98 per cent confirmed that the remote control worked

85 per cent were able to confirm that the EPG worked. 14 per cent couldn't use it.

Overall, of the 74 per cent who claimed there were 'problems with the set top box' 97 per cent didn't mention any specific 'problem' when questioned further.

Also, based on participants' responses in mid January, the likelihood of 'problems with the set top box' was greater if a trained engineer had installed it (82 per cent) than if a member of the family had done so (70 per cent), which presents an unlikely scenario.

This evidence pointed clearly towards 'user issues' – elderly people need time to become familiar with new equipment.

9.1.3 The key difference between the results obtained in mid January and mid February was that participants had been given four more weeks in which to become familiar with the equipment.

This is a key lesson from the Bolton Trial, namely that many of the elderly participants took at least six weeks before they were comfortable with their new digital equipment.

Therefore it would be prudent to plan for local support from at least eight weeks prior to switchover, and this should continue for at least six weeks thereafter, in order to accommodate late-comers.

9.1.4 People receiving digital terrestrial signals from a main transmitter have plenty of time to become familiar with digital equipment. They can convert now if they wish. This is not true of households who take their main analogue signals from a relay transmitter.

In areas served by relays it would be helpful if some digital signals could be made available for at least six weeks before the analogue signals are switched off at the relevant main feeder site, because this allows more time for installation and aerial work, and allows people to start using the equipment earlier. If this is not practicable (e.g. for technical reasons) then perhaps digital satellite is a more appropriate option for some people living in the areas affected, and this should be taken into account in estimating the possible costs of a Support Scheme.

9.2 Ongoing user support

A process for implementing support has been devised and tested, but in Bolton, as in Ferryside, some elderly participants will need ongoing support for a period in order to resolve user issues:

- in Bolton, as in Ferryside, the main source of ongoing support will continue to be family and friends
- some support can be provided by the small team of local volunteers.
- the Trial Helpline will continue for a further three months
- Mastercare will continue to provide technical support as the suppliers of the digital equipment.

On this basis, help will be available to elderly participants in Bolton for a period after the formal Trial period has ended.

A similar approach is likely to be needed after DSO in each region. There will be user issues to be resolved for a while thereafter, and it would be advisable to plan for maintaining a support infrastructure for a period, which should be reviewed in each region having regard to local circumstances, but is unlikely to be less than six weeks after the analogue signals have been switched off.

9.3 Information

For installation, and also for dealing with user issues, the key task will be to make sure that information is easily and widely available to explain how to resolve problems most commonly faced by new users and the elderly.

In so many cases, the technical or fault issues reported are user issues where there is no problem with the box or TV or aerial or connection. The alleged 'technical problem' could be fixed by reading the instructions and pressing the appropriate button on the remote control.

Examples of how to resolve common faults are :

- Remembering to point the remote control at the set top box (not the TV!)
- Where a box has 'frozen', switching it off at the mains and back on again
- If an elderly person switches everything off at night before retiring to bed, digital service can be automatically restored in the morning if default button '1' on the analogue TV set is tuned to the Freeview box (not to BBC1 as would normally be the case).

More work is needed to develop information leaflets explaining how to deal with common problems. Feedback from Bolton suggests that the following would be useful:

- Further development of the installation helpsheet (although the version used in Bolton proved very effective)
- A basic troubleshooting leaflet, covering the user issues most commonly encountered (e.g. the examples above) and written in a simple style
- Useful hints and tips e.g. why not keep a pad and pen near the TV – when you find a channel you really like, why not write down the number of the new channel, then you can go straight to it next time? The engineers were good at making these sorts of suggestions – a note could help people remember, and also deal with common issues.

Information needs to be disseminated through national and local media, but should also be available in local branches of superstores and electrical retailers (large and small), as well as post offices, surgeries, local libraries and schools, or anywhere that offers an effective route to contacting elderly people, and their family and friends.

9.4 Role of Call Centre

At DSO, technically qualified personnel need to be used as efficiently as possible. A well-briefed call centre can deal with many 'technical' complaints without calling in an engineer. The Bolton MBC Helpline was particularly effective at this. Several requests for technical assistance were resolved simply and quickly over the phone by an operator who was not technically trained, thus avoiding the need for expensive technical support or an engineer call-out.

9.5 Local volunteers and charity workers

Although family and friends are the key resource for supporting elderly or disabled people, local voluntary and charity workers also have a key role in identifying and supporting those people who have no family and are socially excluded, for whatever reason. In Bolton, almost all of this work was carried out by telephone.

Efforts could be made to mobilise local volunteers to visit residents who need help in getting used to the new digital equipment. Supplies of support information should be freely available to local volunteers and organisations such as Age Concern and the various branches of local authority Social Services.

9.6 Access to a shared database

This Report has already highlighted the need for a shared database, which can be accessed by all organisations involved in installation and user support. This assumes access by recognised organisations, where information is passed to individual volunteers only on a 'need to know' basis.

In Bolton, legal restrictions meant that a call centre operator could not see the participant's status. Consequently the response could only be "we'll look into it and get back to you". This created issues in re-contacting residents who were not in, or who needed to be contacted through a family member. It would save time if the call centre operator could access the participant's details on screen and be able to start to deal with the enquiry there and then.

9.7 Research

Ipsos were contracted by DCMS to undertake pre- and post- research work amongst Trial participants. Their report will be published separately on the Government's website www.digitaltelevision.gov.uk

Some key findings of Ipsos' work are also noted (where relevant) in this Report.

The response in Bolton has been very encouraging, but help has been provided free of charge in the majority of cases. Further work is needed to assess what proportion of relevant groups might be willing to pay a fee for access to a Support Scheme, and what level of fee would be acceptable.

10. Costs

10.1 Bolton Trial costs

The budget for the Bolton Trial was £300,000, to be funded by DCMS and the BBC in equal shares. The total cost was £211,000. This is not an indicator of the costs of a Support Scheme. Significant elements of the Bolton Trial costs relate to central costs and research costs which are not linked to the number of households participating.

Costs incurred in the Bolton Trial were as follows :

Equipment and Technical support	£ 55,000
Call Centre support	£ 5,000
Volunteer support (including training)	£ 1,000
Communications	£ 7,000
Research	£ 53,000
Technical advice	£ 15,000
Project Management and local management	£ 70,000
Administrative costs (inc T&S)	£ 5,000
Total	£211,000

Details of individual supplier contracts are subject to commercial confidentiality.

10.2 Support Scheme – financial considerations

The administration, organisational and IT costs of a Support Scheme will be on a completely different scale from the BoltonTrial, but the Bolton experience suggests that Scheme costs should take account of:

- Call centre costs (central, and possibly regional)
- A significant information campaign targeted at those who can support people who need help to adapt to digital TV
- Liaison with support agencies (e.g. local authorities, voluntary groups) at a regional and local level
- Training, for engineers and volunteers.

Also, it would be cost-effective if a Support Scheme formed part of a co-ordinated approach to switchover:

- To minimise duplication of effort between the Support Scheme and the marketing, promotional, regional liaison and other work undertaken by Digital UK
- To ensure that there are sufficient qualified installers in each region
- To consider the needs of those who are not eligible for a Support Scheme, but who nevertheless need support in converting to digital TV.

10.3 Confidential financial information

The detailed financial information gained from the Bolton Trial is commercially sensitive and will be used in public procurement contract work relating to the proposed Support Scheme.

Accordingly, the detailed financial information has been omitted from this Report.



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