

Industry and Government Joint Statement on Telecommunications Support for the NHS

Following productive discussions with the Government, NHS and the UK's major telecoms companies have today agreed a set of new commitments to support the NHS.

The NHS needs broadband and mobile services more than ever with many healthcare services (e.g. hospital outpatient appointments) now being provided remotely. Telecoms companies and their workers are making a major contribution to keeping the nation connected during the COVID-19 emergency, ensuring that people can stay and work from home. They have now stepped up further during this national emergency to support the NHS, its staff and patients.

The UK's major internet and mobile companies, namely BT/EE, Openreach, Sky, talktalk, Virgin Media, O2, Three, Vodafone, Cityfibre, Gigaclear, Tesco Mobile, giffgaff, Hyperoptic and KCOM, 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 charge;
- 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.

These commitments are in addition to the support the telecoms companies are providing to the NHS and its patients, including ensuring that the new emergency hospitals being built across the country have the connectivity they need, as well as providing zero-rated access to nhs.uk on mobile connections.

NHS staff will be provided with further information by the NHS on how to

identify to telecommunications providers that they are eligible for this support.

Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

Our NHS heroes need to be able to carry out their vital work without worrying about technology failing them – and people using NHS services online need to be able to rely on their connections.

These welcome commitments will mean frontline NHS staff can use personal phones for work purposes without limits or extra charges, allow GPs to carry out consultations and transfer large files from home, and help vulnerable people who depend most on the NHS for care.

I applaud the NHS for its continued fight to save lives, and mobile and broadband companies who have stepped up yet again to help in the national effort.

NHSX chief executive Matthew Gould said:

Covid-19 has made stark the importance of technology in helping people and those who care for them stay connected.

Technology has the potential to be a tremendous force for good in helping the country and its citizens through the crisis, and we are grateful to industry colleagues for offering their support to the NHS.

Lutz Schüler, CEO of Virgin Media, said:

Everyone at Virgin Media is proud of the work we're doing to help the country stay connected at this difficult time. We're committed to supporting NHS staff whose critical work is keeping us safe. Whether our teams are enhancing services for hospitals and GP surgeries, providing connectivity to care homes or supporting healthcare staff to work remotely, we are working to support the incredible people saving lives every day.

Mark Evans, CEO of O2 said:

I'm proud to see the industry work together to recognise and support the invaluable work of front line NHS staff at this critical time. Connectivity remains more important than ever and we are committed to helping ensure that all our customers can stay in contact with friends, family and colleagues".

Nick Jeffery, CEO of Vodafone UK, said:

We have increased the capacity and reach of our network at the newly established Nightingale hospitals and at many doctors' surgeries up and down the country to ensure we keep patients and NHS staff connected during these challenging times. We're not stopping there. In addition to offering NHS workers free unlimited mobile data, we are exploring the installation of secure video conferencing systems at intensive care units, and have set up dedicated call centres for health organisations within days, when typically it would take months. We are here to support the NHS in any way we can and keep the UK connected.

Robert Finnegan, CEO of Three said:

NHS workers are doing a phenomenal job on the frontline of the UK's response to Coronavirus. All of us in Three UK are happy to be able to play our part by helping supply the connectivity they need.

Stephen van Rooyen, EVP & CEO, U.K. & Europe, Sky:

The whole UK has come together to back our NHS workers and their incredible, selfless effort. We're proud to be able to support them.

Marc Allera, CEO BT, EE and Plusnet said:

The NHS response to this crisis has been remarkable and an inspiration to the whole country. To show our gratitude, we are giving NHS staff on EE unlimited mobile data, so that they can use it to keep connected without any extra charge. We will also work with the NHS to prioritise new fixed broadband connections or upgrades on BT, EE and Plusnet for doctors and other clinicians that might need it as they shift to home-working and video consultations. To our NHS heroes: we thank you.

Clive Selley, CEO of Openreach, said:

Connecting thousands of NHS locations is already a huge source of pride at Openreach, and we're determined to do even more to support the UK's health and social care heroes. We know that broadband can play a pivotal role in protecting the NHS and enabling crucial services to be delivered at a distance. That's why our engineers are still working tirelessly in communities throughout the UK – maintaining the network and building faster, more reliable

connections to care homes, clinicians, the vulnerable and new NHS sites.

Tristia Harrison, CEO of TalkTalk, said:

Britain's NHS workers are nothing short of heroes and heroines, so TalkTalk is determined to do all we can to provide the best possible connectivity and support their vital work in the fight against coronavirus.

