

Social Tariffs

The tariffs providers don't want you to find



August 2026

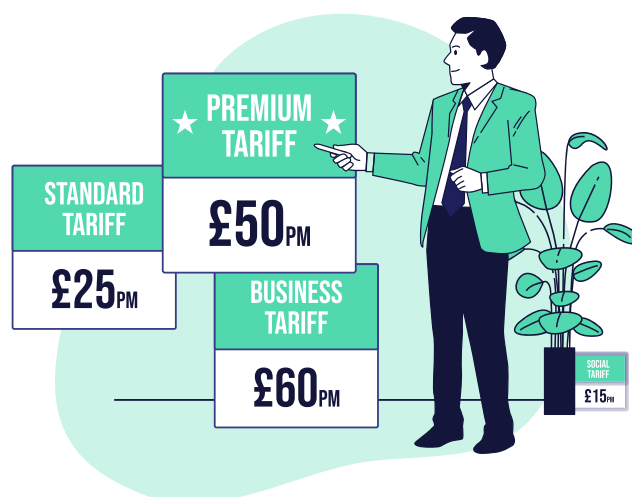
Executive Summary

Broadband providers are still making it needlessly hard for low-income households to find discounted “Social Tariffs” - some priced from just £12.50 a month – despite a new Government charter asking them to do exactly the opposite.

thinkbroadband's review of every provider offering a social tariff found some buried the packages in FAQs or left them off their websites' navigation entirely, while others omitted basic details like upload speed, contract length and exit fees.

Even thinkbroadband's own researchers (industry experts who knew exactly what to look for) struggled to locate the information on several sites.

With cost-of-living pressure still biting, the report names which providers are getting it right, which are falling short of the new Telecoms Consumer Charter, and what needs to change.



Top Performers vs Largest Providers

A-Grades

Provider	Discoverability	Details Published	Download Speed	Price	Eligibility	Overall Score
B4RN	A	A	A	B	A	A
B4SH	A	A	A	C	A	A
Community Fibre	A	A	D	A	A	A
Hyperoptic	C	A	A	A	A	A

Largest Providers

BT	E	D	C	B	C	C-
Sky	E	C	B	C	C	C-
Virgin Media	C	C	C	A	C	C
Vodafone Broadband	B	B	C	C	B	C+

For full results, see table later in the report.

Introduction

Social Tariffs are discounted broadband services, typically made available by some providers to households who are in receipt of certain income-related benefits. These are priced at £10 – £20/month.

An up-to-date list is available on thinkbroadband.com/social-tariffs

In 2024, thinkbroadband highlighted in its State of Broadband Report how [social tariffs are often hidden by broadband providers](#) on their websites, and you have to know where to look to find them.

In February 2026, the UK Government [launched the Telecoms Consumer Charter](#), a voluntary scheme to promote transparency to consumers by its subscribers, which includes a specific expectation around promoting social tariffs:



“ Providers commit to ensuring available social tariffs, for those on means tested benefits, are easy to find and signposted to eligible customers in communications, including, for example, in their ECNs, provider websites and app menus, as well as customer service scripts, ensuring they are easy to locate, understand and take-up. Government encourages more providers to offer social tariffs where they are able to do so.

Telecoms Consumer Charter

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/telecoms-consumer-charter/telecoms-consumer-charter>

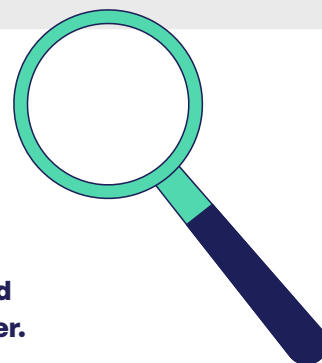
As of July 2026, signatories to the Charter include BT Group (BT, EE and PlusNet), Virgin Media O2, VodafoneThree, Sky, TalkTalk, KCOM, Community Fibre, WightFibre, Hyperoptic and Olilo.

It is worth noting that there are also providers who do not feature on the Ofcom list¹ (e.g. B4RN, Grain Connect, GoFibre, etc.) who offer social tariffs, sometimes far better propositions than the listed operators.

