

# Integrated reception systems (IRS)

## FAQs – October 2009

Investing in Camden's homes



## **1. What is an Integrated Reception System (IRS)?**

IRS is a system that enables all homes in one building to share digital TV, satellite and radio signals.

## **2. I've already got a TV aerial, why do I need IRS?**

TV aerials on Camden's housing estates were installed over 30 years ago.

We are now replacing these aerials for a number of reasons. Due to their age they have deteriorated and are in poor condition. We also receive a large number of complaints about the poor quality of reception they provide.

We are also now entering the digital era. By 2012 the analogue television signal system will be switched off across the UK and a new digital system put in place.

This means that anyone who cannot receive a digital television, cable or satellite signal will be unable to watch television.

## **3. What work have we been doing to make sure we're ready for the switch to digital in Camden?**

Over recent years we've consulted with residents and looked at industry guidelines on the best way to prepare for this change.

This led to the Council's Executive approving plans to install IRS across Camden's housing estates.

That was in 2007. Since then we have started installing IRS, which will continue until 2012, when the work should be complete.

## **4. Is IRS the best option?**

We have done a great deal of research. The vast majority of councils and registered social landlords are choosing to install IRS as they are cost-effective and do not tie tenants or leaseholders into a particular subscription service.

It will mean that all residents will be able to receive both satellite and digital terrestrial signals; meaning they can benefit from 'free to air' channels (i.e. those for which there is no charge).

## **5. I've heard that a booster can just be added to the current analogue aerial. I bet it would be cheaper so why aren't we doing that?**

Our television cables were installed over 30 years ago and their quality is deteriorating. They need replacing to bring them up to modern standards.

While in some places it may be possible to install boosters it's not a viable or suitable long-term option.

Even within the same block it's likely that the quality of the signal will vary from property to property. Some residents will get a perfect reception, others will get a poor signal or nothing at all.

As a responsible landlord we need to install a system which provides the same level and quality of service to all.

## **6. Through IRS which channels will I be able to receive?**

It will be possible to receive:

- Existing analogue channels (until they cease at switchover)
- Free view (approximately 30 terrestrial channels without subscription)
- Free sat (approximately 150 channels without subscription)
- Sky Digital (approximately 400 satellite channels including foreign, premium, sports and movies by subscription. Residents would be responsible for purchasing subscriptions of their choice)
- Sky+ and High Definition television compatibility
- Hotbird (channels in a large number of languages including French, Arabic, Greek, Italian, Polish and a range of Eastern European languages)
- Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) and FM radio

We are able to provide such a broad range of channels because we are installing a '9 wire' system which can receive signals from two satellites.

IRS should also provide a better picture and sound quality than standard analogue transmission.

## **7. As a tenant how much will it cost me?**

Tenants will pay 89p a week for IRS, which will start from the April following installation. This 89p is subject to a rise by inflation plus 0.5% each year.

This service charge is covered by Housing Benefit.

## **8. As a leaseholder how much will it cost me?**

As with other major works, leaseholders pay a charge which is proportionate to the overall cost of installing IRS in their block.

Average costs are £370, but typically range from £250 to £550 when the weighting is applied for the property's rateable value.

There will also be a small annual maintenance charge.

**9. I've already got digital TV so I don't want IRS. Do I have to and do I have to pay?**

By replacing communal aerials that serve all properties within a block we are making a communal improvement which will benefit all residents. The vast majority of residents will use the service straight away.

In undertaking such an extensive project we need to think about the long-term use of our housing stock. It would be costly and impractical to leave properties out of the programme and then return when these properties are re-let, sold or the householder changes their mind.

When work is carried out in their area leaseholders will have the chance to comment on the proposed works. Any questions can be answered by Home Ownership Services on 020 7974 1854, or 4452 or 7100.

**10. How can I find out when work is planned in my area?**

Contact project manager Paula Botha on 020 7974 7702 or email [paula.botha@camden.gov.uk](mailto:paula.botha@camden.gov.uk)

**11. How many homes have already had this work done and how many more are there still to do?**

We currently have approximately 22,500 properties served by a communal aerial.

IRS has been installed alongside our 'raising the standard' scheme in recent years and to date approximately 4,500 properties have IRS in place.

By 2012 all properties will have IRS.

**Ends.**