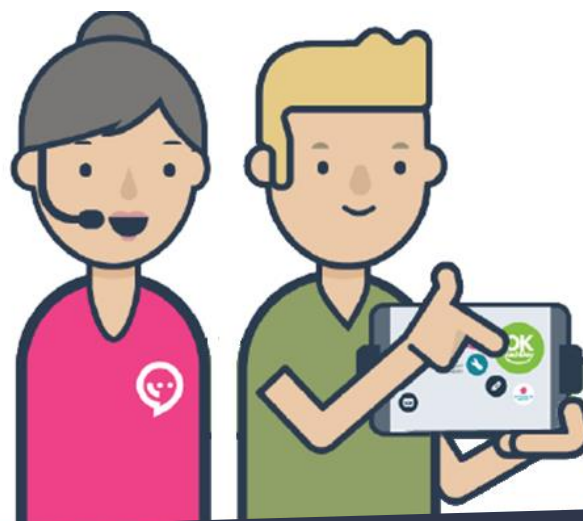# CIH ideas lab:
## What is Digital Switchover?
### How social housing providers will be affected and the opportunities it presents to improve property management and service delivery

## Martin Cutbill
## Director, Alertacall
## 3 November 2020

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# introduction

► Welcome to the last in a series of three ideas labs:

• Ideas lab 1: overcoming the 8 barriers to digital engagement

• Ideas lab 2: a survey into digital engagement in social housing

► Past presentations are available at alertacall.com/resources

► This final ideas lab looks at Digital Switchover, which may require major investment but offers huge opportunities to adopt new approaches

► Slides will be provided and a full written guide will available later this month

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# structure of today's ideas lab

▶ **What is Digital Switchover?**
  Rob Pickering, networking specialist and technology evangelist

▶ **What Digital Switchover means for social housing providers and how to plan for it**
  Jason Kingston, partner, Cube Thinking

▶ **An example digital switchover ready solution: Housing Proactive**
  James Batchelor, chief executive and founder, Alertacall

▶ **Q and A**

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# What is Digital Switchover?
### From pulses to packets and the implications.

## Rob Pickering
### Telecommunications Expert

# Rob Pickering background



- Worked on **technology** projects with several large telecommunications companies.

- Founded a successful company that specialises in 'Internet telephony'.

- **Expert in integrating** modern telephone systems that use internet technologies.

- Software engineer and designer, interested in **AI and connecting people** using technology.

# What do we mean by Digital Switchover?
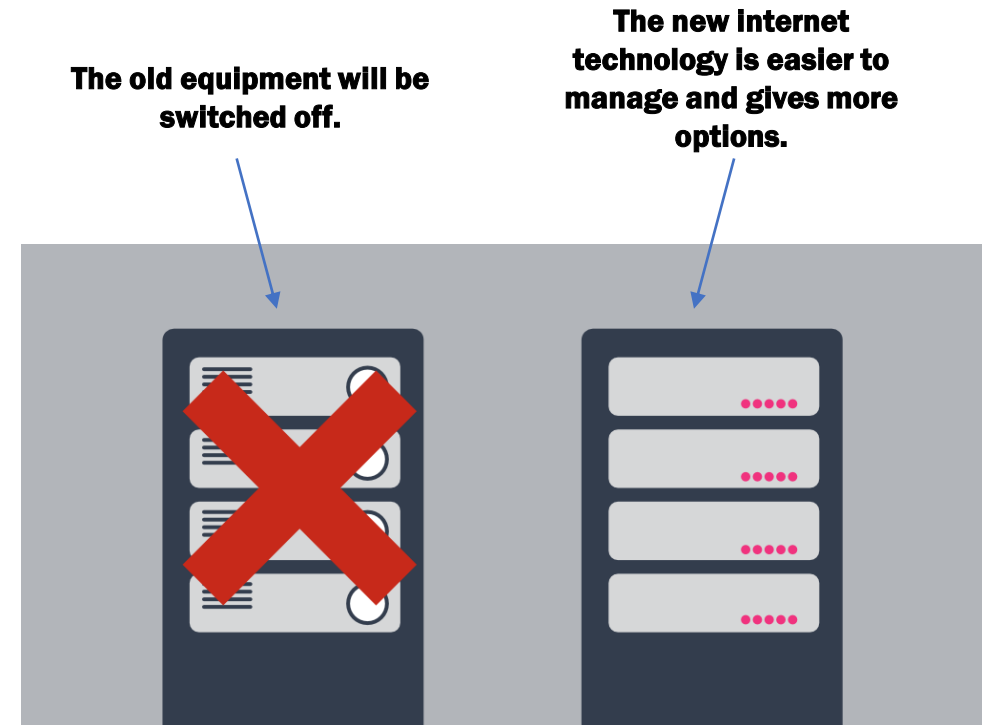
**Before - Pulses**
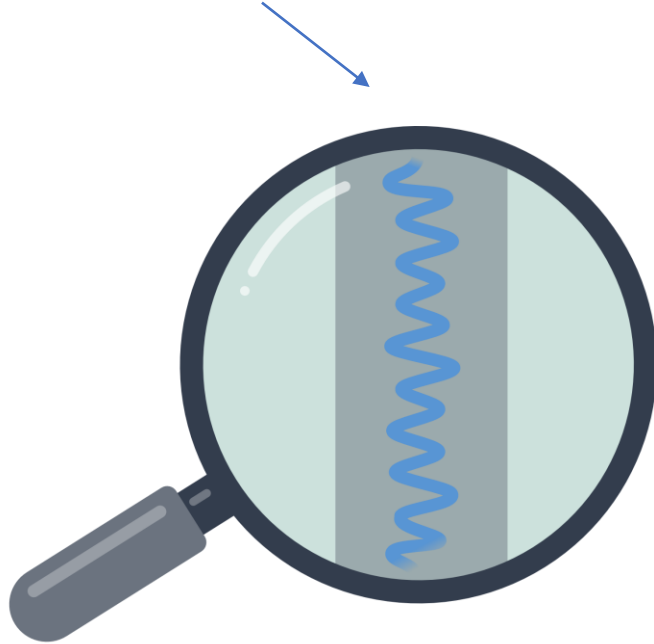
- **Digital** refers to the way that telephone calls will be sent from a property to a local telephone exchange.