1. <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-and-broadband/saving-money/social-tariffs>

Key Findings

Our research confirmed that fundamentally the problems that existed over two years ago remain, with a wide variety of variations by provider.



1 Wide variation on whether social tariffs are easy to find or not by provider.

Some providers have equal prominence with commercial packages whilst others can't be found on a website easily and are buried in FAQs/terms and conditions. Others make it so hard you need to use a search engine like Google to find them buried deep on a website.



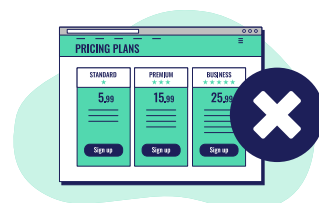
2 There are variations on qualifying benefits across providers.

If you're on Universal Credit then most services are available, whilst those on Personal Independent Payment or Disability Living Allowance have far fewer options. This highlighted the need for us as a broadband information source to start looking at providing more details on qualifying benefits to help users search.



3 Some providers don't even provide pricing for social tariffs on their pages.

For example the page for BT Home Essentials² page only mentioned "plans start from £16.50" without any detail and even that is behind a drop-down section not visible when the page is loaded.



4 Contract periods vary as do the costs of terminating your contract early.

True social tariffs should have no exit penalty, but some do.

The Charter irony

It is worth noting that several of the major providers who have signed up to the Telecoms Consumer Charter - publicly committing to ensure social tariffs are easy to find, understand and take up - scored no better than a C. By contrast, some of the smallest Altnets in our research, with no charter commitment at all, scored considerably higher, giving their social tariffs the same prominence as their standard packages.

This isn't a question of resources. Adding a clearly labelled link and a paragraph of information costs nothing, regardless of company size. If some of the smallest providers in this research can make their social tariffs easy to find, the same effort should not be beyond providers with far larger marketing teams and budgets.

2. <https://www.bt.com/broadband/home-essentials>

Recommendations

1 Discovery

It is essential to ensure that those who may be eligible for social tariffs are aware of their existence. Although the gold standard from a consumer-point of view would be to list them alongside commercial packages, this may be unrealistic for those with many packages as it takes up real-estate on a commercially important page, however social tariffs should be (1) clearly mentioned nearby to regular pricing with (2) text containing the words 'social tariff', and (3) an explanation that they provide lower cost services for those who receive certain benefits/tax credits, and (4) a link to a page to find out more. There should also be links to social tariffs in standard navigation (menus and footers).

2 Package Naming

These packages should be called, or at least contain the term 'social tariffs' and not variations with 'basics' or similar which can be confusing and used in various ways. It may be helpful to talk about "broadband for low income families" but this should be in addition, not instead of the term which should become more standard across the industry.

3 Information

The Social Tariff page should contain the same information as any other packages, including download and upload speeds (and any guaranteed/average speeds), clear definitions of contract and early exit terms, pricing and eligibility requirements.

4 Online Ordering

Larger broadband provider should be able to take orders online to minimise the friction of ordering and reducing the need for those signing up to speak to someone. This may not be practical for the smallest providers, but at least two means of contact (e.g. telephone and e-mail) should be provided.



5 Annual Reminders

We recently assisted a user who was being advised of a price increase by their broadband provider to their social tariff, which confused them. We found that, in fact, they could sign up to a no-income version of the social tariff and limit the increase to £1 a month. It is important that, where price increases take place or annually in any case, providers ensure that those on social tariffs are aware of all social tariffs in case their eligibility has changed.

“

“What is frustrating is when we were researching this, **as experts in the industry who know what we are looking for, even we struggled to find the information on many of these packages.** It honestly seems like some providers are trying to make it as difficult as possible for users to find basic information about these services, let alone trying sign up online. The over-complexity is perplexing.

There's a reason these packages exist. We're calling on providers to do their bit to make eligible individuals aware of them, if they truly believe in the need for discounted services for these groups. Charter signatories in particular should treat this as an immediate compliance gap, not a future aspiration – the commitment is already live”.

