

# Independent research evaluation into the effectiveness of Digital Outreach's community outreach programme model

Conducted by i2 media research Ltd

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## Independent research says that Digital Outreach's community outreach programme has made a big impact on levels of awareness, confidence and knowledge amongst key target groups.

i2 media research – a spin-off of Goldsmiths University of London – carried out the research to assess the benefits of the outreach programme for engaging communities, communicating specific messages, and achieving real behaviour change.

This research focused on the community outreach programme designed to communicate messages about the digital TV switchover. The outreach model has resonance across multiple sectors as a channel to engage highly targeted audiences.

The independent research aimed to:

- Identify the impact of the community outreach programme among individuals reached directly and indirectly through community events
- Explore the effect of the outreach programme on attitudes and behaviour relating to switchover among individuals touched by the programme.

This report summarises the key findings of the evaluation.

### Key findings

The independent research found that the community outreach programme:

- made a significant contribution in reaching and engaging vulnerable audiences across the core target groups and empowering them to manage the switchover process
- has made a significant impact on levels of awareness, confidence and knowledge about the switchover programme among the key target groups
- has provided reassurance to vulnerable people and enabled them to feel confident about managing the digital switchover in their own homes
- has improved attitudes towards the switchover programme itself, with a marked increase in positive attitudes
- was seen to work effectively within the overall switchover campaign, increasing how receptive many individuals were to mainstream marketing materials.

### Methodology

Research was conducted in two phases

#### Phase 1

Individuals attending a community outreach programme event were asked to complete a questionnaire. These were self-administered by participants immediately before and immediately after attending an event. 140 participants were involved at five events in the Central and Anglia TV regions between January and February 2011.

#### Phase 2

A follow-up survey was conducted between 6 and 12 weeks after switchover to assess the longer term impact of the community events during the switchover period. 30 semi-structured interviews were completed, 26 of these respondents had attended a community event and 4 had not been involved in the Community Outreach Programme.

## Context of the community outreach programme

The community outreach programme was designed to reach and engage key audiences with messages about the digital TV switchover. Core target groups identified were:

- Older people
- People who are socially isolated
- People with sensory, mobility or dexterity impairments
- People who have mental health conditions
- People who speak English as a second language and require extra assistance to understand the implications of switchover
- People with learning difficulties.

The programme has been a core element of Digital UK and the Switchover Help Scheme's communications campaign for the digital switchover.

## How the community outreach programme model works

The community outreach programme is one example of a range of outreach programmes delivered by Digital Outreach and Convey.

The model develops partnerships within the existing infrastructure of the voluntary and community sector. Voluntary and community partners receive training, materials and support so they can cascade tailored messages to their local networks, who in turn take these to their end users.

Events and activities are run by existing groups and organisations in a setting where individuals feel comfortable and relaxed. In this way, the message is delivered through a trusted voice.

Communications are tailored so that they are engaging to the target audience, taking into account their particular needs and local issues.

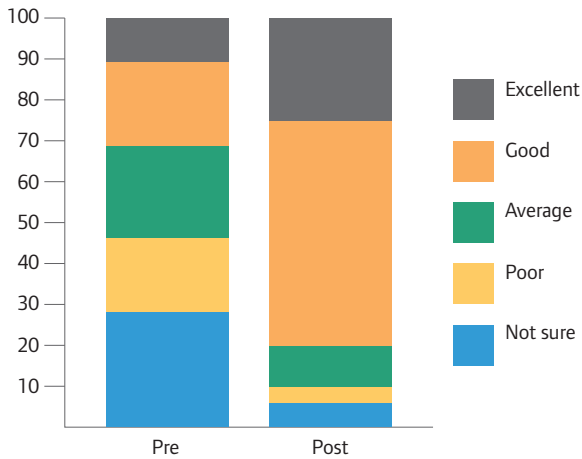
## Effect on knowledge and attitudes towards switchover

The community outreach programme made a significant difference to attitudes about the switchover<sup>1</sup>. Before attending a community outreach programme event, most respondents (81%) reported negative<sup>2</sup> or apathetic<sup>3</sup> attitudes. This reduced significantly immediately after the event. And those reporting a positive<sup>4</sup> attitude increased from 45% to 67% after an event.

This demonstrates that the COP model can effectively shift entrenched attitudes through limited but targeted contact with individuals.

### Understanding the benefits of switchover

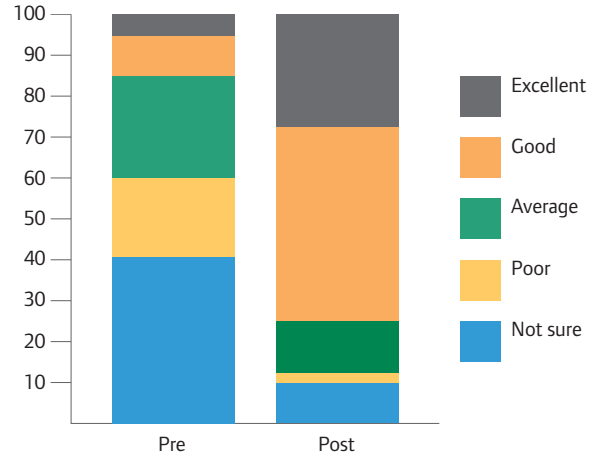
After a COP event the percentage of respondents who felt their understanding of the benefits of switchover was "good" or "excellent" increased from 33% to 79%.



### Understanding how I can help others with switchover

44% more people rated their understanding of how switchover would affect them as "good" or "excellent" after attending a community outreach programme event (78% of the total).

