

MAYOR OF LONDON

London borough leaders

Date: 24 May 2023

Dear Colleague,

Starting in only three months time and lasting until 2025, the Government is allowing Openreach and other private telecommunications companies to switch off their analogue copper network, which currently supports traditional phonelines, known as the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN). Every device that uses the old network including CCTV, door entry systems, lift alarms and controllers, telecare devices, and plant rooms will be affected. Any services you provide or use relying on the PSTN will cease, leaving residents and authorities vulnerable. In practical terms, entire systems may be shut down. This may leave careline services inoperable, lifts turned off and social housing without hot and cold water unless preparatory work is undertaken now to adapt or replace the connected solutions so that they can operate on a digital network.

It is critical to acknowledge that certain areas will experience the effects sooner than others. The Government has not recommended a UK-wide approach to councils or service providers, and no national public information campaign is planned to inform people about the switch off. While the Local Government Association (GLA) is working hard to provide support in the form of good practice and lobbying, we expect direct costs and disruption to be borne by councils and residents alone without any government help. We are therefore asking you to consider:

- Do you know which of your borough's services will be impacted by the switch off?
- Has a budget been proposed and ringfenced to cover costs?
- Does your borough have a target date for when your services will be prepared?
- Which team is leading on ensuring the organisation is aware and prepared for the copper switch off?

From our experience working with boroughs and sub-regional partners on digital connectivity, we understand that some councils are not yet able to answer all of these questions. Councils which are already starting to address this issue have found unexpected complexity and costs with telecommunications companies. To support boroughs to prepare, I have asked the Connected London team in the GLA to set up a London wide working group – working with the London Office of Technology and Innovation – to enable officers to share best practice, experiences, and tools to enable them to develop fully-costed switch off strategies.

We want to work with you to answer these questions, and I invite you to nominate an individual from your borough to take part in this working group. The first meeting will take place on Wednesday 28 June, from 11:00 until 12:30, so please send your nomination to Marie O'Sullivan in the Connected London team (marie.osullivan@london.gov.uk) by 16 June. Marie is also happy to answer any questions you have.

MAYOR OF LONDON

With your support, London can successfully navigate the switch off, and we can ensure that residents continue to receive the services they need. I look forward to working with you on this.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Theo Blackwell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small blue dot above the letter 'i' in "Theo".

Theo Blackwell MBE
Chief Digital Officer for London