Government triples value of UK Gigabit Broadband Vouchers

Building Digital UK, the executive agency that oversees the UK Government's various broadband and mobile programmes, has confirmed that they are tripling the value of the vouchers they issue to homes under their Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme.

The scheme previously offered grants worth up to £1,500 for homes and £3,500 for businesses in rural areas to help them get a gigabit-capable broadband (1Gbps) service installed.

However, eligible homes and businesses will soon be able to apply for up to £4,500 to cover the costs of obtaining a gigabit-capable connection.

The hope is that by issuing vouchers with bigger values, it will enable operators to deploy into increasingly remote areas, where build costs would previously have been too expensive for such projects to proceed.

Under the scheme, vouchers are available to properties in areas with broadband speeds of less than 100Mbps – and where there are no near-term plans for a gigabit deployment in that specific area via either a commercial provider or a state aid supported build like the CSW Broadband Project.

Overall, more than 111,000 vouchers have already been issued through the government's vouchers schemes, and to date, more than 77,000 of these vouchers have been used to connect premises to gigabit-capable broadband.

Switching & haggling really can reduce your broadband bills

As many mobile, pay TV and broadband providers prepare to increase monthly bills this spring, the latest research from Which? has found that customers could save over £200 a year by switching providers.

The survey asked over 5,000 UK consumers whose mobile, broadband or TV and broadband package had recently ended whether they had haggled or switched provider and if so, how much money they had saved in the process.

Their findings showed that there could be compelling savings on offer – particularly for those who were willing to switch to a new provider. But even those who would rather stick with their current provider can reduce the amount they pay by haggling with them.

Across the board, more than seven in 10 customers who switched providers saved as a result, with TV and broadband package customers saving an average of £162 a year by switching – a discount of around 13%, though customers with some providers saved even more.

There were also big savings to be had for broadband only customers who switched, with an average saving being £92 – an average discount of 16%.

Even if you are happy with your provider and don't want to switch, you can still make a saving by negotiating (haggling) for a better price. Savings are not the only potential benefit of haggling – it is also a chance for you to get a faster speed or get more data included in your package.

While the results of the survey suggested that the average customer who upgraded still ended up paying less, there is no doubt that the biggest saving for hagglers was for those who downgraded their broadband deal. So, if you have 500Mbps but find that 100Mbps is sufficient for your needs, that's certainly worth discussing with your provider.

The study also found that customers who do nothing when their contract ended were the ones who were at greatest risk of overpaying on their broadband bills, with some broadband customers potentially facing price rises of nearly 14% this spring.

The Which? website provides a more, in-depth analysis of the survey's findings as well as valuable tips and advice on how to switch broadband provider and how to haggle on your broadband deal.