Sebastien Lahtinen, Director,
thinkbroadband.com

Price Comparison Websites

Although not in the scope of our research³, it would be incomplete not to briefly mention the role of Price Comparison Websites (PCWs)—These sites can be critical in navigating the complex competitive broadband market with deals varying by location. Including social tariffs is therefore important so that eligible users are able to compare the full market of products available to them.

Whilst **many PCWs do include information on social tariffs on separate information pages**, these packages are often **not integrated into the main package search function**. A notable **exception to this is MoneySavingExpert**, which includes a question about eligibility for social tariffs next to the postcode entry field, which allows

those packages to be included. They also **include a filter to allow users to select which benefit** they receive, as this may affect which Social Tariffs they are eligible for (see figures 1 & 2).

It is noteworthy however, that as of our July 2026 check, Money Supermarket (which owns MoneySavingExpert) had not included this functionality within its own comparison

tool, offering only an information page.

We have always **included social tariffs on our main listings over at thinkbroadband.com** (in addition to a dedicated page), however **we do not currently have the functionality to search by benefit**, meaning that those on say Personal Independence Payment (PIP) would need to check the package details to confirm eligibility. As many broadband providers only cover some areas, this usually only means checking a few packages manually, however this is certainly something we want to fix so users don't have to jump through extra hoops. We'd encourage other PCWs to follow MoneySavingExpert's lead and build benefit-based filtering into their core search tools, not just standalone information pages.

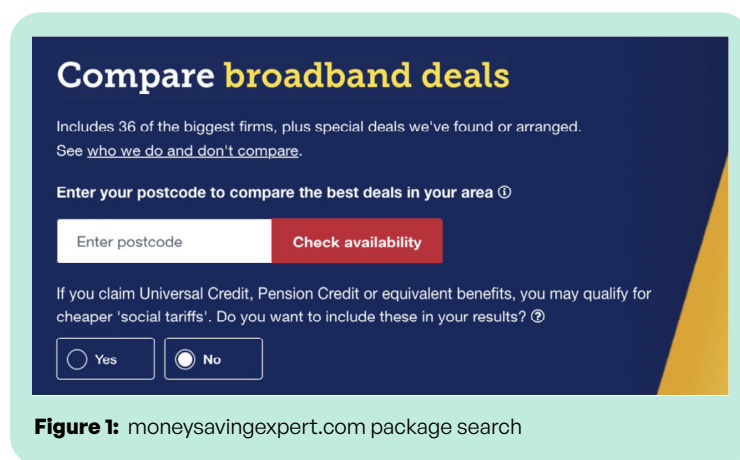


Figure 1: moneysavingexpert.com package search

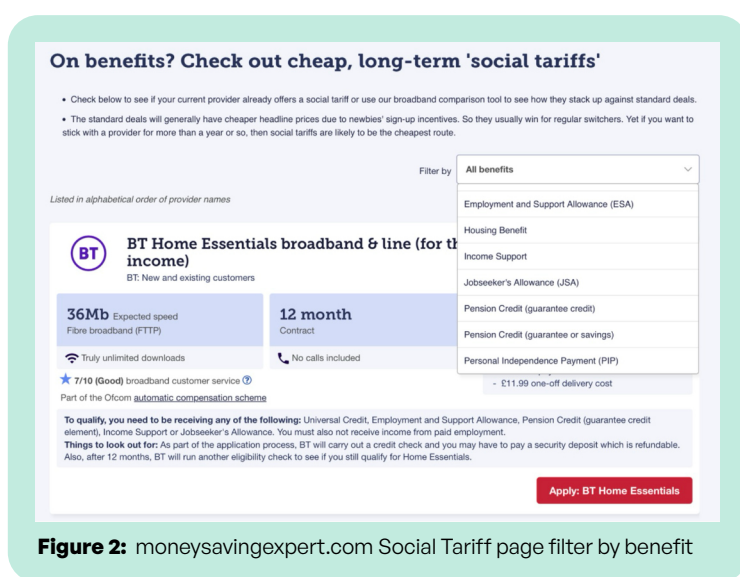


Figure 2: moneysavingexpert.com Social Tariff page filter by benefit

3. thinkbroadband is a broadband information website with a wide variety of tools and services that consumers can use to troubleshoot and analyse their broadband services. However, it also includes a list of packages, which functions as a price comparison website. Therefore, it would be conflicted in fully researching price comparison websites when it offers similar services itself.