The proportion of people who had a good or excellent knowledge of how to help other people increased by 59% - from 16% to 75%. This demonstrates the strength of the model in reaching and motivating individuals to disseminate information and help others within their communities.



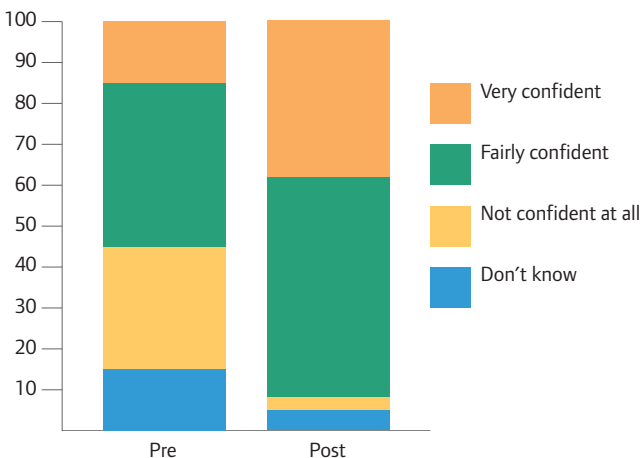
## Effect on confidence

Respondents were asked to rate how confident they were in managing different aspects of the switchover process. There were significant increases in the proportion of respondents stating they were "fairly" or "very" confident across all areas measured as a result of the community outreach programme events.

The community outreach programme was reassuring and informative - 72% found the event informative and 62% felt reassured about the digital switchover.

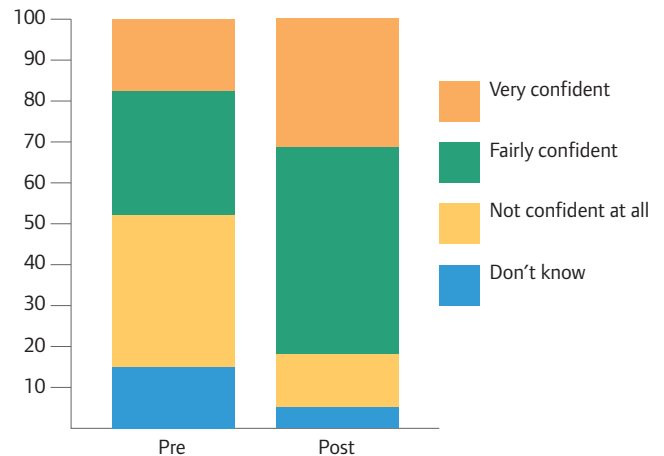
### About choosing the best way to receive digital TV

The proportion of people feeling confident about choosing the best way to receive digital TV increased by from 55% to 92% after attending a community outreach programme event.



### About getting your home ready for switchover, on your own

The proportion of people feeling confident about getting their home ready for switchover on their own increased from 46% to 82%.



<sup>1</sup> Respondents were able to select more than one statement from a list which described how they felt about switchover.

<sup>2</sup> Negative attitudes included "switchover is unfair/we shouldn't be forced to convert to digital"

<sup>3</sup> Apathetic attitude: "switchover is just one of those things we'll have to get on with it"

<sup>4</sup> Positive attitudes included: "switchover is good for me and switchover is good for the UK"

## The longer term effects of the community outreach programme

Respondents were contacted 6 to 12 weeks after switchover had taken place. This enabled a further assessment to be carried out of the longer term effects of the programme.

The outreach programme was well timed in relation to other sources of advice. The community outreach programme was an integral part of a wider communications campaign. It was perceived as a trustworthy, friendly and effective source of information and support. Respondents were aware of the range of support available through the Switchover Help Scheme and where to go for additional help and advice.

The nature of the community outreach programme taking place within existing community events ensured that respondents were comfortable in their environment. The programme helped them feel personally involved and confident to ask questions.

*“Nobody was made to feel stupid”*

*“People were not as frightened about it afterwards”*

*“The personal approach gives you confidence”*

*“The event gave me the opportunity to ask questions”*

Respondents commented particularly on how friendly and informal the sessions were; and that this fostered general discussion without anyone feeling judged. Indeed, some reported that they felt “special” that they had received this type of support.

This context was seen as important in increasing people’s acceptance of mainstream marketing literature produced by Digital UK and the Switchover Help Scheme, especially amongst those who had previously ignored or rejected the material.

There was a consistent feeling amongst respondents that the community outreach programme had given them peace of mind. They reported feeling reassured about managing the process and that it would be affordable. In addition, they reported knowing whether their TV sets were ready for switchover or not – and those who were not ready for switchover were confident that they knew what needed to be done.

Individuals reported that they were confident in being able to distinguish potential “scams” where unscrupulous individuals were recommending replacing adequate equipment.

## The potential to empower

Many respondents felt empowered by the community outreach programme model and others recognised its potential to empower others. This was particularly pertinent amongst those who had adult children, who with good intentions, managed the process for their parents including the purchase of equipment. Empowering these individuals meant that they had more information and were able to develop informed opinions and question decisions taken on their behalf.

*“The event made me feel involved in the process”*

The community outreach programme model has reached into the wider community through the cascade effect. Most people who had been involved in the programme became motivated (and acted) to disseminate information to friends, peers, family or more widely into their communities.

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Convey is part of Digital Outreach. Convey specialises in third sector outsourcing and delivers information and behaviour change campaigns on a wide range of issues such as health, consumer rights and product awareness. Digital Outreach focuses on information and behaviour change initiatives around digital inclusion.