

EXPLAINING THE GIGABIT BROADBAND VOUCHER SCHEME WITH THE DEPARTMENT FOR DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT (DCMS)

Those who pledged to obtain and now have a VALIDATED gigabit voucher should have been sent an email last Spring from: gvsadmin@culture.gov.uk gigabit-voucher@dcms.gov.uk with the subject “A Voucher request was validated by [name of pledger]”.

They have a unique Voucher ID number.

If someone does NOT have a validated voucher, they need take no action.

- The pledge is between the person or entity pledging, Openreach and the UK government in the form of DCMS.
- The vouchers are “virtual vouchers”, their value will be claimed by Openreach from DCMS on your behalf to part fund the extensive works involved.
- **Internet Service Providers (ISPs) are not involved in pledge**, nor in the Community Fibre Partnership with Openreach. Many ISP agents will not be aware of the Gigabit voucher scheme.
- **We are very grateful to all those who pledged for making this upgrade possible for everyone on our exchange.**
- Openreach does email pledgers to advise that a property has gone “live”, although some emails have gone to spam boxes

Those with a validated voucher **made a formal pledge** that they will:

- within two months of their premises having the new service available to order or “live”
- enter into a new contract for at least 12 months
- for a Gigabit capable broadband service (i.e. an **FTTP** service)
- that at least doubles their current broadband speed, subject to a minimum of 30Mbps download.

Those who pledged can be pursued by Openreach for the value of the pledge (£1,500 or £3,500) if they do not comply. If a chosen ISP does not offer an FTTP broadband service, then the pledger would have to choose an alternative ISP to honour the pledge.

The infrastructure works have taken longer than expected for various reasons; Openreach has applied for a modest extension to the 12-month voucher validity. Openreach has indicated some willingness to extend the 2 months if someone is genuinely trying to obtain a new service but is held up for reasonable cause. That will not include my current contract has not expired or my ISP doesn't offer an FTTP service.

Here is some information that may help.

To upgrade to FTTP Ultrafast, gigabit capable, broadband, those with “live” FTTP infrastructure passing their property **MUST place an order with an Internet Service Provider (ISP)**. The ISP will

arrange for a new fibre connection to be taken into your house or business premises and connect it to your router/hub. The ISP will often need to supply a new FTTP capable router/hub. **Most existing phones can be plugged into the FTTP hub.** However, fully digital (VoIP) phones and service may also be available.

Latest information on ISPs providing FTTP broadband:

- BT, Zen, Sky, Vodafone and TalkTalk are the mainstream ISPs currently known to be providing FTTP broadband service with a phone service (if wanted) on the Horsley exchange.
- EE offers an FTTP broadband service without a phone service. EE customers wanting FTTP broadband with a phone service should expect a penalty free transfer to BT for that service.
- TalkTalk offers FTTP broadband service in Horsley. Existing customers who call 0800 0497849 may also be able to obtain a phone service with their broadband service. The “with phone” service is not available to order online or for new customers at present.
- Vodafone offers FTTP broadband (with phone service if wanted) up to 200Mbps at present but “will be upgrading this capability to up to 900Mb during 2022, and customers will be able to change speed mid contract”.
- Plusnet staff have not provided information about FTTP broadband availability, but say they can offer penalty free transfers to BT now for those wanting an FTTP service.
- Utility Warehouse: despite asking, we have no formal information, however, we believe Utility Warehouse uses TalkTalk for its broadband service.
- Small broadband providers: There are many of these, of which a number are shown on the Openreach website listing of Full Fibre providers.

There is no need for pledgers to wait for an Openreach email to place an order with an ISP. ISPs appear very keen, mid-contract, to upgrade customers to a fresh contract. Those who pledged are not entitled to wait until the end of a contract with their ISP.

The above may leave some asking: “what do I need to order to fulfil my pledge to DCMS?”. Unfortunately, as our properties do not all enjoy/suffer the same speed, there is no single answer. Most homes will be able to satisfy their pledge by choosing a service with an up to 150Mbps download speed. A very few homes may need a faster service, if the 2 times speed rule were to be strictly applied. Some homes, however, may be able to satisfy the pledge requirement with a much slower FTTP service should they want to do so. Note though, **it must be an FTTP service.**

We hope this is helpful.



With thanks to Chris Woods, Horsley Ultrafast Broadband Task Group

Check out the DCMS website too at [How do the vouchers work? – Gigabit Vouchers \(culture.gov.uk\)](https://www.culture.gov.uk/how-do-the-vouchers-work?)