See our Social Tariffs Videos

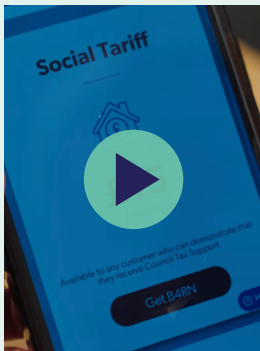
Our Social Tariffs videos explain how social tariffs work and who can benefit from them. We also ask members of the public about their broadband packages, revealing the challenges of raising awareness and helping eligible households find the support available.



Millions are still overpaying for broadband

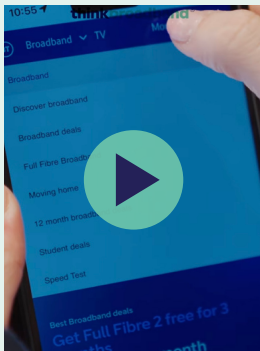
We took to the streets of Merthyr Tydfil to ask people what they're paying - and how many had even heard of social tariffs.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3uFSXedKtiQ>



What are social tariffs?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LEVzJitM6QA>



Why aren't social tariffs easy to find?

Providers have signed a telecoms consumer charter promising to do more to promote social tariffs. Most still aren't.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UgtonW0j3t0>

Social Tariffs Scores A to C+

Provider	Discoverability	Details Published	Download Speed	Price	Eligibility	Overall Score	Package	Download Speed Mbps	Upload Speed Mbps	Monthly Cost	Contract Length Months	Early Termination Fee	Qualifying Criteria
B4RN	A	A	A	B	A	A	Social Tariff – 1 Gbps	1,000	1,000	£15.00	12	N/S	Council Tax Support
B4SH	A	A	A	C	A	A	1Gbps Social Tariff	1,000	1,000	£20.00	1	£0	Council Tax Support
Community Fibre	A	A	D	A	A	A	35 Mbps Full Fibre (12 months)	35	35	£12.50	12	C	No qualification criteria; freely available
Hyperoptic	C	A	A	A	A	A	1Gbps Hyperfast Fair Fibre (social tariff)	1,000	1,000	£20.00	1	£0	UC PC IS JSA ESA PIP AA HB
							500Mbps Ultrafast Fair Fibre (social tariff)	500	500	£17.00	1	£0	UC PC IS JSA ESA PIP AA HB
							150Mb Superfast Fair Fibre (social tariff)	150	150	£13.00	1	£0	UC PC IS JSA ESA PIP AA HB
KCOM	A	A	C	B	A	B+	Full Fibre Flex Plus (social tariff)	50	50	£19.99	1	£0	UC PC IS JSA ESA PIP AA HB DLA
							Full Fibre Flex (social tariff)	30	30	£14.99	1	£0	UCZ PC IS JSA ESA PIP AA HB DLA
Gigabit IQ	A	B	B	D	B	B-	Social Connect (social tariff)	100	N/S	£22.99	24	C	UCZ PC IS JSA ESA PIP AA
Hey! Broadband	A	C	B	C	A	B-	Everyday Fibre (social tariff)	100	100	£19.00	12	£0	UC PC IS JSA ESA PIP AA HB
Wight Fibre	A	A	B	C	C	B-	Full-Fibre 100 (Social Tariff)	100	100	£19.95	1	£0	UC PC IS JSA ESA
YouFibre	D	A	C	C	A	B-	You 50 (social tariff) (Netomnia)	50	50	£16.99	12	C	UC PC IS JSA ESA PIP AA HB
Connect Fibre	E	C	B	C	A	C+	Essentials (social tariff)	150	N/S	£20.00	1	£0	UC PC IS JSA ESA PIP AA HB DLA Any Pensioner born before 1958
Fibrus	A	D	C	B	C	C+	Full Fibre Essentials (social tariff)	50	N/S	£14.99	12	£0	UC PC IS JSA ESA
G.Network	C	A	C	B	C	C+	Essential Fibre (social tariff)	50	15	£15.00	12	N/S	UC PC IS JSA ESA
Grain Connect	D	C	D	A	A	C+	Social Plus Tariff	30	30	£22.50	12	C	UC PC IS JSA ESA PIP AA HB
							Social Tariff	15	15	£12.50	12	C	UC PC IS JSA ESA PIP AA HB
Highland Broadband	B	B	B	D	C	C+	Social 100 (social tariff)	100	100	£23.99	12	N/S	UC PC IS JSA ESA