- Calls will be switched to use **Internet technologies** similar to those used 'behind the scenes' when you make a call using Skype, WhatsApp and similar apps.

- Calls that have for decades been 'electrical pulses' going over the copper wire from a property to an exchange - will be turned in to **'packets of data'**.

- Essentially all phone lines are becoming **internet connections.**
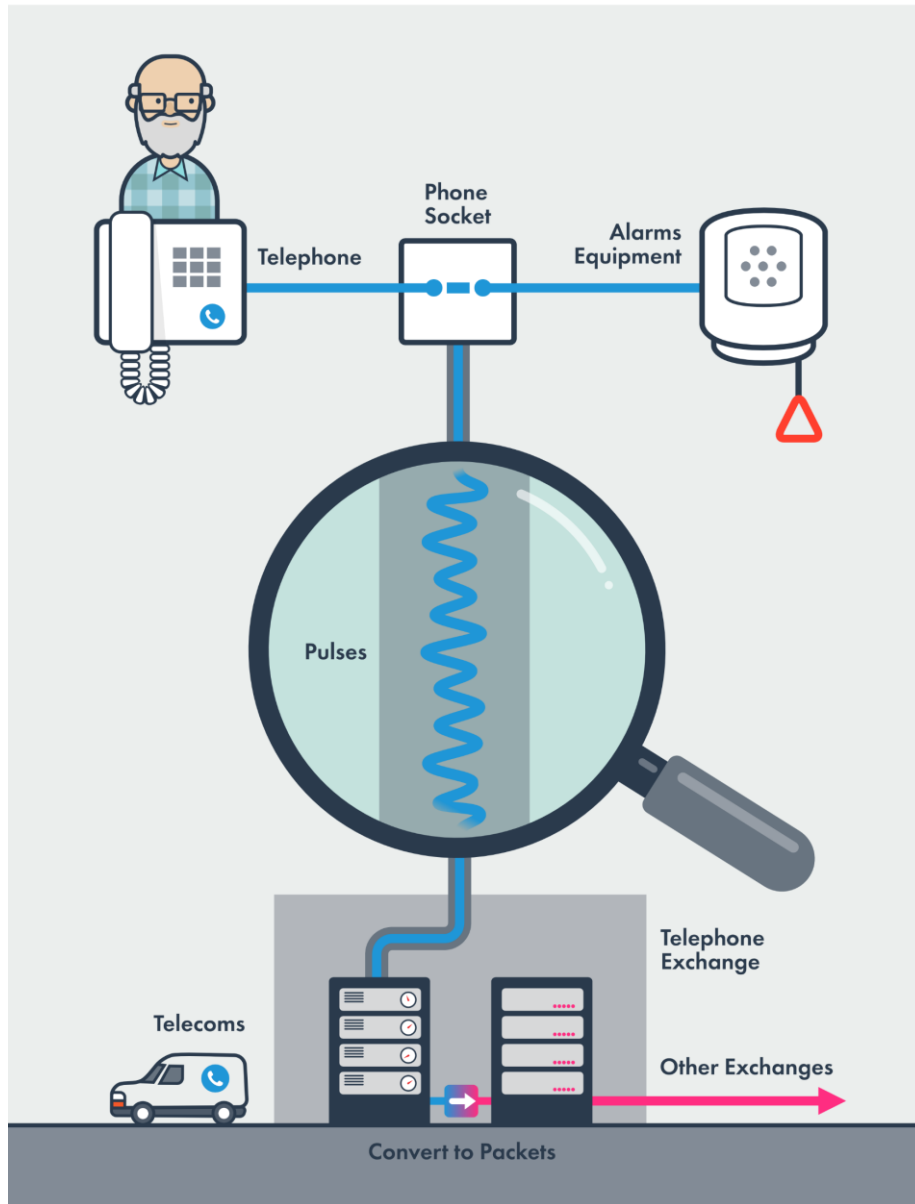
**After - Packets**
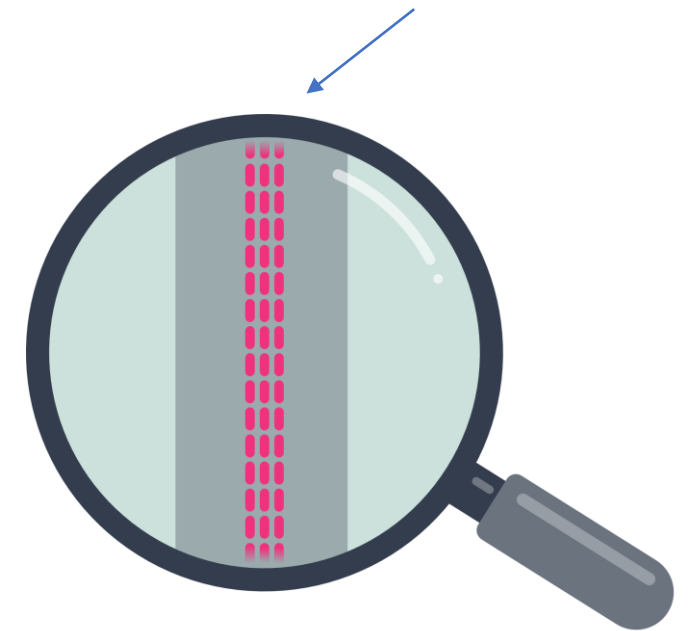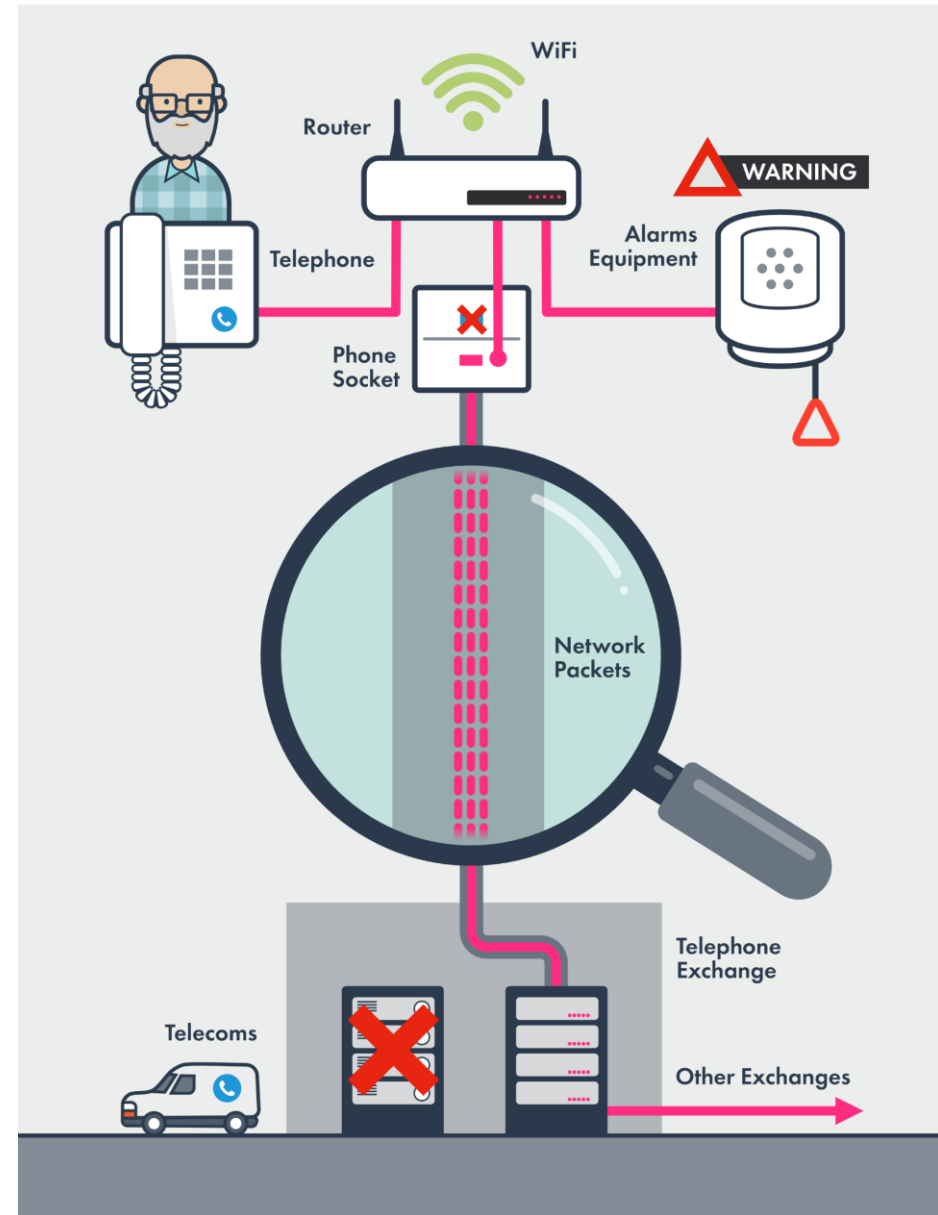
# Why is Digital Switchover happening?

