

Frequently Asked Questions - Better Broadband Subsidy Scheme

1. What is the Better Broadband Subsidy Scheme?

The Scheme has been developed to ensure that every household and business can access an affordable basic broadband service. We define this as a package that costs no more than £400 a year including installation, equipment and monthly subscription fees. The scheme awards vouchers of £350 to eligible applicants to cover the set up costs of a better broadband service, providing speeds which are usually at least 10Mbps.

2. Who is eligible?

Any household or business that cannot access an affordable basic broadband service with a download speeds of at least 2Mbps.

3. How do I check if I'm eligible?

- First check if you can or are due to gain access to superfast broadband at <https://maps.farrpoint.com/WebApps/SuperfastLeicestershire/> . If your postcode is not listed as benefitting use the Openreach Availability Checker to find out what your current broadband speed is at <http://www.dslchecker.bt.com/>
- If this identifies that your premise already benefits from speeds greater than 2Mbps you will most likely be **ineligible** for this scheme.
- If the checker says that you should have access to speeds above 2Mbps but you do not, we will ask you to submit additional evidence. Don't worry; all this would be is a screen shot of an online broadband speed test. The Ofcom checker is available here: <https://checker.ofcom.org.uk/broadband-test>
- If the speed checker identifies that your broadband speed is currently less than 2Mbps then you will be given a voucher as long as we don't have plans to bring superfast fibre broadband to you in the near future.

4. What help can I get if I'm eligible?

You will receive a voucher that will cover the cost of installation and any equipment you need to access a better broadband service.

5. What costs are not covered?

The scheme does not cover the cost of monthly subscriptions. Monthly fees vary depending on the broadband package you choose, i.e. based on the amount of data and speed that you require. The scheme should give you access to packages costing no more than £400 per year or just over £33 a month but you can pay more than this for a superfast broadband service if available from a provider serving your postcode.

6. What quality of broadband can I expect to receive from the scheme?

This will depend on a number of factors including the type of broadband package you choose to buy and the technology used to supply your connection. The two main types of technology are satellite and wireless broadband. Whilst satellite is available to all areas, wireless coverage is more limited.

- **Satellite broadband** can deliver speeds of 10Mbps (or more) but the speed is often not guaranteed throughout the day and packages usually have monthly data caps. You will need to consider how much data you are likely to require and the monthly costs of different packages. Some satellite packages allow you to consume data overnight without adding to the monthly costs. For example, you could download HD catch-up TV shows at night to watch the following day, without using up your data allowance. You may also experience a short time delay using some services such as online gaming. This is called latency which has improved with recent upgrades to the satellites used to provide your connection.
- **Wireless broadband** performs in a similar way to broadband delivered via your telephone line. Wireless broadband is only available in certain parts of the country and from a more limited number of different providers.

7. How do I apply?

You can apply by completing a simple online application form which can be accessed at <http://www.superfastleicestershire.org.uk/register-for-notifications/the-final-4/better-broadband-subsidy-scheme/>

If you are eligible for a voucher you will then need to select a broadband package that best suits your requirements from one of the suppliers registered with the Scheme.

8. Do I have to take out a contract?

Yes. You are required to sign a contract with your chosen supplier for a minimum of 12 months. If you want to terminate the contract within the first year you may have to pay a termination fee. The contract is between you and the supplier and **not** the County Council or Government.

9. When is the Scheme open until?

The scheme has been extended by the Government until the end of December 2018.

10. Are there other options if my broadband speed is less than 2 Mbps?

Yes. You may be able to get:

- a basic broadband service from a 4G mobile broadband supplier. You can check current availability by using the Ofcom mobile coverage checker at www.ofcom.org.uk/mobile-coverage
- a wireless broadband service is available in some areas. Information on available providers can be found by searching online.
- a superfast service in the future from a commercially funded expansion of fibre broadband service or through the Superfast Leicestershire programme.

11. Can the subsidy be used to support fibre broadband?

One of the suppliers offering services through the scheme is BT, via its Community Fibre Partnerships scheme. The subsidy can be used to support coverage delivered through a Community Fibre Partnership project, but the project has to be ready to go live at the time when the eligibility code is claimed. That means that you should speak to them before applying to the scheme.

12. I am in a superfast rollout area but will not be upgraded for a long time and my speed is less than 2 Mb per second. Am I eligible?

You may be eligible for a subsidised broadband connection as an interim fix if the plans to bring superfast coverage to your property have not yet started.

13. Superfast broadband is planned to be delivered to my area. Why do I have to wait rather than get a subsidy now?

There are strict rules around spending public funding to support the delivery of broadband services. We cannot publicly fund two solutions to the same property within the same 12 months.

14. If I apply to the scheme will I still be considered for a fibre upgrade as part of the Superfast Leicestershire rollout?

Yes. Taking a better broadband service under the scheme has no effect on our plans for further deployment of superfast broadband, and you will be considered within any future plans.

15. How will I know the outcome of my application?

We will aim to make a decision on your application as quickly as possible (within one month of receiving your completed form), and we will advise you of the outcome by email.

If we are able to issue you with a voucher under the scheme, we will send you a unique code via email. A list of retail service providers currently operating under the scheme, and their contacts details are available on our website:

<http://www.superfastleicestershire.org.uk/register-for-notifications/the-final-4/better-broadband-subsidy-scheme/>

If we are unable to issue you with a voucher under the scheme, we will send you an email with the reasons for our decision.

16. Can I appeal against a decision not to issue me with a code?

If you are not satisfied with our decision and the reasons we have given, you may submit an appeal by email, setting-out your grounds, and why you believe we should have issued you with a voucher. We will review our decision in the light of your appeal, and will make a final decision. We will not be able to consider more than one appeal in relation to any one applicant. Email to broadband@leics.gov.uk and copy in better.broadband@culture.gov.uk

17. How do I use the voucher?

Once you have received a unique voucher code you should review the products and prices available from each provider who offers services through the scheme and select the product that best meets your requirements, with consideration of the monthly subscriptions costs of each.

You should then approach your chosen retail service provider to order your chosen package and provide them with your unique code. They will confirm the features of the product you have chosen, and the costs involved for a minimum 12 months service contract, after the voucher has been taken into account.

18. Can I use the voucher with a provider not approved under the scheme?

No, the voucher can only be used with retail service providers approved by Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK). Other providers may join the scheme over time, and we will update our list of providers when necessary.

19. Who is the Scheme managed and funded by?

The Better Broadband Scheme is managed locally by Leicestershire County Council's Broadband Project Team and funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.