Key

N/S = Not Stated
C = Contract

UC Universal Credit
UCZ Universal Credit ZERO INCOME
PC Pension Credit

IS Income Support
JSA Income-based JSA
ESA Income-based ESA

PIP PIP
AA Attendance Allowance / Care Leavers
HB Housing Benefit

DLA Disability Living Allowance

Social Tariffs Scores C+ to D+

Provider	Discoverability	Details Published	Download Speed	Price	Eligibility	Overall Score	Package	Download Speed Mbps	Upload Speed Mbps	Monthly Cost	Contract Length Months	Early Termination Fee	Qualifying Criteria
Quickline	D	C	B	C	A	C+	Connect Social (social tariff)	100	50	£16.50	1	£0	UCZ PC IS JSA ESA PIP AA HB
toob	E	A	C	B	C	C+	Essentials (toob) (social tariff)	50	50	£15.00	1	£0	UC PC IS JSA ESA
Vodafone Broadband	B	B	C	C	B	C+	Fibre 2 Essentials (social tariff)	73	N/S	£20.00	24	£0	UC PC IS JSA ESA PIP DLA
Country Connect	E	A	C	C	C	C	Social Tariff	50	50	£20.00	1	£0	UC PC IS JSA ESA
Lightning Fibre	D	C	C	B	B	C	Social Tariff	50	50	£15.00	1	£0	UC PC IS JSA ESA PIP AA
Virgin Media	C	C	C	A	C	C	Essential Broadband Plus (social tariff)	54	5	£20.00	1	£0	UC PC IS JSA ESA
							Essential Broadband (social tariff)	15	2	£12.50	1	£0	UC PC IS JSA ESA DLA
BT	E	D	C	B	C	C-	Home Essentials Fibre 2 plan (social tariff)	67	N/S	£24.00	12	£0	UC PC IS JSA ESA
							Home Essentials No Income (social tariff)	36	N/S	£16.00	12	£0	UCZ PC IS JSA ESA
							Home Essentials Fibre Essential (social tariff)	36	N/S	£21.00	12	£0	UC PC IS JSA ESA
							Home Essentials Unlimited Broadband (ADSL) (social tariff)	15	N/S	£15.00	12	£0	UC PC IS JSA ESA
GoFibre	D	B	D	C	C	C-	GoFibre Social Tariff	30	N/S	£20.00	12	£0	UC PC IS JSA ESA
Sky	E	C	B	C	C	C-	Broadband Basics (social tariff)	150	N/S	£20.00	24	£0	UC PC IS JSA ESA
Truespeed	D	C	D	C	A	C-	Truespeed Basic (Social Tariff)	30	30	£20.00	12	£0	UC PC IS JSA ESA PIP AA HB
Wildanet	C	C	C	C	D	C-	Helping Hand (Social Tariff)	50	20	£20.00	N/S	N/S	UC PC
4th Utility	D	C	D	B	C	C-	Social Tariff	30	N/S	£13.99	1	£0	UC PC IS JSA ESA
NOW	E	C	D	C	C	D+	NOW Broadband Basics (social tariff)	36	N/S	£20.00	1	£0	UC PC IS JSA ESA
Wessex Internet	D	C	D	C	C	D+	Social Tariff (Fibre/Fixed Wireless)	35	15	£17.50	12	N/S	UC PC IS JSA ESA

Key

N/S = Not Stated
C = Contract

UC Universal Credit
UCZ Universal Credit ZERO INCOME
PC Pension Credit

IS Income Support
JSA Income-based JSA
ESA Income-based ESA

PIP PIP
AA Attendance Allowance / Care Leavers
HB Housing Benefit

DLA Disability Living Allowance

Methodology



We visited the website of each provider listed by Ofcom as of 05/05/2026 as offering a broadband 'social tariff' as well as additional providers which thinkbroadband lists on its website as a social tariff, to evaluate how well the website itself promotes those social tariffs. The websites were visited across dates between late May 2026 along with further reviews in July 2026

We visited these all with a Chrome web browser in Incognito Mode to ensure no previous cookies affected the experience. Browser viewport⁴ was set to 1280x720 px on all initial checks to ensure we maintained a similar experience.

