



# News Release

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## **Digital Engagement Team appointed to support communities get better broadband**

A new Digital Engagement Team has been created to support North-East residents, businesses and communities obtain better broadband.

The team of three - funded by the Aberdeen City Region Deal - is available to provide advice, guidance and support to utilise various programmes to obtain superfast broadband (30Mbps).

Scottish Government's Reaching 100% (R100) programme will ensure that all premises in Scotland have access to Superfast Broadband by the end of March 2022, and the Digital Engagement Team are determined to support every North East resident in this journey.

More information on the R100 programme can be found at [www.scotlandsuperfast.com](http://www.scotlandsuperfast.com)

The team is also working closely with local and national telecoms operators to develop the best solutions for every area of Aberdeenshire. Thanks to access to property-level data on connectivity, the Digital Engagement Team can ensure all options are explored for every location in the region which could mean full-fibre broadband, fixed wireless broadband, satellite broadband or mobile broadband.

Current plans mean that 16,055 premises in Aberdeenshire will be connected with full-fibre broadband up to the end of 2027. To receive superfast broadband now, each of these properties has a £400 Interim Voucher, as part of R100, to obtain a temporary, superfast broadband solution while they wait for their full-fibre installation.

### **These vouchers must be utilised by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022**

An additional 7,097 properties have not been included in the planned rollouts of full-fibre broadband. These properties are all eligible to utilise a £5,000 Main Voucher, as part of R100, to obtain a more permanent superfast broadband solution and there is currently no deadline for the Main Vouchers.



## From mountain to sea

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When utilising a voucher, an operator of your choice will claim that voucher on your behalf to cover the costs of installing a superfast broadband solution. To claim that voucher, they must install a solution that guarantees you 30Mbps. Then, you will need to subscribe to the operator for your internet services for a minimum of 12 months.

In line with Ofcom's recommendations around affordability, monthly costs cannot exceed £46.10 per month for superfast speeds, however if you opt for a package of more than 30Mbps, then operators can charge you more.

In addition to the R100, the UK Government is delivering Project Gigabit and the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme (GBVS). This scheme aims to support rural premises across the UK obtain gigabit capable broadband solutions and the voucher scheme can offer up to £1,500 per residential premises or up to £3,500 for business premises.

These vouchers can be used in conjunction with R100 vouchers, effectively meaning up to £8,500 of subsidy is available to some premises.

Cllr Peter Argyle, chair of the council's Infrastructure Services Committee, said: "In this digital age it is essential that our residents and businesses have access to superfast broadband and our Engagement Team will do their utmost to support communities identify the solutions which are best for them. We have nearly 16,000 properties awaiting full-fibre broadband installation by 2027, therefore there is a clear need to get interim packages installed using the vouchers which must be used by the end of March. I would encourage anyone who is in this position to contact our team as a matter of urgency."

Vice-chair Cllr John Cox added: "This small but very dedicated team of officers will be operating as a signposting and advice service for North-East communities and informing and educating residents and businesses about their options. They will help identify bespoke broadband services and will look closely at how properties can be clustered to allow vouchers to be used jointly to give operators and suppliers more incentive to deliver larger or more impactful broadband solution installations."

For links to programme website, details of the different programmes, and more information on the various technology options available, please visit:

<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/business/support-and-advice/communities/Digital-Connectivity/>

You can contact the Digital Engagement Team directly via email at:

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