

Broadband Basics: How to check what's available

One in a series of Digital Connectivity Guides

*A guide for residents and businesses
on checking on what broadband is available
to you and your options to get connected*

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Broadband in Worcestershire

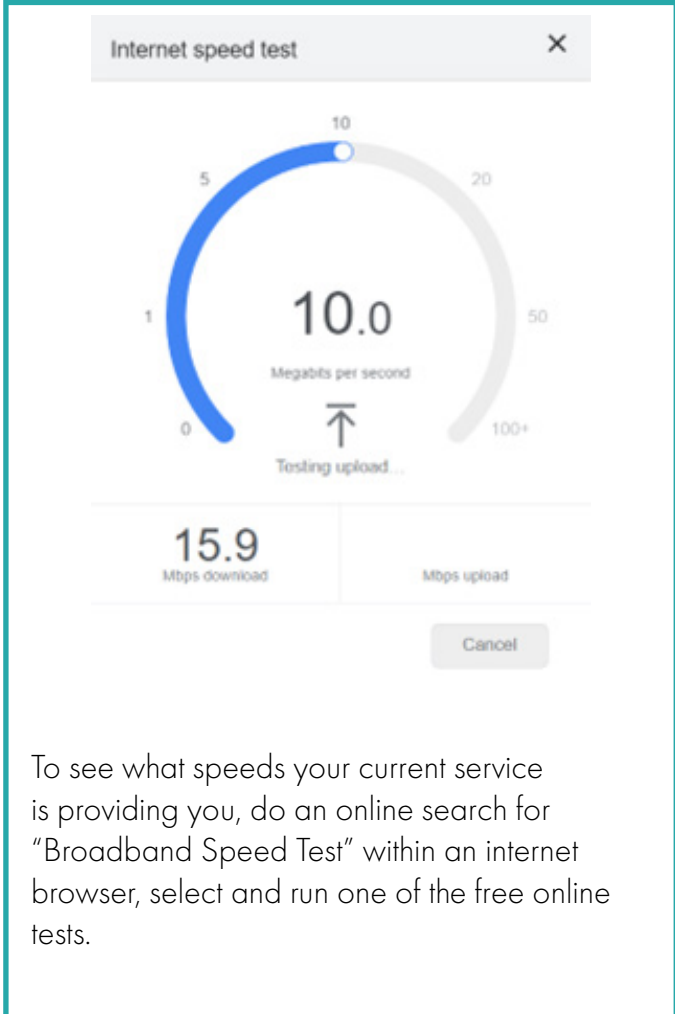
In the last few years, our society has become increasingly dependent on broadband to meet a wide variety of our needs. Whether its streaming on-demand TV, online gaming, working from home or businesses providing services online, a good broadband connection has become vital. The fastest, most reliable broadband is quickly being made available across our county but it's not available everywhere yet or customers don't understand how they can access these new services. Read on to learn more about the different types of broadband, how to check what services you can access, how to sign-up for better services, and what you can do if the services available do not meet your needs.

Broadband basics

The jargon can quickly get confusing when it comes to broadband so here are a few key terms to understand when you start exploring what's available to you.

- **Download speeds** – These refer to how many megabits of data per second (Mbps) you can download to allow you to access things such as films, photos, videos, and other files. For example the download speeds needed for streaming TV programmes have a recommended minimum range of 1.5Mbps to 25Mbps depending on the streaming platform and the level of definition you want to stream in. However, your requirements will quickly increase if you have multiple people and / or devices using your broadband at the same time in your household. So, if your household is streaming TV, making video calls and gaming online, you'll need much higher speeds.
- **Upload speeds** – These refer to how many megabits of data per second (Mbps) you can upload, this matters when you are gaming, attaching files to emails and moving files to the cloud like when you transfer photos from your phone or back up a device. Often on 'standard' and 'fibre to the cabinet' broadband Upload speeds have been much lower than the download speeds, with newer packages on 'fibre to the premises' broadband the upload speeds are increasing too and in some cases can be the same (synchronous speeds).

- **Standard broadband** – also known as ADSL broadband, this service uses the UK's telephone network and has a maximum download speed of 24Mbps. However, in practice anyone using this type of technology may well get much lower speeds than this especially in rural areas.



The screenshot shows an 'Internet speed test' window. A circular gauge indicates a download speed of 10.0 Megabits per second. Below the gauge, it says 'Testing upload...'. At the bottom, it displays '15.9 Mbps download' and 'Mbps upload'. A 'Cancel' button is visible in the bottom right corner.

To see what speeds your current service is providing you, do an online search for "Broadband Speed Test" within an internet browser, select and run one of the free online tests.

