



# Northumberland County Council

FAO  
All Headteachers

Your ref: RT/JK  
Our ref:  
Enquiries to: Richard Taylor  
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Date: 26 March 2021

Dear Colleague

## **Broadband SLA arrangements 1st April 2021 to 31st August 2022**

I am writing to you to explain the charges for Broadband in 2021/22 and the improvements to Broadband Services to schools planned over the next 18 months.

I must apologise for the late nature of this information, which has been delayed by two factors. Firstly, we have been waiting for confirmation of costs from our key providers. A number of these have only been confirmed in the last fortnight. I'm sorry if the delays in confirming arrangements with third party suppliers has caused you any inconvenience.

Let me reassure you that your Broadband Service for the coming year is secure and unless you made arrangements with us in the last year to withdraw from the current SLA, your Broadband connection will continue, at the same price, for another year.

The second factor which has caused delays is the need to integrate our current Broadband services with the changes coming to Northumberland with the Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN).

LFFN is a really exciting opportunity for schools in Northumberland to finally have access to high speed, high quality connections, regardless of their location in Northumberland. Information Services are managing the LFFN project and funding covers all of the fibre build work up to the school and the internal installation of the fibre up to a termination point near the current equipment. Costs for this range from £29,000 to £49,000 per site and will be covered by the Information Services project. Broadband services on the new LFFN circuits will however be more expensive than the current BT connections and we have worked hard to minimise these cost increases, wherever possible.

LFFN will be rolled to all schools in Northumberland over the next 18 months. We are keen to ensure that there is a smooth transfer of service from the current BT copper circuits, which for some schools have struggled to deliver even a 10mb service, to the much faster LFFN circuits.

Since LFFN is an 18 month project, which aims to have all schools connected by September 2022, it is difficult to know when each school site will be installed and active on LFFN and so move on to the new charges.

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To make this manageable for schools and to ensure charging is clear and simple, we have taken the decision to charge schools the current rate in September 2021 for the coming year. This is regardless of when they are connected to LFFN during the year.

For schools this means that First, Middle, Special & Primary schools will be charged the current rate of £2750 and Highs £8850.

These charges will cover schools from 1st April 2021 to 31st August 2022. Essentially, schools will receive 17 months service for the cost of 12 months.

By doing it this way, it means the Broadband SLA will come in line with other County SLAs which are being charged in September every year. It also avoids schools having a sudden change in Broadband costs part way through the SLA when they are connected to LFFN. We hope this simplified approach to charging will reassure schools and enable them to be certain of the charges for broadband between now and September 2022.

In September 2022, all schools should be connected to LFFN and we will commence charging at the new LFFN rates from September 2022 to September 2023.

We are aware that some smaller schools are concerned about increases in Broadband services on the new network. We have tried to avoid major price changes and to make it as flexible as possible, it is our intention is to offer schools the choice of two connections.

### **New LFFN Broadband charges from September 2022**

For First, Middle, Special and Primary the two connections are:

#### **LFFN 160mb download connection costing £3500 per annum.**

This is our 'default' broadband connection and the one we hope most schools will opt for.

#### **LFFN 100mb download connection costing £3000 per annum.**

We have included this option for smaller schools, particularly those concerned about cost increases.

For High schools, we are also offering a choice of two connections:

#### **LFFN 1gb download & 200mb upload connection costing £6500 per annum.**

Again, this is our 'default' broadband connection and the one we hope most high schools will opt for.

#### **LFFN 500mb download & 165mb upload connection costing £5150 per annum.**

This is intended as an option for smaller high schools, where budget costs may be a concern.

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Finally, over the coming months we need to agree with schools their long-term commitment to buying into the SLA in order to stabilise charges to schools.

The Broadband SLA is made up of two costs:

- A) The physical connection into the school, rented from BT. This is the new LFFN connection. These are individual school costs and if a school leaves the SLA, can be cancelled from BT.
- B) The services provided over that connection. These are things such as Internet Service Provision (ISP), the physical connection onto the Internet connection (backhaul), the filtering and monitoring services (lightspeed and Senso) bought from third party suppliers.

These are costs shared across all schools and if a school leaves the SLA, the amount the remaining schools have to pay increases.

For example, if we take last year there were 141 schools in the 20/21 Broadband SLA, for various reasons, often due to academisation, 14 schools have left the SLA for 21/22. As a consequence the remaining schools have to pay a greater amount for the services in B).

If schools had remained at 141 in the broadband SLA, the LFFN charges in September 2022 would be £300 less for each of the connections offered, eg a small school taking the 100mb service would be paying £2700 per annum.

It is for this reason we need schools to commit to being a member of the broadband SLA for a longer duration, perhaps 3 to 5 years, in order to ensure we can guarantee there will be no price rises and also tie 3rd party suppliers in at fixed costs.

It is our intention to liaise with schools and suppliers over the coming months and agree the length of time all parties are prepared to commit to.

### **Schools not a member of the Broadband SLA**

Schools not part of the current broadband SLA are welcome to join the broadband SLA when they are connected to LFFN. They can of course, discuss with their current provider to see if they are able to offer a service which makes use of the faster LFFN connection. Alternatively, when they are contacted by Information Services to arrange the LFFN installation, they can request one of the four connections listed above, for their school.

Yours sincerely



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