- **Currently two sets of equipment at exchanges:**

  - **Old equipment** for transmitting calls using electrical pulses, invented 100+ year ago.

  - **Equipment for internet connections** – which can transmit many different media types, e.g. video and files – as well as voice calls.

- **Expensive maintaining both** sets of equipment.

- **Going to transition** entirely on to the equipment that uses internet technology and connections.

The old equipment will be switched off.

The new internet technology is easier to manage and gives more options.

**Before Digital Switchover (Now) without internet**

Telephone

Phone Socket

Alarms Equipment

Pulses

Telecoms

Telephone Exchange

Other Exchanges

Convert to Packets

**After Digital Switchover**

WiFi

Router

Telephone

WARNING

Alarms Equipment

Phone Socket

Network Packets

Telecoms

Telephone Exchange

Other Exchanges

# Who will be impacted and when?
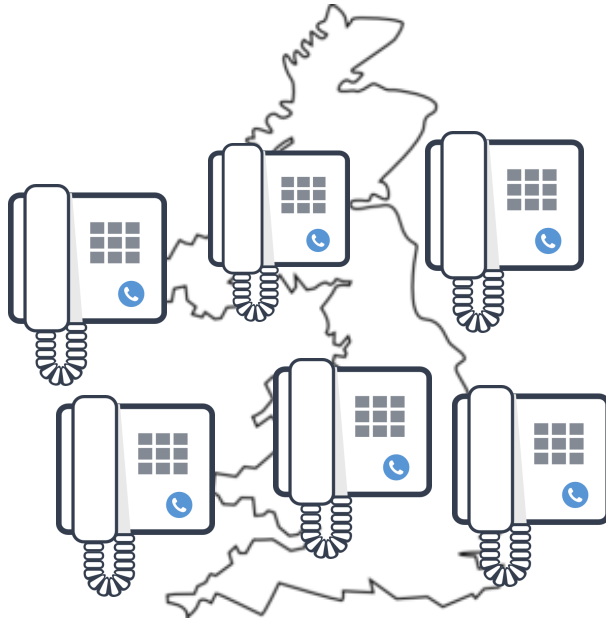




**Every traditional telephone line** in the UK, including those used by you and your residents, and by most hard wired intercom and alarm systems to send calls, and signals to/from buildings.

BT and others are planning on this work being complete by **December 2025**. Millions of homes, so there is scepticism about timescales. Support is going to be given to older and vulnerable people.

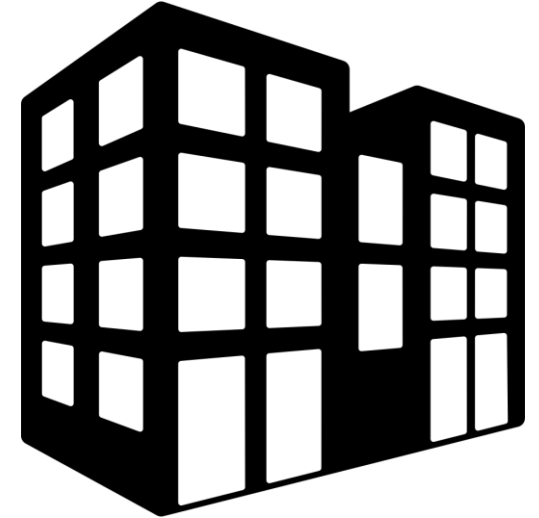# Impact on different types of equipment
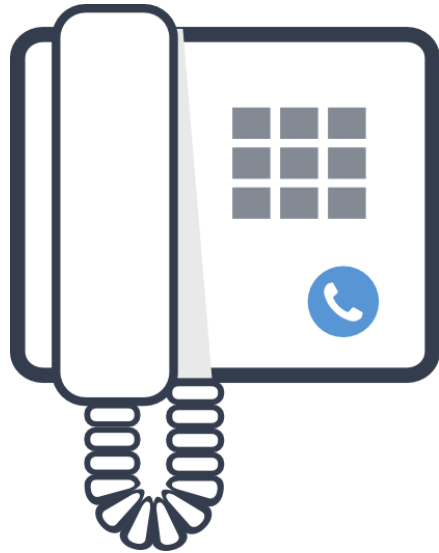
**Most standard landline telephones will continue to work after Digital Switchover because they don't use any complicated signals.**

WARNING

**Hard wired and alarms systems may not work after Digital Switchover because they use complicated signals that can be unreliable on digital phone lines.**

**Some office telephone systems may be impacted – usually handled by IT.**

# Alarm/intercom systems may become unreliable

- Hard wired alarm and warden call systems invented in the 1960s and 1970s for sheltered housing.

- Invented before everyone had phones and mobile phones, and before internet technologies.

- These often have a single phone line going into them to allow calls and 'alarm signals' to go through to and from dwellings, e.g. for pull cord signals to go off-site.

- Many of these older systems may not work because they cannot send and receive signals reliably on a digital phone line. Alarm centres may miss alarm activations and calls.

- Digital Switchover is an opportunity to move on from hard wired alarm and intercom systems.

# Resident implications

- A telecoms engineer will visit each property and change the BT Telephone socket to one that looks and work differently.

- The telecoms company will supply those that don't already have one with a 'broadband router'. This will have a BT socket on the back of it – existing phone equipment will plug in to this.

- This 'BT socket' on the router will convert calls from traditional telephone devices into internet data 'packets'.

- Residents may need to unplug and re-plug back in equipment in their homes into the socket on their router, e.g. their own phones and dispersed alarm systems.

- Residents may find any hard wired alarm systems may become unreliable if the housing provider takes no action.

WARNING
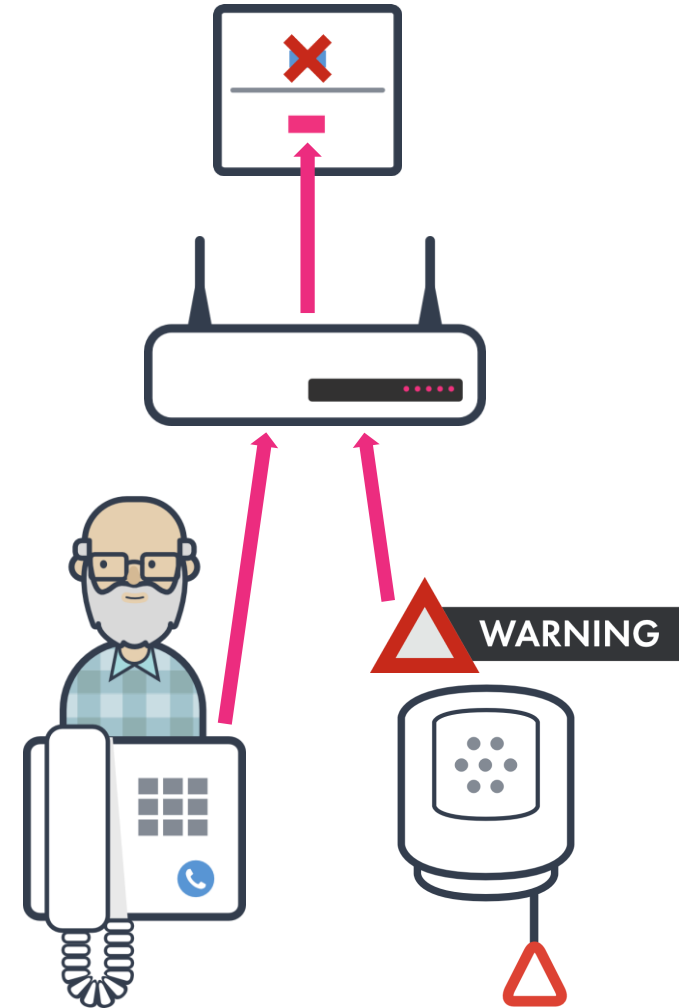
# Implications for housing providers

