



Superfast Broadband Questions and Answers

Questions and Answers:

Q 1: Do I automatically get superfast broadband once the work on the cabinets has been finished and the service has been switched on?

A: No. This is a brand new service and has to be specially ordered, either as an *upgrade* to your existing broadband service or possibly as a new service or *new line*, if you don't already have some form of broadband installed and working.

You do not have to change to a new superfast service: you have the option to stay on your current "Standard" tariff with your present supplier using your current equipment. However Openreach has told us that:

"Unless the customer is on a fibre based service then they will see no improvement in their speed. This is because they will still be on copper wire all the way back to the exchange. Customers will only have their broadband line switched to a fibre line if they take a fibre service."

Q2: Do I have to order superfast broadband from BT, as BT installed the cabinet?

A: No, you don't. BT Retail is just one of many companies able to offer superfast broadband. BT advertises its own superfast service under the "Infinity" brand, but other suppliers offer services based on the same fibre technology, so you should definitely shop around!

Q3: Do I have to stay with my existing supplier?

A: No, you don't have to stay with them (*unless* you're under contract for a period which may cost you a penalty to move to another supplier), so you should always look to see what deals are available if you switch. All the potential suppliers will automatically know when superfast broadband is available in the area, so you may find you will be offered a good deal to tempt you to move to (or stay with) them.

Q4: From which companies can I get superfast broadband?

A: A lot of suppliers offer superfast broadband in the UK. However, not all of them may choose to provide services here, so you will need to check which ones offer this service nearer the connection time. A couple of useful comparison sites are:

<http://www.uswitch.com/broadband/> and <https://broadband.moneysavingexpert.com/>

Q5: Will it cost me lots more money to get this much faster service?

A: Not necessarily. Superfast services will cost a little more, but prices should not be substantially higher than you currently pay – it depends on how fast a service you need and how much capacity.

There are some less expensive suppliers available, for example if you have a limited budget or are looking to reduce costs. It will definitely pay you to shop around, possibly using the comparisons sites we mention above.

Q6: Do I still have to pay a line-rental fee if I order superfast broadband?

A: Yes, there is still a charge for the monthly rental cost of the copper wire into your house, so this won't disappear if you sign-up for fibre broadband. Some suppliers offer a small monthly discount if you sign-up for 12 months or pay up-front for the rental for the year, but for the moment that's a cost you will still see on your bill.

Q7: Will I need to commit to a new minimum term contract?

A: Probably yes. A lot of the companies will ask you to sign up for an extra 12 or even 18 months or to extend your *existing* contract if you decide to stay with your current supplier.

Again, it is worth shopping around as you may get shorter term deals than this, although the suppliers offering greater flexibility may charge slightly more each month for their services.

Q8: OK, so which of these companies would you recommend to us?

A: Sorry, we can't and we don't recommend specific companies or services. However, we know that broadband can be a confusing subject and that everyone has different needs. For example, you may live alone, share broadband with other family members, or live in a multi-tenancy property. Some of you may run businesses from home.

Q9: How does superfast broadband actually get into my house?

A: The FTTC (Fibre To The Cabinet) service that is going to be available to us still comes from the new cabinets into your property over the normal copper telephone line that you probably already have installed. Even if you use a company such as TalkTalk or Sky, their services still need a working telephone line.

Q10: What if I don't have a working telephone in my property already?

A: You will still probably have a telephone line installed in your property but it is just not being used. Your supplier will be able to check this for you.

If you're one of the few properties that *doesn't* already have such a connection, there may be a new connection charge to pay but this is dependent on the supplier, so ask them first.

Q11: What speed will I get?

A: The maximum download speed you will get from the new fibre service is currently around 76-80Mbps, while the upload speed can be up to 20Mbps (often marketed as 76/20 or similar).

Some companies offer a choice between the full 80Mb service and a slower 40Mb service. Obviously prices differ and the upload speeds available on the latter are much lower which could be a consideration if you have to upload lots of large files.

The *actual* speed you get will depend on the distance of your house from the new cabinet, as the signal has to pass along the length of copper wire from the cabinet to your house. The speed is also affected by the condition of the existing cables both outside and inside the house. For example, if you have lots of old extensions wired in and around your property, this *may* reduce the speed you'll get.

All being well you should be able to obtain close to 76Mbps if you are within 300m of the new cabinet. Even people at the very edges of villages should see a speed improvement over the level they see now. For example, 1km away from the cabinet, the download speed should be around 28Mbps. You should note that you will get the fastest speeds in your home if your PC is connected directly to your hub: transmission over wi-fi will reduce the speed somewhat.

At the end of this note are maps of Ashendon village and Pollicott showing the anticipated, achievable speeds once the new system is operational. These maps have been prepared by Peter Johnson, our resident expert, using his professional knowledge and the Openreach data available to us. The original Openreach data is available on the Ashendon Parish Council website. Remember, these are estimated speeds and not guaranteed.

Q12: How can I find out how fast my service will be in advance?

A: When you are ready to connect to the new service, ask your chosen supplier. They will be able to give you an estimate before you go ahead and order. In practice, it's possible that you'll do better than they quote, but much will depend on the condition of the copper wire from the cabinet.

BT have said that if any house / group of houses do not get the minimum superfast speed of 24 Mbps then they will consider installing a direct fibre cable to the premises, but this would be at extra cost, typically £1000 - £2000 per property.

