

Northumberland Schools Broadband Service SLA 2016 - 2018

Northumberland Schools Broadband January 2016

This document contains an overview and information on the changes to the schools' broadband service and the new charges for April 2016 to March 2017.

Summary - key points

- Northumberland County Council have been out to tender for a **new Broadband contract** for the next three years.
- Over the coming months **all schools will have their internet connection transferred to the new BT service**, with First, Primary, Middle & Special schools upgraded to BT Superfast Broadband.
- **First, Primary, Middle & Special School charges will be reduced** from £3995 per annum to £2750 **a saving of £1245 per annum in 2016**.
- **Small schools**, currently on 8mb Rate Adaptive circuits and which are charged £2100, **will be upgraded** and have the new charges phased in over three years and will not pay the full rate until 2018. Charges will be £2250 in 2016, **gradually phasing in the increased costs, whilst having their connections upgraded to Superfast broadband**.
- **High Schools** currently pay £11,000 per annum. The new charge will be **reduced** to £8850 **saving £2150 per annum**
- **Monitoring, Filtering and support services are all included** in overall cost alongside new services such as traffic shaping to allow schools to prioritise the services on their Internet connection.
- In order to maintain and manage the joint schools network we intend to make the Broadband SLA **a 3 year agreement**. This will enable us to contract with both BT and other providers, for example Lightspeed for filtering, with some consistency. **Schools wishing to withdraw from the SLA must give notice of at least 1 year (in the second year)** to enable us to restructure and recast our provision for remaining schools.
- It is important to appreciate that this is a **shared service** with cost savings to schools made through the collective acquisition of multiple circuits and support services. Schools who opt out not only impact on the number of BT connections required, but also on the shared cost of central services such as filtering. Hence the need to add stability to the contracts through a 3 year agreement. The charges quoted in the Broadband SLA are **based on current schools maintaining their NCC Broadband connection**.

Context

The current Northumberland schools' broadband network is made up of a range of connections provided by either BT, Satellite or the Council's own Northnet infrastructure.

Northnet was set up by the Council at a time when connectivity options from commercial providers in Northumberland was very limited and it has provided the majority of schools with high quality connections. Its provision though is restricted, largely to schools in urban areas, where its Skypilot technology can link back to the corporate wide area network.

Around 45 of our smaller, more rural, schools have been by far the most difficult to provide with high quality Broadband connections. These are often too isolated, or far from their exchange, to connect to the NorthNet network and the only alternative has been BT 8mb rate adaptive circuits. These utilise the standard copper technology of the old exchanges and invariably provide schools with connections which are often less than 2mb. Due to the inadequacy of these connections the Council also piloted satellite links in 3 schools sites, though with mixed results, with difficulties including time lag on connection, response and additional costs.

Fortunately our options have changed significantly in recent months with the investment from Northumberland County Council through iNorthumberland, the government and BT in upgrading telephone exchanges around the County.

Information services went out to tender last year and agreed a contract which will enable **All schools to have BT Superfast Broadband**. We are now commencing the roll out of this major infrastructure project and schools should be expected to be contacted initially by a member of Information Services and then BT to arrange your transition to the new Superfast Broadband Network.

Current charges and costs

Current broadband provision is structured around the three types of connection mentioned above and priced according to connection type. These connections and charges currently are:

High School 800mb connections £11000

Northnet 10mb+ connections £3950

BT 8mb rate adaptive circuits £2100

These charges are based on a number of elements which make up the Broadband Service and not simply the line connection costs.

The overall charge to a school is made up of two components. Line costs and Service costs. These include:

Line costs

- BT line annual line rental costs or NorthNet Skypilot costs to connect the school.

Service costs

- Backhaul infrastructure charges to connect between schools and back to NCC for filtering and secure connections

- Local filtering control of individual school filters, additional resources to support authentication of mobile devices
- Internet Service Provision
- Manage internet filtering and monitoring through Lightspeed Rocket technology
- Management and support for the service

New BT Superfast Broadband cost breakdown and total charges for 2016 / 2017

High Schools

£8850 in 2016

First, Middle, Primary and Special schools

£2750 in 2016

Schools transitioning from 8mb Rate adaptive circuits

£2250 in 2016 (phased to match the above charge by 2018)

2016 transition costs

To cover migration from current circuits to new BT connection. We need to maintain elements of the old NorthNet network until the final schools are moved off and onto the new BT system. **The charges quoted above are for 2016 and we anticipate further savings in 2017 & 2018 which will be reflected in further reductions in charges.**

Charges will not rise over the three year period and any additional savings will be passed on to schools.

SLA services

The Broadband SLA provides schools with the following services:

- Curriculum broadband connectivity via secure Northumberland network.
- Internet Service Provision through an approved DfE schools broadband provider .
- Filtered Internet access to Becta agreed standards.
Schools requiring websites blocking or unblocking should contact the email below to make requests.
- e-safetyinschools@northumberland.gov.uk
 - High schools management of their own filtering services.
- Global schools filtering to IWF standards and also individual school filters when requested i.e. having YouTube unblocked just for your school.

- Technical support for Broadband connectivity issues.

Schools should report any technical issues to the Information Services Helpdesk to make requests.

IS_ServiceDesk@northumberland.gov.uk

SLA issues and notice to terminate services

Providing Broadband connectivity to schools through an optional SLA, raises a number of issues:

a. Secure admin services are currently provided on a closed network to all schools via the admin connection. If a school was to opt out and no longer be connected on the secure network there are implications for Information Services on future provision and security of services. There may be costs and staffing implications for Information Services if a number of schools need supporting with 'unique systems'.

b. If schools opt out of the centralised service they would need to organise their own services including secure email systems and web hosting. Secure access to e-business has also been raised as an issue. There will be cost and capacity issues for schools in dealing with this, as well as security issues if schools opted for cheap web based 'free' solutions without regard for data protection.

c. If a school opts out and seeks internet connectivity from elsewhere then they need to ensure that services provide filtering and also report logs, should an incident occur. Filtering is essential and schools owe a common law duty of care to take reasonable steps to ensure its pupils and staff are safe from foreseeable harm and that technical measures such as filtering and monitoring are in place to safeguard children, young people and staff.

d. Perhaps the greatest issues centre around impact of individual schools opting out on the overall costs for those that remain and the management of transfer of services from NCC to a school. Current models are based on economies of scale with all schools buying in. If some schools opt out costs could potentially alter for others.

e. Transfer of services from NCC is not a simple transaction. NCC have contracts with BT and for NorthNet maintenance which would need to be terminated. Schools cannot just 'adopt' and take on charges for a current line. BT require schools to 'novate' the line from one owner to another. This in effect means that schools would have to pay line installation charges before adopting a connection and managing themselves. BT also require 60 days lead in before a transfer can take place.

f. Because of commitments to BT and NorthNet maintenance NCC Information Services would require 12 months notice in order to terminate services from them. This is necessary in order to cease current services and contracts and also for the school to arrange 'installation' of its own new services. If you are contemplating leaving the County system it is essential that you notify either Joanne Southern or Richard Taylor as soon as possible to arrange to discuss the implications of this.

g. Internet services from other providers may not be filtered and Heads and Governors would need to ensure that services into school meet DfE criteria.

6. Contacts

If you have any queries regarding your broadband connection, charges or filtering, please contact:

Richard Taylor

e-learning & ICT Adviser

richard.taylor@northumberland.gov.uk

or

Joanne Southern

Information Services

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