

Introduction

Starting Point has researched the best value broadband deals available at the time we updated this document (April 2026). We have looked at social tariffs that can be a cheaper cost broadband package for people on certain benefits or a low income.

We can't guarantee that the information in this document will be the cheapest option for you, it's always best to do your own research for your circumstances, and how you use the internet. We can't guarantee the information in this document is up to date, as deals are started and ended on a regular basis. The costs stated were correct on 16th June 2026.

Starting Point take no responsibility for the trustworthiness or reliability of the companies mentioned in this document, but they are widely used businesses.

We use three sites for price comparison of internet or phone deals and have included links in each section below to the individual company websites for their low cost options.

- 'Broadband Genie' - www.broadbandgenie.co.uk
- 'You switch' - www.uswitch.com
- 'Money supermarket' - www.moneysupermarket.com

Broadband providers can confirm which customers are eligible for social tariffs, removing the need for customers to provide their own eligibility.

Eligibility for Social Tariffs

Low-cost broadband and phone plans are for those who are on one of the following benefits:

- Universal Credit
- Pension Credit (Guarantee Credit)
- Employment and Support Allowance
- Jobseeker's Allowance (Income based)
- Income Support

Some providers may extend to PIP, Attendance Allowance or Council Tax support depending upon the provider.

You will need to provide your National Insurance number so they can check your eligibility.

British Telecom

Home Essentials Call Only Plan

Cost: £10 per month

Download speed – not applicable

Includes: Line rental and unlimited minutes calls

Contract: 12 months with no early exit fee

Home Essentials Unlimited Broadband (only where Fibre is unavailable)

Cost: £15 per month

Download speeds: 16 Mbps

Includes: Broadband, line rental and unlimited minutes calls

Contract: 12 months with no early exit fee

Home Essentials Unlimited Fibre Essentials Plan (No Income 36 Mbps)

Cost: £16 per month

Download speeds: 36 Mbps

Includes: Broadband, line rental and unlimited minutes calls

Contract: 12 months with no early exit fee

Home Essentials Fibre Essentials Plan

Cost: £21 per month

Download speeds: 36 Mbps

Includes: Broadband only

Contract: 12 months with no early exit fee

Home Essentials Fibre Plan 2

Cost: £24 per month

Download speeds: 67Mbps

Includes: Broadband only

Contract: 12 months with no early exit fee

Visit the BT website for more information:

<https://www.bt.com/home-essentials>

Virgin Media

Virgin Essential Broadband

Cost: £12.50 per month

Download speeds: 15Mbps

Contract: Flexible 30 days rolling contract with no exit fee

Set up: Free

Virgin Essential Broadband plus

Cost: £20.00 per month

Download speeds: 54Mbps

Contract: Flexible 30 days rolling contract with no exit fee

Set up: Free

Virgin Essential Broadband plus with Flex (TV channels)

Cost: £20.00 per month

Download speeds: 54Mbps

Contract: Flexible 30 days rolling contract with no exit fee

Set up: £0 to £20 set-up - check with Virgin O2

If you want to subscribe to a Virgin Media Essential broadband package, you will need to provide your full name, postcode and date of birth, and confirm your consent to Virgin Media using these details to perform an eligibility check.

Applications must be made online via live chat -

<https://www.virginmedia.com/broadband/low-income-families>

Other broadband providers

Sky Broadband Basics

Cost: £20 per month

Contract: 24 months

Ful Fibre or Sky Broadband Superfast. (Sky Broadband Essential if fibre isn't available in your area)

Calls: Pay as you talk

NOTE: There are no exit fees if you cancel within the 24 month contract. Sky will automatically change your contract to a higher tariff at the end of the 24 months. You will receive an email reminding you that your contract is coming to an end which will also state your new monthly price.

<https://www.sky.com/help/articles/sky-social-tariff>

Best value broadband and social tariffs

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Now Broadband Basics

Cost: £20 per month

Contract: rolling monthly contract with no exit fees as long as you give 31 days' notice.

