

Half a million frontline NHS workers benefit from coronavirus telecoms deal

Half-a-million NHS frontline staff in England have benefited from mobile and fixed broadband offers to stay connected at work during the coronavirus outbreak.

This follows an [agreement](#) made in April between the Government, NHS and telecommunications companies with 29 mobile and fixed broadband providers agreeing to prioritise connectivity improvement for NHS frontline staff.

Connectivity is more important than ever as many NHS frontline staff find themselves adapting to remote working.

Almost 500,000 NHS staff have claimed directly from their provider or through the NHS triaging system.

Will Loughborough, Consultant Radiologist from Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust said:

I am a Consultant Radiologist and because of COVID-19 and social distancing I'm spending more time than usual reporting from home and remote participation in MDTs.

The triage process was straightforward and within three days I received a new router as part of a temporary free broadband upgrade with my provider.

The speed of downloading images has improved greatly meaning I can report a higher volume of studies in a given session. This is particularly relevant for more complex studies such as PET-CT, which is an essential study to help guide the treatment of patients with complex cancer.

Minister for Digital Infrastructure Matt Warman said:

We've depended on our NHS heroes throughout this crisis and I am glad we've been able to provide this package of support from our brilliant telecoms companies to keep them connected.

That so many frontline staff during this difficult time are benefitting from the mobile data, calls and texts they need at no extra cost is no less than they deserve.

Minister for Care Helen Whateley said:

NHS staff have been at the frontline of our battle against this disease and I am hugely grateful for their expertise and dedication in caring for patients during this difficult and unprecedented period.

This agreement has helped NHS staff stay connected with their colleagues and patients and allowed them to work flexibly from home, ensuring patients continue to get the care they need.

The [ongoing commitments](#) made by UK telecoms providers include prioritised access to mobile data access, voice calls and texts on personal mobiles for work purposes, so that NHS staff can work without fear of extra charges and limitations.

There were also broadband improvements where possible for NHS clinicians working from home, so that they can perform tasks such as consultations via video conferencing and review radiology images.

Providers involved in the commitment include BT, EE, O2, Vodafone, Three, Tesco Mobile, Virgin Media, talktalk, Sky, Openreach, Gigaclear, Cityfibre, Post Office, ID Mobile, Lycamobile, GiffGaff, Plusnet, KCOM,ASK4, Community Fibre, Zzoomm, Voneus, Smarty, Hyperoptic, G.Network, Spectrum and Wightfibre.

Other firms have committed to help the NHS stay connected during the outbreak by working with customers who find it difficult to pay their bills as a result of coronavirus, removing data allowances on fixed broadband services and offering generous new mobile and landline packages.

Marc Allera, CEO of BT's Consumer Division, said:

Over a quarter of a million NHS staff have taken us up on our unlimited data offer since April and we hope this support has given them one less thing to worry about. Along with the discount we already provide, this is a thank you from all of us at EE to those in the NHS that are working so hard for us all. We've also removed caps on our broadband packages so customers have unlimited data, which helps all those working remotely.

Nina Bibby, Chief Marketing Officer O2 (Telefonica UK) said

We recognise and value the incredible work of NHS frontline workers throughout this challenging period. Mobile connectivity remains more important than ever and from providing thousands of connected devices and additional mobile data and voice calls, through to handing over the keys for The O2 to be used as an NHS training facility, we're proud to support NHS staff and help them stay connected to their colleagues and loved ones.

Nick Jeffery, CEO of Vodafone UK said:

We were delighted to be able to help NHS staff and carers during this difficult period.

Lutz Schüler, CEO of Virgin Media said:

Our NHS staff are the true heroes of this crisis who continue to make huge sacrifices and take risks to battle coronavirus. We are proud to have played our part in helping these incredible individuals get the connectivity and services they needed to support their vital work. Keeping the country connected has been a top priority for Virgin Media since day one and we'll continue working to ensure we deliver.

Clive Selley, CEO of Openreach said:

Everyone at Openreach is proud to be connecting our NHS heroes. The pandemic has shown that digital connectivity is more important than ever for our friends, families and healthcare professionals – so we're cracking on with our plan to build a new, ultrafast and ultra-reliable broadband network to millions more people all over the UK.

Andrew Glover, Chair of the Internet Service Providers Association, said:

The telecoms industry has stepped up throughout this crisis and is proud to have been able to offer such support to the NHS at this time. ISPA has been working with our membership to push through these commitments and we're delighted that so many clinicians have been able to benefit from the scheme.

Allirajah Subaskaran, Founder and Chairman of Lycamobile said:

We're incredibly proud to have been a part of this important Government initiative. It's heartening to know that nearly half a million NHS frontline staff have been able to access mobile and broadband services without having to worry about bills or hidden charges. They have made tremendous sacrifices to ensure the safety of millions of citizens around the country and this is just one small way in which we can say thank you to them for all of their efforts. Our commitment to providing free services to NHS heroes will remain in place until the crisis comes to a close.

Dale Raneberg, CEO, KCOM said:

KCOM is very happy to be able to help support this valuable initiative. NHS staff have worked tirelessly to protect people in the UK throughout the COVID-19 outbreak and where our fibre technology can make it easier and safer for clinicians to consult with patients and to manage their work remotely then it's important and right that we play our part.

Graeme Oxby, Chief Executive Community Fibre said:

Community Fibre thanks all NHS staff who have made such a massive contribution to saving lives. Our own key workers have been keeping London connected and we are delighted that NHS staff have been able to take advantage of the special discounts available to them. We look forward to welcoming more in the coming months.