

Care on Call

New Digital Alarm System

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



About the new alarm system

Why are you installing a new digital alarm system?

We are upgrading the alarm system because the UK is moving from traditional analogue telephone networks to digital technology. The Government's digital switchover means that older analogue telephone services are being phased out. Some existing alarm systems rely on this older technology and may not continue to work reliably in the future. The new digital system will help make sure residents can continue to access help when they need it.

Is this change because my current alarm isn't working?

No. Your existing alarm may still be working perfectly well. The change is needed because of the wider national move from analogue to digital telephone networks.

Do I have to have the new system installed?

Yes. If your home currently has a communal or personal alarm system provided as part of the scheme, the upgrade will be required to ensure the service remains compatible with the new digital telephone network. We will provide information about the installation and what you need to do before any work takes place.

Will I need to do anything differently?

Yes. The pull cord will be removed, so you will use your pendant to raise an alarm instead.

The new system is designed to be simple to use. You will still be able to use your alarm to request help in an emergency or if you need assistance. If you're close to the SEVEN unit, you can also press the red 'Help' button to send an alarm to Care on Call.

We will explain how the new system works and give you information to keep in your home.

Will I still be able to contact someone if I have an emergency?

Yes. When you press the button on your pendant, it will send an alarm call to Care on Call. The pendant will flash red to let you know that your alarm has received the request and is making an alarm call.

What happens if there is a power cut?

The new equipment is designed to keep working during a power cut and has up to a three day battery life. We will provide residents with specific information about how their system operates during a power cut, including any backup arrangements that apply to the equipment installed in your home.

What happens if my telephone or broadband goes down?

The new alarm system uses mobile networks rather than your home telephone or broadband connection. The SEVEN has two SIM cards and is designed to connect to available mobile networks, helping it maintain a connection. If you think there is a problem with your alarm, please report it using the contact details provided to you.

Will the new equipment look different?

The equipment may look different from your existing alarm equipment because it is a newer digital technology. We will show you the equipment and explain how to use it before or during installation and information sessions.

Will I still have a pendant and/or pull cord alarm button?

Your pull cord will be removed because it will no longer work. You will use your pendant to raise an alarm instead. To call for help, press the button on your pendant. The pendant will connect to the Care on Call service so that you can request assistance. If you're close to the SEVEN unit, you can also press the red 'Help' button to send an alarm to Care on Call.

Will the Care on Call response service I currently receive change?

No. The response service you receive will stay the same. The only change is how your alarm connects to the Care on Call response service.



About the digital switchover

Why is BT changing the telephone network?

The UK's telecommunications network is being upgraded from traditional analogue technology to modern digital technology. As part of this national change, services that rely on the old analogue network need to be upgraded or replaced.

Why are sheltered housing schemes particularly affected?

Many sheltered housing schemes have alarm systems that were designed to work with older telephone technology. We need to make sure these systems are compatible with the new digital network so residents can continue to receive the support provided by their alarm service.

Does this mean my existing alarm will stop working immediately?

No. The change is being planned in advance. We are upgrading the systems ahead of the changes to make sure residents are not left without a reliable alarm service.

Is this a change being made by the housing association?

The move from analogue to digital telecommunications is a national change. Our role is to make sure the alarm services provided in our homes are upgraded appropriately and that residents understand what is happening.

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The cost of the new system

Will I have to pay for the new alarm system?

There is no changes to the charge for the Care on Call response service. There will be a new charge for the connection to the service, which is changing as we move from the old analogue telephone network to digital technology.

The charge will be collected through your existing service charge arrangements. We'll provide more information to help you understand what this means for you.

How much will the charges be?

From April 2027, the following charges will apply:

- 75p per week for the SIM card that keeps the digital equipment connected. This is an ongoing charge

From April 2028, the following charges will apply:

- £3.75 per week for one year only to cover the cost of installing the new digital equipment. (This is Housing Benefit eligible.)

Why is there a charge?

The charge helps contribute towards providing and installing the digital alarm service. The move to digital technology requires new equipment to make sure the alarm system continues to operate.

How will this appear on your service charge statement?

From your February 2027 statement, this cost will appear combined with your existing support package charge as one total figure. The rest of your service charge will be reviewed as usual.

Will Housing Benefit cover the charge?

If you are eligible for Housing Benefit, the £3.75 per week charge is expected to be covered by Housing Benefit, subject to the usual Housing Benefit rules and your individual circumstances. We will provide further information to help you understand how this applies to you. This charge won't come into place until 2028.

What if I can't afford the additional payment and I'm not eligible for Housing Benefit?

If you're finding it difficult to pay this charge, your rent, or other bills, please speak to our Income Team. They can offer free, individual advice on benefits and budgeting, and can also put you in touch with independent agencies who provide free, impartial advice. We also have a support fund to help customers who need support.

Will the 75p ongoing weekly charge be covered by Housing Benefit?

No. The ongoing 75p per week charge will not be covered by Housing Benefit or the proposed support fund.

Why does the charge reduce from £3.75 a week to 75p a week?

The first-year charge reflects the costs associated with introducing the new digital alarm service. Once the new system has been established, the ongoing charge will significantly reduce the continuing service and access to the telephone services (SIM card).

