



## Connectivity and coronavirus (COVID-19)

### London's access to mobile and broadband networks

We know that with lots of Londoners now having to stay at home, people have lots of questions about whether mobile and broadband networks will be able to cope as more of us are now working from home.

Both mobile and fixed networks are built to support peak times. The types of application that people use heavily at peak times, during evenings at home, such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, Sky Go and other streaming or gaming services, use much more bandwidth than typical working tools like emails, voice and video calling.

There is enough capacity in the system to cope with many more people working from home, even with the significant increases in home working we are seeing due to coronavirus (COVID-19) impacts.

If many engineers are ill or required to isolate, broadband providers may have to prioritise repairing faults over new connections. However, operators have been considering this for some time and have been developing plans for coping with such a situation.

### Telecommunications works in London

Londoners may see telecommunications workers continuing to do essential works keeping broadband and mobile networks running across London. Providers and operators are following advice from the Government to ensure that their staff are adhering to physical distancing measures as well as having the correct personal protective equipment (PPE). Operators will be taking extra precautions if they are required to enter your property including asking regarding vulnerable people, and whether any occupants are occupying.

On Friday 20 March, the Government announced that those working in telecommunications would be considered key workers. This is including, but not limited to, network operations, field engineering, call centre staff, IT and data infrastructure, 999 and 111 critical services. Workers should confirm with their employer that, based on their business continuity arrangements, their specific role is necessary for the continuation of this essential public service. Employers can provide a letter of confirmation for the worker. Please see [Government guidance for more information](#).

On Friday 27 March, a joint statement [found here](#) was released by the Department for Transport (DfT), Streetworks UK (SWUK), Highways Authority and Utilities Committee (HAUC) and JAG UK to provide guidance on essential streetworks during the COVID-19 outbreak. The Government also released further guidance [found here](#) for telecommunications infrastructure deployment in England.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has created a [dedicated webpage](#) for providers to access information about deployment of telecommunications infrastructure in England. This can be also be found through DCMS's [Digital Connectivity Portal](#) which houses wider information for local authorities and providers to improve digital connectivity.

### The GLA's Connected London team

The [Connected London team](#) are continuing their work remotely. We are regularly monitoring and discussing live issues with connectivity providers to ensure Londoners have the connectivity they need to work from home. We are working directly with operators to ensure they are able to address faults across London. We are also maintaining relationships across London boroughs and providing them with updates as we receive them. The Connected London team are speaking with Ofcom to understand how future developments and potential further restrictions on movement may impact the sector and will update this page with any developments.

If you are experiencing issues with your connectivity please contact your mobile or broadband provider. Should an engineer visit be required you may be asked some additional questions regarding whether you are self-isolating or if there are vulnerable people who are taking social distancing. This does not necessarily mean an engineer will not be able to visit, but some extra precautions may be taken.

Ofcom initially [published some guidance](#) for how to prepare your broadband for working from home, and how to improve your [indoor coverage](#). Followed up with a [dedicated webpage](#) which offers practical advice and tips for how to get the most out of your broadband.

Wiredscore has [published this article](#) on improving your internet whilst working from home.

Below we have provided a list of guidance from various operators.

#### Operator guidance

On 10 April, through a [joint statement](#) with Government, the UK's major internet and mobile companies have agreed to work with NHS England and NHS Improvement, and NHSX to:

- Offer identified NHS frontline staff, who are existing customers, the mobile data access, voice calls and text they need, at no extra cost, on their personal mobiles used for work purposes, to enable the staff to work remotely without fear of extra charges and limitations;
- Ensure NHS clinicians working from home have, wherever possible, prioritised broadband upgrades to superfast or other improvements they might need, in order to perform tasks, such as consultations carried out via video conferencing and to download/upload large medical files. Clinicians with slow or standard broadband speeds, for example, would be eligible to be upgraded to superfast speeds where their current connections are insufficient. Some providers will upgrade customers who are NHS workers on to faster speeds without any extra charges.
- Improve connectivity in care homes that have slow, or no, broadband connections, wherever possible; and
- While patients having remote consultations will get the best experience on a fixed broadband connection, there are a small proportion of mobile-only households. Operators have already agreed generous data allowances for their vulnerable mobile customers, so that patients that can only use a mobile connection for their video consultations will have sufficient data available.

Please contact your service providers to better understand the options available to you during this time.

#### Broadband

- [Openreach](#) have published guidance on [their website](#).
- [BT's Group](#) Chief Technology Officer released this explanatory [video on Twitter](#) and has posted guidance on [their website](#).
- [Virgin Media UK](#) are giving mobile pay monthly mobile subscribers unlimited minutes and a 10GB data boost at no extra cost, for a month. Here is [their statement](#).
- [Sky Broadband](#) are providing customers with a number of extras including making Sky Go Extra free to customers, making landline calls free, and providing additional data for mobile customers. Guidance is available on [their website](#).
- [Community Fibre](#) have provided guidance for their customers on [their website](#).
- [G.Network](#) have provided guidance for their customers on [their website](#).

#### Mobile

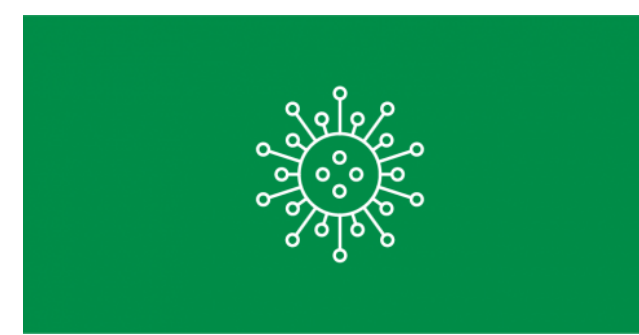
- [Vodafone](#) have released this [social media post](#) to inform customers on how to ensure they keep their devices clean and created a [dedicated webpage](#) for customers. Vodafone have made access to NHS Online free without using data.
- [Three UK](#) have made NHS 111 calls free and have published guidance on [their website](#).
- [EE](#) have arranged for NHS staff to receive 6 months unlimited data and published guidance on [their website](#).
- [O2](#) have made data free access to a number of websites including NHS Online. Including free calls to NHS 111 and have asked customers who may struggle to pay bills to get in touch. They have published guidance on [their website](#).
- [GiffGaff](#) have made data free access to a number of websites including NHS Online, as well as free calls to NHS 111 and published a statement on [their website](#).
- [Tesco Mobile](#) have made data free access to a number of websites including NHS Online and have made free evening and weekend calls for their customers, see [their website](#) for information.

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