

Cheaper broadband for struggling families: 14 August 2022

- New system allows customers to give permission to broadband providers to confirm their eligibility for cheaper deals
- Plans come alongside further deals secured by Cost of Living Business Tsar and former Just Eat boss, David Buttress, as part of the Government's [Help for Households](#) campaign
- Further series of cost of living deals will provide extra support to families as kids return to school

Broadband bills could be cut for millions of low-income households under Government plans to encourage '[social tariffs](#)'.

A new service, which will go live next week and be run by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), will allow internet service providers to verify – with customers' permission – whether they are in receipt of a relevant benefit and therefore eligible for extra financial support.

The Government has called on all broadband providers to offer and promote social tariffs – discounted broadband and mobile deals for people on Universal Credit and other benefits – with statistics showing only 1.2% of those eligible have taken advantage of such a package.

The scheme is already supported by Virgin Media O2 who, following discussions with Government, has announced today that they will use the system to verify eligible customers signing up to their Essential Broadband tariff. The company will also waive early termination fees for those moving from existing tariffs.

Customers on social tariffs could in some cases save over a hundred pounds a year. The new system will also simplify the process by removing the need for customers to prove their entitlement to broadband providers as regularly as every month. Social tariffs are available to eligible customers in 99% of the country following Government-led negotiations with broadband companies.

The Government's Cost of Living Business Tsar, David Buttress, has welcomed the new scheme and committed to continue working with industry to scale up and promote existing social tariffs, as well as encourage all providers to offer a discounted tariff.

Cost of Living Business Tsar, David Buttress, said:

Times are tough and families across the country are feeling the pinch, so we're making it easier for companies to reduce phone and broadband bills for struggling families.

Some of the biggest network operators have already committed to

take advantage of this new scheme and we want to see other providers follow their lead so that everyone eligible for a social tariff can access one.

This is just one of the ways that we're working with businesses to offer help through our Help for Households campaign, building on the comprehensive £37 billion package of support already being provided by Government.

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Thérèse Coffey, said:

It's more important than ever that people get the financial support available to them, including cheaper broadband for benefit claimants, and this change makes these social tariffs even easier to access.

I'd like to thank those providers leading the way in moving customers over to discount rates, and I encourage others to follow suit to help millions of households to cut bills.

Digital Secretary Nadine Dorries, said:

Social tariffs are vital for families struggling with bills, keeping them connected even in tough times.

Our discussion with broadband companies led to the range of social tariffs on the market today and we've secured a raft of new cost-of-living commitments from them to ensure help is available for anyone that needs it.

I urge anyone concerned about falling behind on payments to contact their supplier to see what support is available.

Internet service providers will be required to gain customers' consent before speaking to DWP about their eligibility. DWP will minimise the information provided, sharing nothing other than confirmation that the person is entitled to a qualifying benefit at the time of contact. This ensures that claimants' data remains as safe as possible.

Alongside the launch of today's scheme, the Government's Cost of Living Tsar, David Buttress, has also announced a further series of cost-of-living deals and discounts as part of the Government's [Help for Households](#) campaign.

The deals have been negotiated with some of the UK's largest businesses and follow those already [announced last month](#) to access the full range deals.

The new deals include:

- A bespoke new deal with the publishing firm Scholastic, who are offering 20% off children's books. Scholastic will also donate an additional 20% of all order values over £10 in Rewards to local schools for them to spend on books and resources to help stock libraries and classrooms.
- A curated set of Back to School deals from Amazon, with discounts ranging from backpacks and school uniforms, including up to 30% off Clarks School Shoes, to deals on stationary essentials from BIC, Staedtler and Papermate. Amazon Fresh is also offering savings, from lunchbox essentials to laundry detergent.

A number of other Help for Households partners, including Marks & Spencer, Primark, Shoezone, ZSL and Go-ahead have also agreed to promote their existing support schemes under the Help for Households campaign to raise awareness. For example, ZSL are offering new £3 tickets for London Zoo and Whipsnade.

Lutz Schüler, Chief Executive Officer of Virgin Media O2, said:

Connectivity is a lifeline people can't go without, and as one of the first providers to have introduced a social broadband tariff in 2020, we are committed to making it as easy as possible for customers to get support with the cost-of-living crisis. We're working to implement the API as soon as possible making it faster and easier to sign up for our social tariff as part of a comprehensive plan to boost the awareness, availability and attractiveness of Essential Broadband.

Catherine Bell, Co-group Managing Director, Scholastic UK said:

We're delighted to be part of the Government's Help for Households campaign. We recognise the pressures that the current cost of living crisis is bringing and understand that back to school can be a very expensive time for parents. We firmly believe that reading for pleasure for children is more important now than ever and through our school Book Clubs we are pleased to offer a huge range of books with a special Help for Households discount for September that parents can access via their school organiser or by visiting our Book Clubs website. Every Book Club purchase comes with the added benefit that Scholastic will donate an additional 20% of all order values over £10 in Rewards to your local school for them to spend on books and resources to help stock libraries and classrooms.

Kathryn England, Chief Operating Officer of ZSL London Zoo said:

The thrill and awe of a visit to ZSL London or Whipsnade Zoo is something that we want as many people as possible to experience. Our Community Access Scheme ensures that cost isn't a barrier to that. In partnership with the UK Government's Help for Households scheme, every day for the rest of the school summer holidays (until Sunday 4 September) we are providing additional tickets to either London or Whipsnade Zoo, from as little as £3 per person – helping us to introduce even more people to the wonders of the animal kingdom. Our zoos help to inspire a life-long love of wildlife. Home to endangered species from all over the world, we aim to empower every person who visits our zoos to help us protect these animals. Now, more than ever, it's so important that everyone has a better understanding of nature and the role we can all play in helping to protect our precious planet. Just visit www.zsl.org/CAS to find out more.

The government's Cost of Living Business Tsar is working to secure further deals under the Help for Households campaign which will be announced over the coming weeks and months.