

Guide to the Better Broadband Subsidy Scheme

Introduction

The Better Broadband Subsidy Scheme has been developed by the UK government to provide access to a subsidised broadband installation to homes and businesses that are unable to access a broadband service with a download speed of at least 2 Mb per second and who will not benefit from the superfast broadband roll out.

If you currently experience poor broadband speeds, or are unable to obtain an affordable broadband service at all, the scheme will provide you with access to a basic broadband service that will offer speeds of at least 2 Mb per second.

You can check your broadband download speed over the BT Openreach network using the ADSL checker at www.dslchecker.bt.com. Broadband services may also be available from Virgin Media or other providers. You can check whether superfast broadband is available at your address using the BDUK superfast broadband checker at <http://gosuperfastchecker.culture.gov.uk/>.

If you take advantage of this Scheme your household or business will still be eligible for a superfast broadband service in the future.

Applications to the Better Broadband Subsidy Scheme can be made until the end of 2017.

How the Better Broadband Subsidy Scheme Works

The Better Broadband Scheme will ensure that no household or business will need to pay more than £400 to access a basic broadband service over a 12 month period.

Households and businesses that are eligible to take advantage of the Scheme will be provided with a unique code that will cover most of the cost of the installation and commissioning of a basic broadband service including any necessary equipment.

They will be required to enter into a contract for a minimum of 12 months with one of the suppliers registered under the Scheme and pay any remaining cost of installation (if any), the monthly charge for the service they select, and any VAT payable.

The code does not have a specific fixed value but when used to obtain a basic broadband service from a registered supplier it will reduce the total cost by up to £350. The code has no other value and cannot be redeemed in any other way than through the Scheme.

Which households and businesses are eligible to take advantage of the Scheme?

Households and businesses can take advantage of the Scheme if they meet the following three criteria.

1. Your home or business is not currently able to access a broadband download speed of at least 2Mb per second.
2. There are no alternative affordable broadband services available to you, which would provide a download speed of at least 2Mb per second.
3. There are no plans to provide superfast broadband to your location within 12 months of your application.

Households and businesses that apply for a subsidy will be asked to confirm there are no alternative affordable broadband services available to them that offer a broadband speed of at least 2 Mb per second.

We will also ask you to confirm that you do not already have a satellite or wireless broadband service installed and that you are the owner or occupier at the address given on the application form. We cannot accept applications from anyone who is not the owner or occupier at this address.

If we believe a household or business is likely to be able to access superfast broadband within 12 months we will not issue you with an eligibility code, but if superfast broadband availability is more than 12 months away, or not yet planned, we will issue you with a code.

If your household or business appears to be eligible for the Scheme we still recommend that you research other options available to you **before** applying for a subsidy as there may be suppliers who are not registered with the Scheme who may offer more favourable terms (for example by offering a longer contract period) than the broadband packages available under the Scheme.

If you decide to take up a broadband package from a supplier who is not registered with the Scheme you will not be able to benefit from a subsidised broadband installation.

You can check the current availability of 4G broadband services using the Ofcom mobile coverage checker at <http://www.ofcom.org.uk/mobile-coverage>

You can check if a fixed wireless broadband network is available in your area by searching for wireless operators and network providers in a search engine.

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 Partnerships project, but the project has to be ready to go live at the time when your unique eligibility code is claimed (otherwise, the subsidy scheme would not be providing access in a timely way to an improved service).

How to apply to the Better Broadband Scheme

If your household or business is eligible under the Scheme and you have decided you would like to take advantage of a basic broadband installation subsidy complete the simple online application form at <http://basicbroadbandchecker.culture.gov.uk/>

We will ask you to provide the following information on the application form

1. Your postal address, including your post code
2. The main telephone number at that address, if there is one available.
3. Your name and contact details including mobile phone number and email address.

If your application is successful we will email you a unique eligibility code together with the full list of suppliers registered to offer a subsidised broadband installation service. The suppliers offer a variety of broadband packages, at different prices, to meet the needs of a range of consumers and businesses. We recommend you review the products and prices from each supplier before selecting the product that best meets your needs.

To take advantage of a subsidised installation you must present your unique code to your chosen supplier when you place your order for the service and enter into a contract for a minimum of 12 months.

Orders must also be placed within 30 days of receiving the email with your unique code although the actual installation date can take place after this.

The code has no other value, and can only be redeemed by presenting it to a supplier operating under the Scheme.

If you choose to take up a broadband service with a supplier who is not registered under the Better Broadband Scheme you will not be able to use the code issued under the Scheme and will have to meet the full cost of installation, commissioning and monthly charges for the service yourself.

If your application is not successful we will email you and let you know why we are not able to issue you with a code. If you are not satisfied with the reason given you can submit one appeal by email to better.broadband@culture.gov.uk setting out why you believe we should have issued you with a code. We will review our decision in light of your appeal and make a final judgement. We are not able to consider more than one appeal per applicant.

The Better Broadband Scheme is delivered by a partnership between The Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Local Broadband Programmes and the registered retail service providers. It is jointly managed by Local Broadband Programmes and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.