



Your Pathway to **Connectivity**

A Guide to getting online —
whatever your situation, wherever
you move.

What does Connectivity actually mean?

“Connectivity” is the ability to connect to the Internet. Connectivity is what allows people to use apps on their phones, browse websites on their computer and allows smart TVs to stream content etc

If you lack connectivity, it means that you are Digitally Excluded, cut off from an ever-expanding way for people, to communicate, interact, access resources and to manage their lives.

This document will explain the various methods you can gain connectivity for your internet enabled device's and how you can finance them.

There are 3 main ways which you can connect to the internet:



Wired Connections

This is the oldest connection type – it used to run over phone lines with a dial tone but has since evolved to deliver high-speed internet via broadband and fibre.

- **Standard broadband** – runs over the phone line. Available almost everywhere, but slower and drops off the further you are from the exchange.
- **Part-fibre** – fibre to the street cabinet, copper the rest of the way. Faster, good middle option, widely available.
- **Full fibre** – fibre all the way to your home. Fastest and most reliable, but not yet everywhere.



SIM Devices

SIM devices use SIM cards to connect to the mobile data network.

- **Mobile phones/devices** – uses its SIM for calls/data and can share that connection with other devices. **Some Laptops and tablets also have SIM slots and work the same way to give you connectivity.**
- **SIM Dongle** – A small USB device with a sim inside, that you can plug into your laptop to get an internet connection.
- **SIM router** – A router producing a Wi-Fi signal uses a SIM instead of a wired connection. Plug it in anywhere, take it with you when you move.



Tethering/WiFi

A device that is already connected to the internet can share its connectivity by broadcasting a signal you can connect to.

- **Mobile hotspot (tethering)** – shares your phone's mobile data as Wi-Fi. Other devices connect through it just like any Wi-Fi network.
- **Wi-Fi router** – shares its connection as Wi-Fi, so multiple devices in the home can get online at once.
- **USB / Bluetooth tethering** – shares a phone's data with one other device over a cable or Bluetooth instead of Wi-Fi, useful if Wi-Fi isn't available.

Which solution suits me?

Which connectivity type, below, matches your situation!

I just need data — no new device

Social Tariff SIM Card (£12/mo)

If you already have a phone, tablet or laptop, **and you need dedicated mobile connectivity**, you'll only need a SIM card.

For Framework service users, the best option is usually a SIM on a **Social tariff** (*a lower-cost version of a SIM or fixed connection for people receiving benefits, significantly cheaper than a standard tariff*).

We recommend SMARTY's Social Tariff at £12/month, with unlimited texts, calls and data — usually over £20 elsewhere. Other social tariffs are covered later in this document.

Framework can also provide you with donated SIMs with texts, data and minutes for free.

I want internet for non-Sim devices

Dongles/MIFI – These are cheap small USB sticks that you slot a SIM into, and they can either broadcast a signal or act like a wired connection. They are small and mobile but suffer from compatibility issues and poor signal. They can be a good low-cost option.

Routers – These need an internet connection and will provide data to multiple users. There are a few different options

4G/5G SIM router – If move residences regularly, a **SIM router (MiFi)** may be your **best option**. These routers only need a SIM and power socket to function and 5G devices offer highspeed internet like Broadband.

Fixed broadband router – These use a wired connection and are the fastest/most reliable. They are tied to one address, need a long 6–12-month contract and needs installation. Best for when you get a permanent home.

I need a device AND a data plan

If you don't already have a device, there are a few options:

Basic phone – cheapest option, good for calls and texts only, no internet browsing needed.

Refurbished smartphone/device – a low-cost way to get an internet enabled device, often £40–£80, with a warranty from reputable sellers. (More details later)

New devices on credit – pay in instalments, and device is yours from the start, but usually the most expensive route overall.

Smartphone on contract – device and data bundled together monthly, no upfront cost, but tied into a longer contract and usually pricier than buying outright and adding a social tariff SIM.

I'm settled — I have a fixed address

Vodafone Essentials broadband (£12/mo)

If you're in a settled address, **fixed broadband** is usually the fastest and most reliable option, though it needs installation and ties you to one address. Pair it with a **social tariff** if you're on benefits – cheaper than a standard tariff.