- Disruption likely in 2025 for residents – your teams will need briefing to handle queries.

- Hard wired alarms and intercom systems:

  1. Will yours become unreliable and will you need to take some action?
  2. What outcomes are you looking for in a system if you do replace?
  3. Are they needed any more?
  4. Are they worth the investment / ROI
  5. Are there better alternatives?
  6. Who is going to pay for work?

- Dispersed alarm systems that plug in to telephone lines in individual properties may also need changing if older.

- Door entry systems connected to hard wired alarms in sheltered may also need replacing.

- Implications for office telephony, ensure internal systems are ready (IT teams usually handle this).

**An opportunity to re-imagine your whole resident offer and launch a Digital Engagement project?**

# CUBE THINKING

*What Digital Switchover means for social housing providers and how to plan for it*

Presented by:

Jason Kingston

# Who are Cube Thinking?

Partner led business performance

consultancy

We think differently, have ethics & play to win.

We support businesses & organisations to make change stick the right way. We have over a decade of experience in social housing & were founders of the Golden Marzipan Group.

Our backgrounds in auditing, lean, six sigma & digital transformation are matched with products & services that drive up evidenced business performance.

**Focus on process, people & digital for high performing businesses**

CUBE THINKING

# Why am *I* talking to you about this?



- Partner at an all sector business performance consultancy
- Led BA & BI functions at YHG, Salix & Guinness Partnership
- Worked with over 30 RPs in last 3 years
- Digital acceleration needs steroids

CUBE
THINKING

# The Connected Estate

# Still relevant

- 1999 JRF & CIH *Digital Futures* Report

- 1935 Daily Express *Home of Today* publication

CUBE THINKING

# So why so much sector variation?

# Strengthen your digital strategy and deliver improved outcomes

- Minimise infrastructure investment
- Reduce ongoing maintenance costs
- Increase digital engagement with residents
- Improve resident management
- Deliver operational efficiencies
- Adopt a proactive approach to identify future resident needs

CUBE
THINKING

# Sheltered & Supported scheme options

- Hardwired & dispersed alarms
    - Decommission hard wired system
    - Adopt totally different service model
    - Upgrade hardwired system to wireless
    - Replace hard wired system with latest supplier version

- Dispersed wired alarms
    - Stop providing alarm service & signpost
    - Upgrade dispersed to mobile solution
    - Upgrade dispersed to proactive wearable tech
    - Replace dispersed with like for like

- Do nothing

CUBE
THINKING

# Critical considerations

- Is now the time to deploy WiFi on schemes?

- Does the solution improve housing management efficiency?

- Is deploying a touchscreen with video-calling important?

- Are there targets for digital engagement?

- What approach will guarantee a return on investment?

- Are all residents engaging with alarms - should we replace like for like?

- Is proactive service delivery to help detect changing needs important?

CUBE
THINKING

# Communicating the plan to stakeholders

| Start | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Beyond |
|-------|---|---|---|---|--------|

- Transformation Team
- Housing Managers
- Front line staff
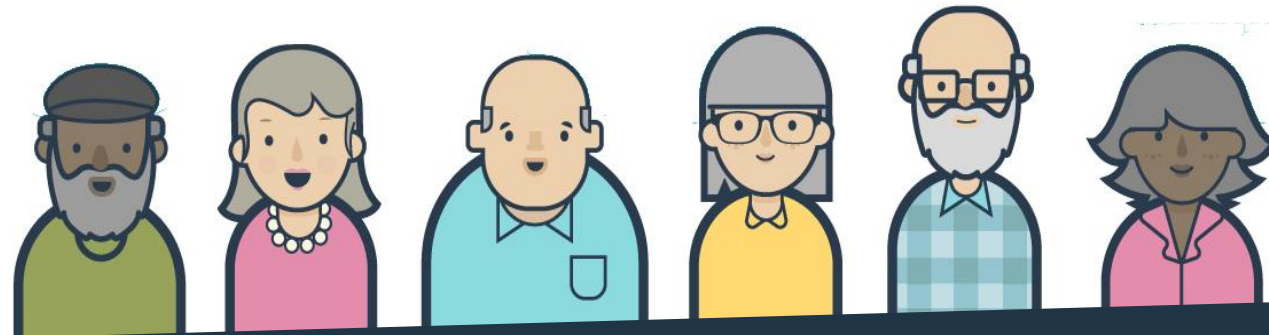- Residents