Dana Tobak CBE, CEO of Hyperoptic said:

We're happy to do our bit to support the vital work of our NHS frontline workers who are doing the whole country proud in their selfless work to fight Covid-19. Those NHS workers that register for the scheme and are Hyperoptic customers currently taking our 50Mb and 150Mb products will be upgraded to a 1 Gigabit connection for the duration of the crisis at no extra cost. We hope this will help ensure that those NHS procedures that can be done from home, are done from home over our broadband network.

Greg Mesch, CEO of CityFibre, said:

The Coronavirus crisis has highlighted the nation's increasing need for robust and reliable connectivity that allows us to work, access public services and communicate through online services. CityFibre is proud to join with the rest of the telecoms sector so that thousands of NHS workers will be able to work seamlessly with colleagues around the country, while care home residents will be able to access medical services remotely and help them to keep in touch with the friends and family they can no longer see.

Dale Raneberg, CEO of KCOM said:

As a provider of broadband and voice service to the emergency services and to the people that work in them we are happy to support this initiative to help in the fight against COVID-19. Using our fibre services to increase the efficiency of clinical diagnosis while at the same time keeping NHS staff safe will help address the medical challenges that society faces with the pandemic but also protect the front line teams. We are again pleased to join with industry colleagues in establishing a further package of measures to support the NHS and the dedicated people who are keeping it operational. These measures form a critical part of Government's broader efforts to counteract the threat we face from

COVID-19 and the team at KCOM will continue to work with the public and private partners to overcome it.”

Gareth Williams CEO of Gigaclear said:

We recognise the enormous sacrifice and commitment made by frontline NHS staff at this time of national need and will endeavour to play our part in assisting them as much as we can when they are working at home.

Tom Denyard, CEO of Tesco Mobile said:

We know how hard NHS staff are working at the moment and we want to help keep the frontline staff connected. This is a way to show our appreciation for the remarkable job they’re doing to help the nation. We hope that providing increased connectivity will allow them to continue their incredible efforts – we really can’t thank them enough.

Ash Schofield, CEO at giffgaff said:

Today more than ever before, we are as a country in crisis, relying on the heroics of our wonderful NHS. Our brand mission at giffgaff is to put community first, and it is both our honour and privilege, as part of the telecommunications sector, working alongside our government to support our NHS frontline staff”.

Notes to Editors:

- NHS frontline staff who require greater broadband bandwidth for the purposes of clinical activity or require upgraded data/voice packages from their mobile providers, will be identified without needing to proactively call their communications providers. EE, Vodafone and O2 will set out a process or include further detail on their websites for how customers can self-identify as being NHS staff. All other NHS staff, seeking mobile and/or broadband support, will be identified through a triaging process managed by their own NHS organisations. More detailed information will be given to NHS staff in due course.
- It should be noted that it may take several weeks for the processing of broadband upgrades for clinicians to be completed, but the NHS and industry will work as fast as possible in these unprecedented circumstances.
- NHS frontline staff who are Virgin Media customers do not need to take any action because they have already provided an extra 10GB of data to all their post-pay mobile customers, as well as unlimited voice minutes. Virgin are confident that these changes will meet the requirements of

NHS workers at this time, but in the event that some have extra requirements, they will address these using the NHS managed triage process.

- Sky Mobile customers already receive unlimited calls and texts as part of their standard package. In addition, Sky has given all customers 10GB of additional free data in their Piggybank, which can be shared across all the SIMs on the account.
- Vodafone has proactively upgraded customers who are registered for the Vodafone Advantage NHS discount to free unlimited mobile data. Any NHS staff with a personal Pay Monthly who is currently not flagged on Vodafone's system can still take advantage of this offer via VeryMe on the My Vodafone app, accessible on [Apple](#) and [Android](#).
- EE's offer for all NHS staff launched on Thursday 9th April and runs until 9th October. Any NHS staff that are EE pay monthly customers should sign up direct at www.ee.co.uk/NHS. Other EE, BT and Plusnet customers that are front line staff and seeking similar mobile offers, or seeking improvements or upgrades to fixed connections, should register themselves via the process run by the NHS. BT are committed to supporting the NHS and have donated technology to hospitals, doctors and nurses, as well as connecting the NHS Nightingale Hospital.
- Hyperoptic will upgrade existing 50Mb and 150Mb customers in the qualifying NHS worker roles who register for the scheme to a 1 Gigabit service at the same cost of their existing service for the duration of the Covid-19 emergency.
- Tesco Mobile will support eligible frontline NHS pay monthly customers with 500GB data and 5000 minutes. Live date and T&Cs will be confirmed soon at tescomobile.com/coronavirus and once applied to the customer's account, extra connectivity will be available until 30 June 2020.