Standard broadband – runs over the phone line, available almost everywhere, but slower.

Part-fibre / full fibre – faster, more reliable options where available, with full fibre being the quickest.

SIM router (5G) – not fixed broadband, but worth knowing: a 5G SIM router can match fibre speeds without installation or being tied to an address.

SIM Card and social tariffs

This page will give you some more information regarding SIM cards.

What's the difference between 4G and 5G?

5G delivers higher speed internet than previous versions and will be more stable. We previously used a 3G network which progressed to 4G and now 5G. As technology improves we will move to 6G etc.

4G

- Available almost everywhere in the UK — 99% population coverage
- Typical speeds of 20–60 Mbps — enough for streaming and video calls
- All modern phones and most SIM routers support it
- Reliable in cities, towns and most villages

5G

- Much faster — often 100–300 Mbps where available
- Still rolling out — best in cities and larger towns
- SMARTY Social Tariff includes 5G at no extra cost
- Great for a SIM router as a home broadband replacement

Below 4G (3G, 2G)

Older network signals, like 3G and 2G have mostly shut down. Avoid any devices that run on these as they will be obsolete very soon leaving the device unusable.

Which mobile network should I choose?

Different mobile networks have different prices, but they also have different coverage for their different signals such as 4G and 5G. It's worth investigating what coverage is available in your area because it can vary greatly.

The best way to do this is to search for **"Network Coverage Map UK"** OFCOM have a website but there are many others you can use to check what signal is available in your area.

A coverage map will show which networks have signal towers in your area, what type of signal they broadcast (4G and 5G) and sometimes what type of connection/speed that will give you.

Some areas will have terrible 4G coverage but will have new 5G towers which gives broadband equivalent speeds.

SIM Card and social tariffs –2

There are 4 major networks in the UK, but they also allow smaller services to use their network and sell different contracts. These smaller providers can be cheaper and offer better service and it's worth comparing different providers for the best deals.

When you compare coverage maps, you will need to be aware of which network each supplier uses. Below are a list of Networks and the smaller companies which use them.

EE – (1pMobile, BT Mobile, Ecotalk, Lyca mobile, Spusu Talk, Home Mobile, Utility Warehouse)

Best rural coverage in the UK. Good if you move around or live outside cities.

Three – (Honest Mobile, iD Mobile, SMARTY, Superdrug Mobile)

Fast 4G and growing 5G. 99% UK population coverage. Best value for unlimited data.

Vodafone – (Asda Mobile, Lebara, Talkmobile, VOXI)

Strong in cities and towns. Good choice if you're based in urban areas.

O2 – (Giffgaff, Sky Mobile, Tesco Mobile)

Reliable nationwide coverage. Also powers Sky Mobile and Tesco Mobile.

Social Tariffs

If you receive Universal Credit, Pension Credit, ESA, JSA or Income Support, you qualify for a social tariff – a specially discounted SIM with no credit check and no long contracts. Below are the current main social Tariffs but new ones come online all the time. We recommend SMARTY, you get unlimited texts calls and data, and you can use the SIM in a router without throttling.

Provider	Cost per month	Data	Network	Contract	Key perk
SMARTY (recommended)	£12	Unlimited	Three (5G)	Monthly rolling	Tethering included, no speed caps
VOXI For Now	£10	Unlimited*	Vodafone	Monthly rolling	*Unlimited for first 6 months then social media only
O2 Essential	£10	10GB	O2	Monthly rolling	Cheapest entry; enough for basics
EE Basics	£12	5GB	EE	Rolling 12-month	Best rural coverage; speed capped at 25Mbps

Prices correct June 2026 – always confirm on provider websites before signing up.

The SIM router — broadband without a fixed line

A SIM router (also called a 4G/5G home router or MiFi) is a small device — about the size of a paperback book — that turns a mobile SIM into a Wi-Fi signal for your whole home.

Why it works well for people in temporary housing

- Take it with you when you move — just plug in and go
- Multiple devices can connect at the same time
- One SIM, lots of options — use in the router or pop it in a phone
- No engineer visit, no waiting for installation
- No credit check required with social tariff SIMs
- Works anywhere with a mobile signal

What does it cost?