CUBE THINKING

# Thank you

CUBE THINKING
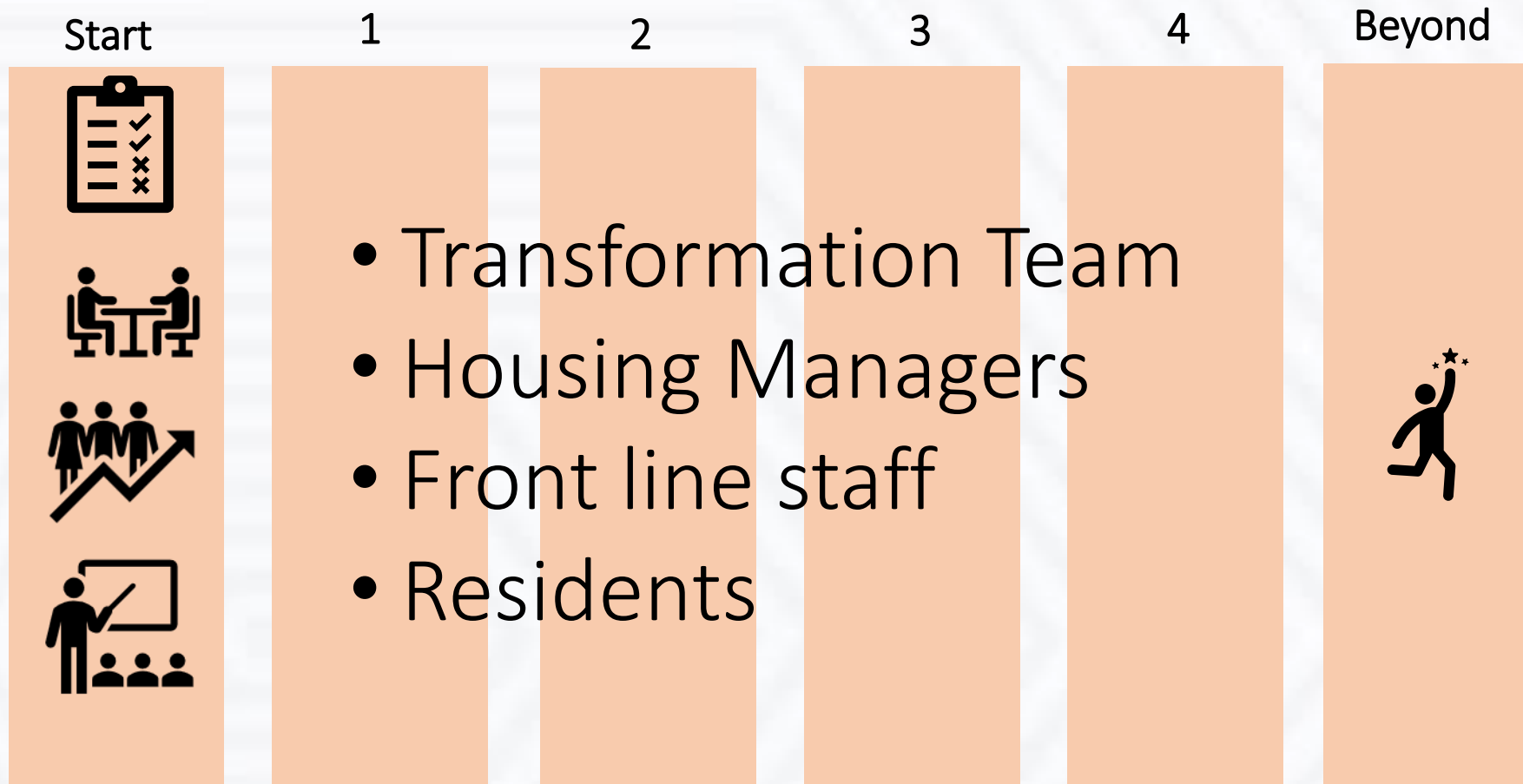
# Housing Proactive – A Digital Switchover Ready Solution
# Why you might want to move on from hard wired alarms and focusing on outcomes that matter

**James Batchelor**
**CEO & Founder,**
**Alertacall**



www.alertacall.com

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# Quick intro to Alertacall

SILVER STORIES
**Corporate Sponsor**

We support this wonderful charity that reduces loneliness for older people and helps children too.

- **Established 16+ years** with a mission to improve the lives of 100,000s of older people.

- Combine **ingenious technology** with people who have the **right values** and excellent training.

- **Invented the "I am okay" button** and lots of processes around proactive resident contact.

- Freedom to **"do the right thing"**.

- Won a **National Business Award** for Innovation, CIH award for New Ideas and Approaches with United Welsh.

- Around **50 housing providers highly satisfied** and UK-wide private customer services.

- Balance profit & **purpose**, goal to start our own older persons charity and plant 100k+ trees.

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# Hard wired alarm systems, are they fit for purpose anymore?

- Usually **very expensive** with equipment and cabling costs running in to tens of thousands.

- Equipment on the wall makes user **engagement difficult** – even if it's some kind of interactive display.

- Door entry release on wall **forces the resident** to stand up quickly to grant access.

- Pull cords have limited value, often **out of reach** when needed. Can also look institutional.

- Pendant or wrist worn alarms can create a **false sense of security** because 4 out of 5 don't wear.

- High level of **vendor lock-in. Ties you** to a manufacturer for a very long time. Do you really want that when there is so much innovation?

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# Focus on outcomes that matter to residents <u>and you</u>

- Being **financially prudent** and keeping FDs happy, with something that is low cost, great value and cost recoverable.

- Acknowledging most older people do not want to wear or carry something. **An "alarm" is no longer a sales point.**

- Understanding that one of the biggest issues is **loneliness** and isolation – how does a solution address that?