Q12A What about Poor Quality of Copper Wiring to Properties?

A: Some houses report that corroded copper wiring causes their currently slow broadband. We are advised that the current low speeds available to the village mean that BT Openreach would not previously replace copper wire as any improvement would have been negligible.

However, when we have the new cabinets sending out 80Mbps and a target speed of (for example) 60 Mbps, BT tell us that degradation will be much less than now; but if a household is not achieving a speed that relates to their distribution point and distance from it, it is a fault and BT Openreach will address this once reported to them by the customer's Internet Service Provider. So it is something that will be addressed after installation. The working group will,

however, raise this point with Openreach for the 15th January Parish Council meeting.

Q13: How long will it take from ordering until I benefit from superfast broadband?

A: Even if you need to order a new copper line into your property (that is, if you don't already have a telephone line), it's likely that this will take between 8-10 working days.

The company you choose should keep you updated with progress. Bear in mind that lots of people will probably be ordering this new high speed service when it first goes live, so this may cause installations to be delayed initially, depending on the number of engineers available, but hopefully not for too long.

Q14: I've been offered a choice between self-install and engineer install. What does this mean?

A: Some suppliers now offer you the choice to *self-install* – this means that an engineer won't have to come into your house, but everything will be sent to you for you to plug in on the day.

Unless you've recently had your BT wall box faceplate changed to one that says "Mk2" on the front *and* you're confident that your house wiring is in good condition, we'd still recommend the peace of mind (and optimized setup) you should get by choosing an *engineer install*.

Q15: OK, I decide to go ahead and order superfast broadband. What happens next?

A: Your supplier will be able to tell you what day to expect the engineer. The supplier may also decide to provide you with a new router (and possibly wall box faceplate), as your old one may not be up to the job of working at this new, higher speed. Some of the companies will offer this free as part of the contract. Some will charge a small(ish) one-off amount.

Also, if you know already that your current router is compatible this replacement may not be necessary.

For the nerds amongst you: if it will talk PPPoE via a WAN port in a combined VDSL modem & router, then it should be fine; but if those words mean nothing to you, then you should ask your supplier for guidance.

Q16: What is involved on the day and what do I have to do?

A: The supplier should have given you a time window, during which the engineer will be working. He/she is likely to call you in advance to check that you're around to provide access into the house (if you've chosen an engineer install option).

It will take an hour or so to complete the work. Some of this will involve changes at the cabinet and some in your house. When the engineer comes to your house, either you will have been sent a new Openreach modem, or he/she will provide one, to plug into the main BT faceplate (which is normally where your **existing** ADSL modem and telephone line are connected) and he may also replace this faceplate with a newer version.

You should make sure you have a free power socket available for this new modem as well as for your existing or new router

Q17: Is that it?

A: Not quite: *it can be a good idea to make sure your engineer is provided with tea and biscuits!*

The engineer will test that the circuit from your house to the cabinet and on to the exchange is working properly and will plug your router into the Openreach modem to complete things. This should then “just work” – either because your supplier/ISP has sent a new one, ready to go, or because the existing one is already setup correctly. The engineer won’t leave until this test stage is completed **and** you’re satisfied that it’s working.

The engineer is *technically* NOT responsible for anything else in the house, but they can be very helpful, so **do** make sure your existing devices still do what they’re supposed to – items such as your laptop or tablet, PlayStation, games consoles, Smart TVs – before waving them on their way.

If you ARE having a problem connecting, they’ll often be happy to help you sort it out. This is why the tea & biscuits can sometimes be so important!

Q18: Will I see superfast speeds straight away?

A: Pretty much, yes. As we mentioned above, your supplier (and also probably the engineer after he’s run his tests) will have told you what sort of speed you can expect from this new service, so start surfing, or stream a film to see how it's doing.

There’s likely to be a period of time for the service to “bed in”, so be prepared for a few days of “ups and downs” before everything properly settles down. If after a week you think you’re still not getting the speed you were expecting or were promised when you signed-up, then ask your supplier to check what’s wrong.

They are responsible for fault finding, for fixing things for you and for calling out Openreach if they find there’s a fault anywhere **outside** your premises.

If the fault is inside your premises and beyond your BT wall box then BT will charge you for the visit and any remedial work they do (currently £129.99!) so do check what you can inside your house before you call them out!

Q19: What benefits will I see with superfast broadband?

A: Superfast broadband can give you speeds up to 80 times faster than we currently experience. This can dramatically improve activities such as watching movies via iPlayer or Netflix (no more downloading programmes overnight!). It can also enable you to download your high quality music and high definition movie purchases in minutes rather than hours. You will be able to send and receive large, high quality photographs without even noticing, or stay in touch via Skype or FaceTime with friends or relatives abroad.

Do you have children (or adults) connecting their tablets, games consoles, TVs and other smart devices and complaining how slow everything is, especially in the evenings? Superfast broadband will enable these devices to work at the same time.

If you run a business from home, you can have everyone in the business connecting to the Internet at high speeds.

Superfast broadband also means that future services such as conferences or consultations via video link and super high-definition TV and live sports events will be accessible to you.

ATTACHED: Anticipated Achievable Broadband Speeds

David Crwys-Williams

for Connecting Ashendon CIC and The Parish Council Broadband Working Party

Anticipated Achievable Broadband Speeds

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