

Broadband Self-Help Guide

The following self-help guide may help residents to improve their broadband speeds prior to the deployment of superfast fibre broadband:

Broadband speeds can be effected by a range of factors and in particular:

Home/office set-up e.g. location of wireless router, strength of signal if using wifi, number of devices sharing a wifi signal

1. Distance of a premises to the serving exchange over copper wiring
2. Bandwidth capacity within the service providers network (e.g. broadband speeds dropping during busy hours)
3. Internet capacity via the World Wide Web

12 easy steps to help improve broadband speeds:

1. Undertake a broadband speed test

If you haven't already done so, use a speed tester to measure the level at which your broadband connection is currently running. This will allow you to see what difference the following suggestions make to your speed.

2. Update your browser



There are updates being made all the time to browsers, so using the latest version should always greatly reduce the time it takes to surf and download web pages. If your browser is consistently clunky, consider switching software altogether. For example, Internet Explorer users might get an instant boost by switching to Mozilla Firefox or Google Chrome.

3. Reposition your router

The position of your router can have a significant effect on the quality of your wireless connection. Place it in an area where the signal will be affected by as few obstructions and little interference as possible. For example, away from appliances which emit wireless signals (e.g. cordless phones, baby monitors) and avoiding barriers (such as walls and doors) between the router and your computer. Ideally, it should be positioned up high – on a bookshelf for example.

4. Check your Wi-Fi settings

Your router has lots of different settings that can affect your wireless broadband signal that can be tweaked and adjusted to help get the best speeds. For example, making sure you use a different wireless channel to your neighbours can reduce interference and drop speeds for both of you. Check your manual for instructions on how to adjust these settings.

5. Secure your network

If you have wireless broadband, the first and foremost thing you should do is secure your wireless network. If you are unwittingly sharing your connection with unauthorised users then they will be using up valuable

bandwidth. This means that the speed of your connection and download allowance could take a battering, not to mention the security threat this poses.

6. Use less bandwidth

There are many applications (such as Windows Updates or Skype) that may discreetly start running when you log in to your computer and these may slow your connection down without you even realising. Set these applications so they don't run automatically – this should reduce your bandwidth overhead and make a noticeable difference to your connection speed. Find out what's running on a PC by pressing Alt + Ctrl + Delete to bring up your task manager.

7. Fit an iPlate

If you can't get anywhere with your speed, fitting a BT iPlate (around £5) is an option for you. Also known as a broadband accelerator, this connects to your phone socket and gets rid of a lot of the potential interference in there. In some cases an iPlate can boost broadband speed by 60 per cent – although there is no guarantee with this.

8. Expand your wireless network

If you're having trouble with wireless, you could invest in a wireless repeater. These improve your wireless range, bouncing the signal over a larger area. You could also add a powerline adapter. These use the wiring in your house to send a Wi-Fi signal around. Wherever you have a free plug socket, you'll be able to position a wireless hotspot. This is a significantly more expensive option, but is often much more effective.

9. Stop using wireless

A wireless connection will always be slower than a wired one. When you set up a wireless network, you should expect a bit of a drop in speed – no problem for people with fast connections, but for those whose broadband moves like an exhausted snail, it may not be the best choice. So try connecting directly via Ethernet cable if you can. You'll likely find speeds better – and if you don't, it implies that the problem may be with your provider, not your equipment.

10. Traffic jams

The time of day at which you go online can greatly affect connection speeds. When lots of people are trying to access the internet at the same time there is increased traffic on the physical phone lines and also each website's servers. Heaviest traffic is usually in the evenings, so to benefit from the fastest speeds you should try to surf when internet traffic is low, generally in the day time or very late at night. If you have heavy downloading to do, you will get the fastest download speeds during off-peak periods.

11. It's good to talk

If you are not getting what you expected from your ISP, then give them a call. You may be able to boost your connection speed simply by asking them if they can identify a fault on the line, taking steps to fix it for you. Alternatively, if you've been on the same package for a long time – 12 months or more – your package might be outdated. Not only may faster options be available, you may be paying more than you need to. It's up to you which of those is worse.

12. Switch

After all these measures, if your current package still isn't giving you the speed you want, it may be time to switch provider. Use an Ofcom-accredited comparison calculator to compare broadband deals and find a more suitable package for you.