We scored each provider under five criteria and then established an overall score.

Scoring

We gave each provider a score in five areas:

Discovery — "Can eligible users find the package?" This was one of the most important criteria that we identified in our research. If eligible users are not able to identify and find social tariffs, then they will not be able to take advantage of them.

- Looking at the terminology⁵ used to refer to social tariffs
- The presence of social tariff information on product pages
- The prominence of that information
- The presence of links to social tariffs on main menus and in footers

Some providers go out of their way to provide equal prominence for social tariffs alongside their existing products, whilst others make it almost impossible to find social tariffs without using a search engine to find where they may be on their site. Where they are available, the lack of information is astonishing.

Information — We often found that information on social tariffs was very much lacking compared to what was being provided for regular tariffs. Often, upload speeds were not

explicitly stated, and there was a lack of clarity in relation to the contract period or early termination fees. Also, information on what happens at the end of the first year in terms of renewed verification of eligibility or move to another tariff.

Speed — Based on the download speed. We had concerns about how many providers failed to provide upload speed information at all, and very slow upload speeds on a couple of products, but given the various levels of information we felt this was simpler than trying to adjust for upload speeds. We scored a provider on the fastest service offered.

Price — As social tariffs are designed to provide services to those least able to afford higher prices, we felt that it was important to include an element for the monthly price. This was not adjusted to take into consideration the range of speeds offered and, where multiple packages were available, the lowest price was scored. This was to ensure that access to broadband was prioritised, even if there were further options for faster packages at higher costs.

Eligibility — Variations as to which particular government benefits were required to meet the criteria for social tariffs by various providers. There was a core of benefits centred around:

- Universal Credit
- Pension Credit
- Income Support
- Income-based Job Seekers Allowance
- Income-based Employment Support Allowance

It is worth noting that some providers offer additional, lower-cost packages to those on Universal Credit with "zero income", in addition to base social tariffs.

Finally, some providers look for "Council tax support" (which overlaps with many of the criteria), and another provides a social tariff without specific criteria (albeit with a 12-month contract).

Generally speaking, we've rated those with more options in terms of

eligibility with a higher score than those which have stricter criteria.

Overall Score — These scores were then combined into an overall score to reflect our view of the providers' efforts to publicise and make accessible social tariffs that provide a great service to those in need. This is not a direct average of all scores but reflects a general trend with particular focus on signposting to ensure that packages are discoverable in the first place. Without this, the remaining information may as well not be present. Where subjective discretion was required, we applied it to the overall score.

Limitations

Sign-up Process — We didn't adjust for score whether you can subscribe online or if you have to call as it's unclear whether signing up online actually places an order or simply refers the request to a support agent to get in touch. This would have required signing up with each provider.

National vs Local — We did not score availability of the packages and it is important to note that some packages are only available in a small area (for example that covered by a particular Altnet), so it is not possible to directly compare all packages.

Multiple Packages — Where a provider offered multiple packages, we assigned the highest score in each segment as this generally offered more choice for consumers, but this may not fully represent a value for money calculation.

Bundled Services & Other Support

— We did not evaluate any subsidised telephone services which may be offered at discounted rates or consider other support, for example to job seekers, which may be available from providers but which are not available openly as social tariffs, as these were not based on the same criteria and may prove more difficult to access (e.g. requiring a referral from a Job Centre)

4. Set using whatismyviewport.com

5. The term 'social tariff' is commonly known and is expected to be used. Using terms like 'low-income household' or similar terms or descriptions are also positive when aiding navigation. Terms which can't be associated with a social tariff other than by checking the linked page are not rewarded