What if I can't afford the charge?

Please don't ignore the charge or worry about it on your own. If you are concerned about being able to afford the charge, speak to us so that we can explain the options available to you. We are also considering a support fund for customers who are not eligible for Housing Benefit but need help with the first-year charge. Further details will be provided before charges begin in 2028.

Will everyone living in the scheme have to pay the same amount?

The planned charge is £3.75 per week for the first year, followed by 75p per week. Your individual service charge information will confirm the charges that apply to your home.

Will I continue to receive the same service and charges from Salford Council?

Salford Council will continue to provide the same Care on Call service as usual, so residents can be reassured that there will be no change to the support they currently receive.

What do you expect the electricity running cost to be?

The new system is expected to use very little electricity. The estimated running cost will be around £1.83 per month, based on an estimated electricity use of 0.369 kWh per month.



Installation

When will my new alarm be installed?

We will contact you before any work takes place to explain when the installation will happen and what you need to do.

Will someone from Salix Homes be there?

Yes. A member of the Salix Homes team will be around in the communal area when your new system is being installed.

Will someone need to come inside my home?

Yes, an engineer will need access to your home to install the new alarm system and remove the old one.

Will I have to move furniture or prepare my home?

We will let you know if there is anything you need to do before the installation, but we don't expect you will need to move any furniture. The installation team will aim to minimise disruption.

What if I'm not going to be in when the system is being installed?

If you're not going to be in when the system is being installed, please let us know as soon as possible. It is important that the new system is installed so that your alarm service continues to operate correctly.

Who will carry out the installation?

A trained specialist contractor, Ashley & McDonough, will carry out the installation. They will be in your home for about 30 minutes. We will provide residents with information about how to identify authorised installation staff before work begins.

Will the installation damage my home?

The installation will be carried out as carefully as possible and any work required will be explained to you. If you have concerns about where equipment will be installed, please discuss these with the installer.

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Using the new system

About your pendant

Why does my pendant flash red?

Your pendant flashes red when you press the button to let you know that the alarm has received your request and is making an alarm call.

How far away can I use my pendant?

The pendant has a range of 300 metres (328 yards) in open space. This can be reduced in schemes, although it will still work comfortably up to 200 metres (219 yards). The range is from the location of your SEVEN unit in your flat.

How long will my pendant battery last?

Your pendant battery should normally last between three and five years, depending on how often it is used. When the battery is getting low, the system will send a low-battery alert so that the battery can be replaced.

Can I wear my pendant in the bath or shower?

Yes. Your pendant is waterproof and can be worn in the bath or shower.

Can I call into my alarm unit?

Yes. We've enabled Answer Anytime on your SEVEN unit. This means Care on Call or a member of the Salix Homes team can call your SEVEN unit at any time to speak to you.

Will I receive training?

We will provide information to help you understand how to use your new alarm system. We will also be holding resident sessions where you can ask questions and find out more about the changes.

What if I accidentally press the alarm?

Don't worry. If you accidentally activate your alarm, follow the instructions provided with your system. The response team will be able to establish whether you need assistance.

What if I need help but it isn't an emergency?

Your alarm can be used according to the service arrangements for your scheme. We will explain when and how you should use it and what happens when you raise an alarm.

What if I don't understand how to use it?

Please get in touch and ask us. We want residents to feel confident using the new system. You can raise questions during the resident sessions, installation, or by contacting us afterwards. A user guide will also be provided when the new system is installed.

Can my family member or carer be shown how the system works?

Where appropriate, we can provide information to help family members/carers/advocates understand how the system works. Please speak to us about this if you would find it helpful.



Safety and reassurance

Is the new digital system safe?

Yes. The system is being introduced to ensure that residents continue to have access to an appropriate alarm service as the UK's telecommunications network changes.

Will the new system affect my other services?

The alarm upgrade is specifically about the alarm service and its connection to the digital communications network. We will explain any changes that could affect you as part of the installation information.

What happens if the new alarm stops working?

If you believe your alarm is not working correctly, report it to us straight away using the contact details provided to you. Do not assume that the system is working if you notice a fault.

What happens in a real emergency?

If you are in immediate danger or need emergency assistance, you should call 999 and ask for the appropriate emergency service. Your alarm system provides an additional way of requesting assistance, and we will explain how the response service works for your scheme.



Support and information

Where can I ask questions?

Contact us on 0800 218 2000. We want residents to have the opportunity to ask questions before the new system is installed, and the new charge is introduced.

What if I have additional support needs?

Please tell us if you need information in a different format or need additional support to understand or use the new system. We want to make sure all residents can access the information they need.

What if I am worried about the cost?

Please speak to us. We understand that even a relatively small additional charge can be difficult for some households. We will provide more information about Housing Benefit and the proposed support fund before the charge is introduced.

Where can I find more information?

We will provide residents with further information as the project progresses, including details about the installation programme, how the new alarm works, resident information sessions, the service charge, Housing Benefit, the proposed support fund, what to do if your alarm develops a fault, and who to contact for help.

You can also find information at
www.salixhomes.co.uk/care-on-call