The UK government has announced that telecoms companies have agreed to new measures to protect vulnerable customers as their landlines are upgraded to new digital networks by the end of 2025.

Seven network operators – Openreach, CityFibre, Sky, KCOM, AllPointsFibre, CommunityFibre, Ogi, and WightFibre – have signed up to new protections which will ensure people who rely on personal alarms to call for help are not left without a working device during the migration. The government said nearly 2 million people use these vital alarms in the UK.

The new measures agreed today include a commitment from network operators to take steps to ensure their customers’ lifesaving buttons continue to work and functioning alternatives are in place before any migration takes place.

The new commitments include:

* operators having to work with partners, including internet providers, to check if their customers own a telecare device
* operators providing at least 12 months’ notice to phone providers before enforcing the switchover of a customer
* no telecare user being migrated to a digital landline service without the provider, customer or telephone company confirming that they have functioning solution in place
* telecom operators working with Ofcom, the government, and phone providers to create a shared definition of ‘vulnerable’ customer.

Michelle Donelan, the technology secretary, said “This will provide much needed reassurance to those relying on these vital devices and I will continue to pressure organisations to do everything in their power to make sure the switchover is seamless and safe.”

This agreement follows ongoing and active collaboration from telecoms operators in providing reassurance to vulnerable households. Virgin Media O2 and BT agreed to similar mitigations at the end of last year.