

# **FULL FIBRE INTERNET FOR SOCIAL HOUSING RESIDENTS | SUMMARY DOCUMENT**

## **Background**

Internet is now the ‘fourth utility’, an everyday necessity alongside water, electricity, and gas. Hackney Council is working to enable the installation of **modern full fibre internet connections to all social housing in the borough**, so that tenants and leaseholders will have access to some of the fastest and most reliable connections in London at some of the most affordable prices.

We are seeking the views of Council tenants and leaseholders regarding this work to install full fibre internet to social housing, so that we can use your input to shape the plans we take forward. We will take your priorities into account in negotiations with internet providers, and we will share your responses with the Mayor and Councillors.

Please read the information in this summary document before completing this survey.

## **What is full fibre and why is it important?**

Full fibre describes the material (optical fibre) used to connect internet to homes. Old networks run on copper wiring, or a mix of copper and fibre (so are not ‘full fibre’). Full fibre is considered the gold standard for internet connections as it is fast, reliable, and ‘future proof’ - it will cope with growing demands and won’t need to be replaced or upgraded in the foreseeable future.

Full fibre allows households to use data-intensive services (such as gaming, video calls, and streaming video services like BBC iPlayer, Netflix and Amazon Prime Video) across multiple devices without a drop in service, and makes it easier to work from home. Very competitive full

fibre packages are available which are often just as affordable as those over slower connections.

At present only around 11% of households in Hackney have access to full fibre.<sup>1</sup> Most households only have access to 'fibre to the cabinet' - this is where fibre only runs as far as the exchange cabinets in the street and customers have to rely on old copper wiring for the 'last mile', which reduces speeds dramatically.

### **How we will improve internet connectivity for tenants and leaseholders in social housing**

The Council is planning to work with fibre internet providers to enable the installation of full fibre internet to social housing residents. This will be done in a way that minimises disruption and provides choice to residents.

There will be no cost to the Council, tenants, or leaseholders: all the new infrastructure and services will be funded and managed by the providers. The Council will not be sponsoring any of the providers. Our role is simply to facilitate access for providers so that they can install new connections, under a non-exclusive agreement (so neither the Council nor tenants will be locked in to a single provider). We will make sure that works are completed to the highest standards in accordance with best practice, are safe and compliant with all regulations, and are carried out in a way that is sensitive to residents.

Once connections have been installed, tenants and leaseholders will be able to take up or switch to a package offered by the new providers if they want to. There is no obligation to switch: if you are happy with the service from your current provider, you can continue your contract with them. However, the new providers and the fibre connections they install will likely offer far better performance and value-for-money than any other services currently available.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://maps.london.gov.uk/connectivity/>

The Council's research suggests there will be around 2-3 fibre internet providers interested in working with us. Having at least 2 providers installing fibre connections should ensure that tenants and leaseholders have more choice and prices are kept competitive.

### **This is for everyone**

This work represents a significant commercial opportunity for fibre internet providers, as they will get access to many new customers. In return, the Council will be seeking commitments from providers to:

- Install connections to as many homes as possible, without cherry-picking only those buildings which are easy to connect to.
- Offer low-cost, subsidised packages for those least able to pay, and options which do not require credit checks or fixed-term contracts.

### **Community benefits**

The Council will also aim to secure additional community benefits for residents, in line with the Mayor's manifesto commitments to improve economic opportunity and digital inclusion (ensuring the internet is for everyone in Hackney and that everyone can use, understand and access it easily and safely).

We will ask providers to deliver or contribute to initiatives such as:

- Installing free internet connections to community halls
- Providing IT equipment for community use
- Digital inclusion / digital skills training
- Apprenticeships for local people
- Employment opportunities for local people

It may not be possible to secure all the community benefits listed above but we are keen to ensure that we realise as many of these benefits as possible through negotiations with the internet providers.