SIM router (one-off)	£25–£60
SMARTY Social SIM	£12/mo
Total month 1	~£37–£72
Ongoing cost	£12/mo

Compare: average standard broadband is £27–£35/month — and you can't take it with you.

Tethering — turning your phone into a hotspot

Tethering lets your phone share its mobile data connection with other devices — a laptop, tablet or another phone — over Wi-Fi, or Bluetooth.

It's one of the easiest ways to connect a device to the internet if you already have a phone which can access the internet.

How to set it up

- iPhone: Settings → Personal Hotspot → Allow Others to Join
- Android: Settings → Connections → Mobile Hotspot and Tethering
- Then connect other devices as you would to any Wi-Fi network

Things to know

- Uses your phone's data allowance — check this is included with your plan
- SMARTY Social Tariff explicitly allows unrestricted tethering
- Drains your phone battery faster — keep it plugged in
- Works best for light use: browsing, emails, job applications

It's worth noting that not all SIM tariffs support being used in routers or dongles. Although they may be advertised as being “Unlimited” some have hidden systems that limit your usage if it detects you're using large amounts of data.

We have experienced this ourselves but have found that SMARTY sims do not have this restriction while Lyca mobile does.

Home broadband and social tariffs

Home broadband and social tariffs are common in most homes and are used because they deliver large amounts of data to a property at high speeds. This makes them perfect for homes with more than one person living there, as they can supply connectivity to people using phones, TV’s and computers concurrently without performance dipping.

The disadvantages to broadband/fiber is that they usually require, a long-term contract, (6-12 months), are more expensive than getting a SIM card, they can increase in price during the contract length, and they usually take a month for the provider to set up the connection.

This makes them less suitable for those in temporary accommodation (Framework residents) but is more suitable for people moving into permanent accommodation.

Again, prices and coverage vary especially within rural areas and new builds. It’s best to check coverage and what speeds are available.

Below are some Social Tariffs which are available for individuals on Universal Credit, Pension Credit, ESA, JSA or Income Support.

Provider	Cost per month	Speed	Contract	Notes
Vodafone Essentials (recommended)	£12	38 Mbps	12 months	Cheapest fixed broadband social tariff in the UK
Hyperoptic Fair Fibre	£15	150 Mbps	30-day rolling	No exit fees; fast full fibre — check postcode
Virgin Media Essential	£12.50	15 Mbps	30-day rolling	Available to ~50% of UK addresses
BT Home Essentials	£15	36 Mbps	12 months (no exit fee)	Cancel any time; no credit check
TalkTalk (jobseekers)	Free 6 months	Superfast	6 months free	Only for people actively seeking work

Home broadband and social tariffs

Best deals right now — Updated June 2026

This section is refreshed monthly. Ask your support worker or visit access4all.uk for the latest options.

SIM only

- SMARTY Social Tariff — £12/mo, unlimited data, 5G, no credit check
- O2 Essential — £10/mo, 10GB, good for light users
- VOXI For Now — £10/mo, unlimited data (first 6 months)
- EE Basics — £12/mo, 5GB, best for rural coverage

SIM + phone bundle

- SMARTY £12 SIM + refurbished phone from CEX from ~£40
- Look for: Moto G series, Samsung A series — solid phones under £80
- Back Market — certified refurbished with warranty
- Ask Framework DIP about gifted device availability

SIM router deals

- TP-Link M7350 4G MiFi — around £30 on Amazon
- Huawei B535 home router — £35–£55 refurbished
- Pair with SMARTY Social SIM at £12/mo
- Total ongoing cost: £12/month for full home Wi-Fi

Prices are examples — always confirm on provider websites before purchasing. Framework DIP can help you sign up.

Need help getting connected?



Talk to your support worker

They can help you apply for a social tariff, find a device and get online. No question is too small.



Visit access4all.uk

Our guided tool helps you find the right option for your situation — works on any phone or device.



Free drop-in sessions

Framework runs regular digital skills sessions. Ask your support worker for your nearest one.