- How do you encourage residents to **engage and connect** with you whilst still giving them control?
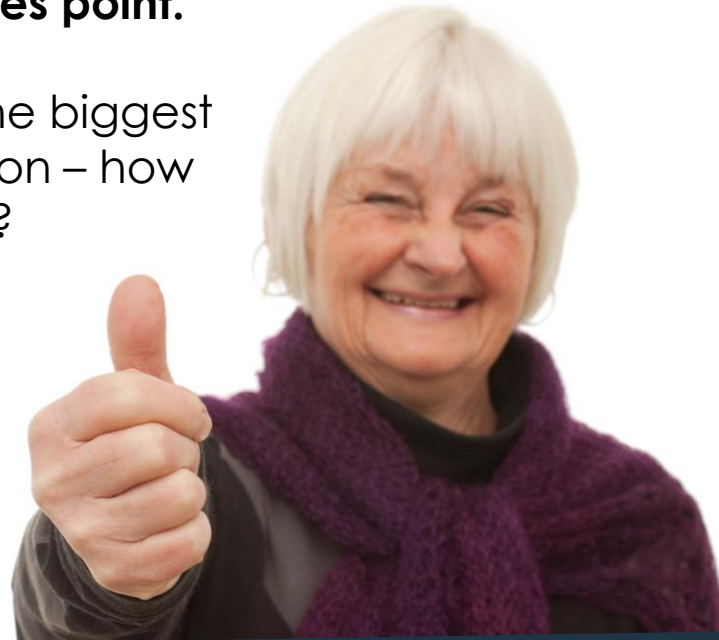
- How do you **focus staff time where it's needed** and make it easy for staff to communicate with residents and vice-versa?

- Is this an opportunity to **reduce other costs** like repairs handling and **improve business efficiency?**

- Could this be an opportunity to kick-start true **digital engagement** with residents – and move on from thinking about this is purely "assistive technology"?

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# Step 1 - Give residents control with a portable digital device

**Portable 8-inch Touchscreen in stand. OKEachDay button can be pressed by residents in their own time (daily, weekly, monthly) to signify everything is OK at their property and to pick up information.**

- All engagements with device logged.
- Network connectivity built in (4g).
- Designed specifically for older people.
- Text, image, audio, video messaging.
- Reminders, prompts and surveys.
- Specific web pages can be sent.
- Can be "called like a telephone".
- Customer service buttons.
- Can be connected to Wi-Fi networks for video-calling and door entry calls.



**Zero hard wired cabling required
4g connectivity "built in to device"
Digital Switchover Ready**

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# Step 2 - Guarantee the option of friendly daily human contact

**If a resident chooses not to press our OKEachDay Button by an agreed time, or does not for any other reason - they are called by a friendly, trained person. This means they <u>always have the choice</u> to speak to a real person, 365 days a year.**

- Friendly and patient communication.
- Calls recorded and noted up in system.
- Dementia friendly, learning disabled and suicide awareness training for agents.
- Information can be passed to the resident, e.g. about repairs and events.
- Information can be taken from the resident and passed to relevant teams.
- Calls can be transferred to other teams.
- Unusual interactions can be flagged.
- Agents can escalate in emergencies.



**Daily, Weekly, Twice Monthly, Monthly and other contact routines can create value.**

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# Step 3 – Give teams real-time reporting about engagements

**Secure reporting portal allows housing providers teams to see important events, track the occupancy of properties and see customers with changing needs.**

- Access granted to housing staff.
- Can be accessed from smart devices.
- See broadcast messages and more.
- Schedule new messages, upload new information and engage through the reporting portal with Alertacall team.
- See customers with changing trends.
- Regularly updated with new features.

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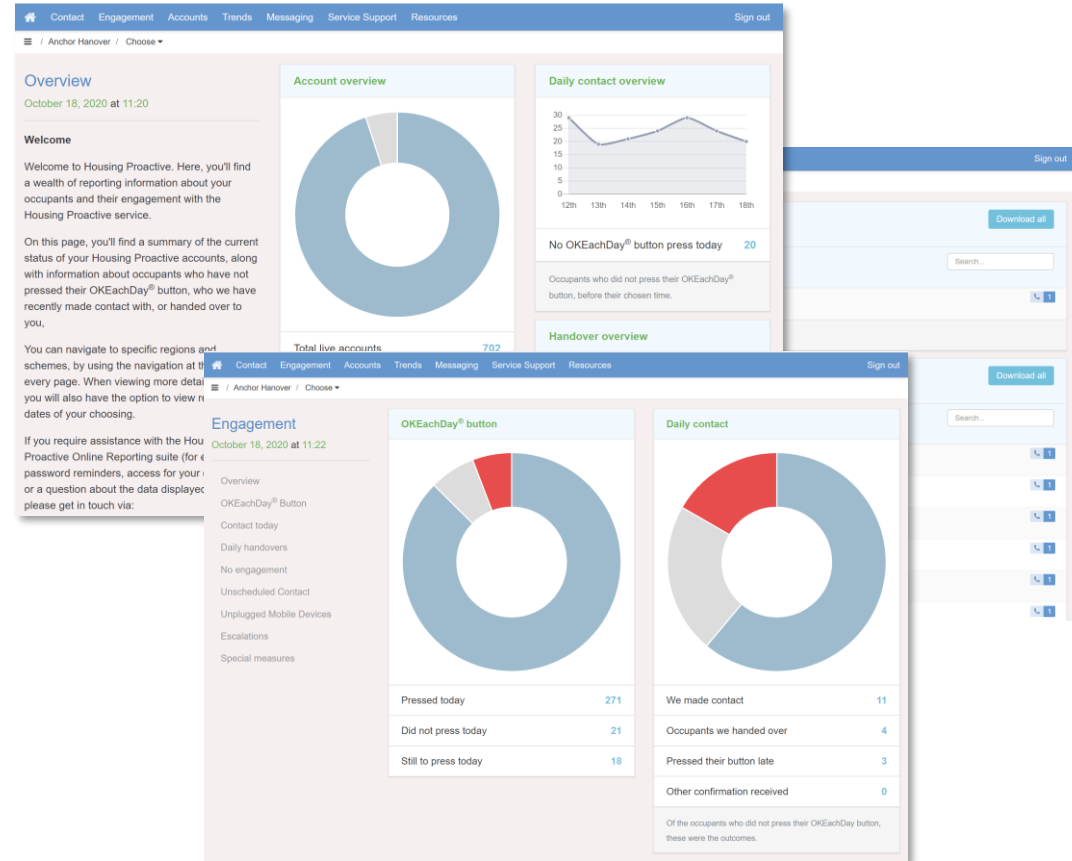
Changes in the way people communicate
can indicate an imminent support requirement
and we can see this in the data (1-4 months)