Download Speed: NOW Broadband 36Mbps

Calls: Pay as you talk

Call 0333 759 5056 as it's not possible to sign up online to the Basics plan.

<https://help.nowtv.com/article/now-broadband-basics>

Vodafone Essentials Broadband

Cost: £20 per month

Contract: 12 months

Download Speed: 73Mbps

NOTE: Vodafone Essential Broadband has no minimum term, so you can choose to cancel the plan whenever you wish. After 12 months you need to reconfirm your eligibility or move to a standard plan. If you take no action after 12 months you will be moved onto an out of contract price of £30 per month.

<https://www.vodafone.co.uk/broadband/essentials-broadband>

VOXI For Now

Cost: £10 per month

Unlimited 5G

Unlimited social media and video that will not use data on these apps

Contract: After 6 months switched to standard plan at £10 per month

Tether multiple devices with mobile hotspot. (Tether means to use (a smartphone) in order to connect a computer or other device to the internet).

The unlimited Video uses supported apps such as YouTube, Netflix, Prime Video, My5, UKTV Play and TVPlayer. <https://www.voxi.co.uk/for-now>

4th Utility (Not widely available yet)

Cost: £13.99 per month

Contract: 30-day rolling contract

Download: 30 Mbps

<https://4thutility.co.uk/social-tariff>

You Fibre (Not widely available yet)

Cost: £16.99 per month

Contract: 12 month contract

Download: 50 Mbps

Call 0333 443 9694 to apply

Price changes to £26.99 per month at the end of the initial 12 month contract if it is not renewed.

MiFi - portable wireless router

What MiFi is

A **battery-powered, pocket-sized router** that broadcasts Wi-Fi.
It uses a **SIM card** to connect to mobile networks, just like a smartphone.
It can connect **multiple devices at once**

How MiFi Works

- The device connects to a 4G or 5G mobile network using its SIM card.
- It converts that mobile signal into a local Wi-Fi network.
- Your devices join that Wi-Fi network just like they would at home.
- Most units run on a rechargeable battery lasting 4–8 hours

Many MiFi devices available in Stockport are locked to networks.

Unlocked are mainly available online. Unlocked are useful if you are eligible for a Databank SIM card.

Unlocked Examples from Amazon (new)

- 4G USB Dongle Modem - £9.99
- 4G LTE Mobile Hotspot Router - £11.32
- 4G LTE High speed - £14.99

Locked example (cheapest)

- Vodafone 30GB dongle - £30 to £40 from The Vodafone Store (Stockport Precinct) or Argos (Stockport Peel Centre).

Broadband speeds versus cheap deals

Beware the cheapest deals that have a low internet speed (11Mbps) or a long contract.

Some companies will have the cheapest tariff but a very low limit and/ or a low speed. A low speed means slow internet (some webpages won't work, and some will be slow). A small data limit will mean you will use up your paid-for data quickly (e.g. watching videos takes up more data) and you may end up paying more if you go over your limit.

We don't recommend going below 30Mb per second, as it will be too slow for a household using broadband.

About Starting Point

Our mission is to support people lead happier and healthier lives through informal learning. That learning must be a quality experience in a community setting that is comfortable, convenient and safe. When it comes to learning, we are the starting point.

- Starting Point run digital skills sessions. Contact us to join a skills session if you are not sure how to do some of the tasks to be able to take up low cost internet. If you struggle to use a live chat or scan and send a document we can support you to do this yourself in our skills sessions.
- Starting Point can connect you to the Good Things Foundation National Databank if you are on a low income (Free calls, free texts and 7-25mb of data per month for 6 months) A databank is a data version of a food bank if you can't afford your mobile bills.
- We run the DigiKnow digital device lending library. If you are on a low income you can borrow a tablet or a laptop, depending on your circumstances. Lending periods vary from 1-6 months.

Contact Starting Point on the DigiKnow helpline: 07724 217888 or
Email: james@startpoint.org.uk