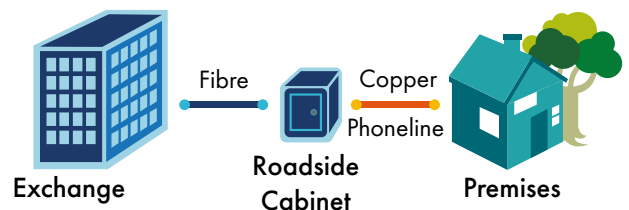


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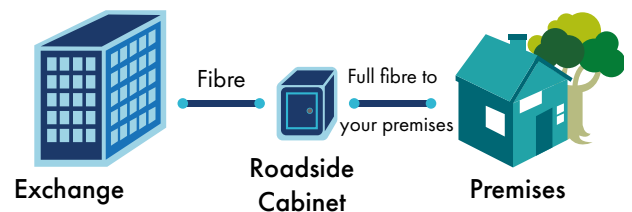
- **Fibre to the cabinet (FTTC):** Fibre optic cables mostly replaced the old copper-based telephone network, but copper wires are used for the last part of the network from a local 'street cabinet' to your property. Using a copper section of wiring limits the maximum speed of this technology to 80Mbps. In reality, the speeds you receive become slower the further away you are from the street cabinet. Speeds over 24Mbps are often referred to as 'superfast'.
- **Full fibre / Fibre to the premises (FTTP):** Fibre optic cables go all the way from the exchange to the premises and offer the fastest speeds available, capable of exceeding 1,000Mbps (1Gbps). These full fibre networks and others capable of 1Gbps are often referred to as 'gigabit capable'.
- **Lease lines / private network / ethernet:** These terms are often used to describe a broadband service that is purchased and paid for by a private individual / company when the main networks do not meet their required demands, more on this is provided in another guide.

There are two types of fibre deployment:

FTTC - Part Fibre Broadband



FTTP - Full Fibre Broadband



How to check what you can get

As of July 2023, c98.5% of premises in Worcestershire could receive superfast broadband and c65% could receive gigabit capable broadband (and these figures are increasing all the time as new networks are built). This coverage is not just provided by one company building a single broadband network of wires but by several different companies that frequently compete for customers in the same areas.

To get the full picture, you will need to do some homework and check whether gigabit capable, superfast or standard broadband services are available via operators in your neighbourhood.

As well as completing a general search using your internet browser for 'full fibre networks near me' or similar, you may want to check the following providers we know to be deploying networks in Worcestershire. (We are not endorsing these networks in any way or saying that they are the only ones, just that we know they are in our county and offering services.)

- **Airband:** www.airband.co.uk
- **Be-Fibre:** www.be-fibre.co.uk
- **CityFibre:** www.cityfibre.com/residential
- **Full Fibre Ltd:** www.fibreheroes.co.uk
- **Gigaclear:** www.gigaclear.com
- **Hyperoptic:** www.hyperoptic.com
- **Openreach:** www.openreach.com/fibre-broadband
- **Pure Fibre:** www.purefibre.net
- **Virgin Media/O2:** www.virginmedia.com/postcode-checker
- **Zzoomm:** www.zzoomm.com

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Each broadband infrastructure provider will have a 'Postcode Checker' where you can enter your details to find out what speeds are available now, whether deployment is planned, or if they are not intending to deploy in your area.

Some of the broadband infrastructure providers such as Openreach do not sell broadband directly to you as the customer but allow other broadband Internet Service Providers (ISPs) like Talk-Talk, Sky, BT etc. to sell to you using their network. Think of these like your gas or electricity providers where one company owns the pipes and wires but another provides you the service and sends you your bills.

Several broadband infrastructure providers do not allow other ISPs to sell on their networks and so you must use their ISP if you want to use their network. Whilst some infrastructure providers act as an ISP on their network and also let others sell off it too.

If you're happy with what's available, then some things to consider

Most customers are now fortunate enough to find that there is a service available to meet their needs. But before you place an order you should consider the following.

1. Compare the offers of the ISPs available on the networks open to you. You may want to consider speed, price, data limits and quality of service.
2. Check your existing commitment to your current supplier in terms of contract length and any charges for leaving your contract early.

Further guidance on the switching process can be found at [How To Switch Broadband Provider - Which?: www.which.co.uk/reviews/broadband/article/how-to-switch-broadband-provider-a1VrH1b61tEU](http://www.which.co.uk/reviews/broadband/article/how-to-switch-broadband-provider-a1VrH1b61tEU)

If you're unsure on any of these options, please get in touch with the Digital Infrastructure and Connectivity Team, emailing: broadband@worcestershire.gov.uk

What to do if the broadband available doesn't meet your needs

For a significant minority of customers in Worcestershire there isn't currently a decent broadband service available. But help is at hand. There is another guide available in this series, 'Alternative Solutions to your Fixed Broadband Connectivity', which suggests some alternate technologies to fibre, such as mobile and low earth orbiting satellite. There are also a number of funding schemes available aimed at supporting communities and businesses in areas where broadband connectivity is poor.

You can also visit our Complementary Schemes web page or follow us on social media for the latest news on deployments across the county:

www.worcestershire.gov.uk/digitalconnectivity

 [/broadbandworcs](https://www.facebook.com/broadbandworcs)

 [@ConnectingWorcs](https://twitter.com/ConnectingWorcs)

How to Guides

This guide is one of number of guides Worcestershire County Council has created to help support residents, businesses, and visitors to get the most out of their broadband and mobile connectivity.

Other guides can be found on the Worcestershire County Council website:

www.worcestershire.gov.uk/digitalconnectivity

The information provided by Worcestershire County Council through these Mobile and Broadband Connectivity Guides is for general informational and educational purposes only and is not a substitute for professional advice. Accordingly, if you are not familiar with the technology and before taking any actions based upon such information, we encourage you to consult with the appropriate professionals.

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