Female, 80 years of age (Months 1-4)

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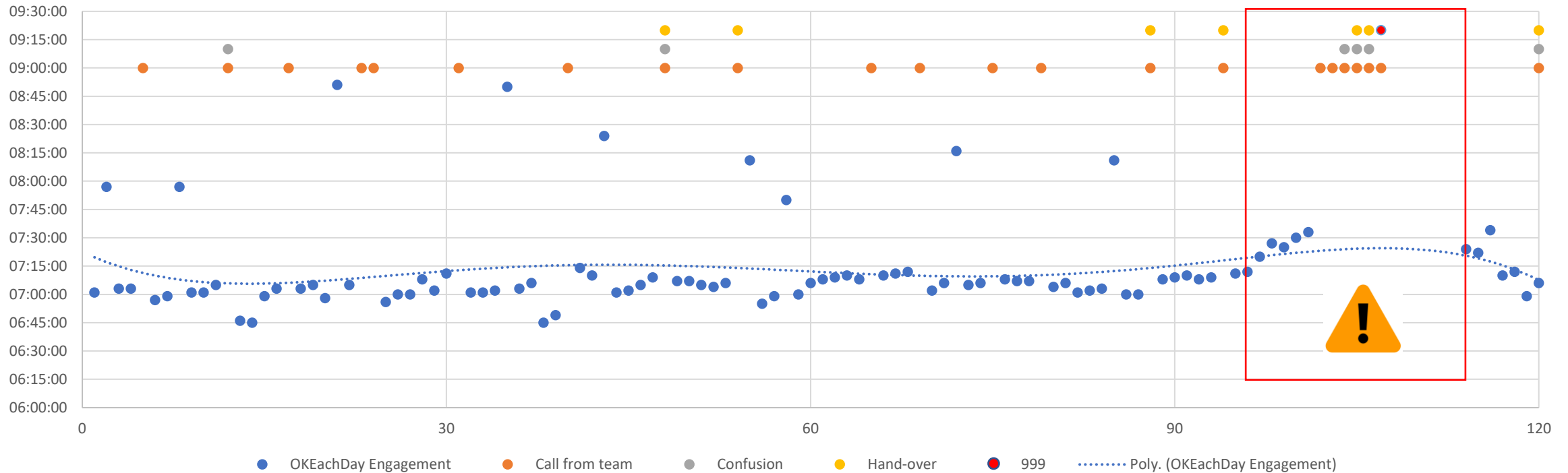
# Deploy WiFi – multiple benefits, low cost

- Allows lots of different devices to **connect to each other** and share information without cabling into each property.

- Enables high bandwidth and high data usage applications such as **video-conferencing and video-door entry.**

- Can be used to **support security** and **CCTV** by helping you put devices in otherwise difficult to cable locations.

- Can be made accessible to residents to give them **access the internet** using their own devices on free or paid for models.

- **Low cost**, minimal disruption to residents. "Access points" installed in **corridors**.

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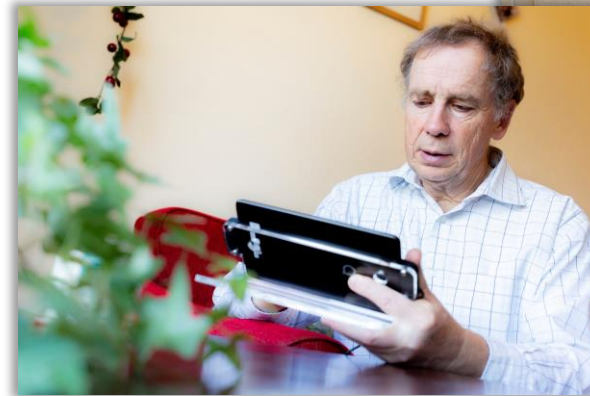
# Deploy 'wearables' to select groups – not all

- Consider that many people don't want to wear or carry anything that looks like a traditional alarm, and that **traditional alarms have limited value.**

- **Only give devices to those you are confident will use them**, otherwise you waste money and create false security.

- You do not need hard wired systems because WiFi, mobile and customer telephone lines give **plenty of options.**

- **We have a wrist worn device** that looks like a "fitness tracker" and include falls detection, movement tracking and well-being checks. Battery life of 1+ year.

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**You can do it!**

**Be ready for digital switchover, lower costs and improve service.**

**Our Housing Proactive team will guide you step by step**

**James Batchelor**
**james@alertacall.com**
**07814756613**

**I'll put you in contact with one of our friendly team members.**

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# Q&A

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# thank you for joining us!

**call**

digitalswitchover@alertacall.com

tact:

martin@alertacall.com