

# **GUIDE**

to the

## **Voluntary Agreement on Standards for Fixed Broadband Services**

Between the Commerce and Employment Department, Sure and JT

## What is the broadband standards voluntary agreement?

This is an agreement between the Commerce and Employment Department and broadband operators Sure and JT, whereby the operators have committed to meet certain minimum performance criteria when delivering broadband services to their customers.

The agreement covers the broadband internet services which are typically used by households and small and medium businesses (SMEs). It will be effective from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2015.

## Why is it needed?

Internet connectivity is an essential service for the majority of Guernsey's businesses and Islanders.

The agreement builds on the operators' existing commitments to their customers, and aims to bring additional clarity on what customers can expect from their broadband service.

## What does the agreement cover?

The agreement focuses on 3 main areas:

1. **Download speeds:** The agreement specifies the minimum download speed which can be expected by users for a range of broadband services.
2. **Marketing terms:** Certain marketing terms are reserved for broadband services of a certain speed.
3. **Quality monitoring:** Broadband providers commit to regularly checking the performance of their customers' broadband service, and to provide reasonable support for resolving issues.

## What are the minimum guaranteed broadband speeds?

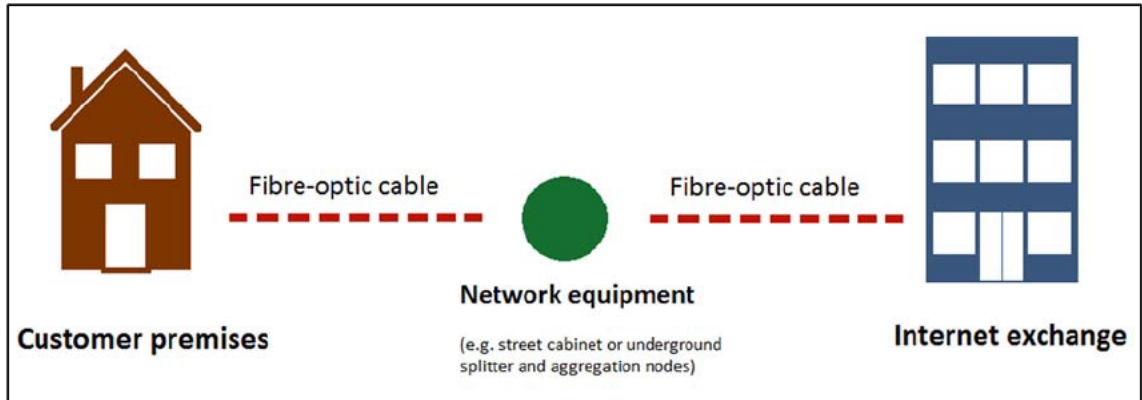
Four categories of services are defined, each with its own minimum guaranteed speed.

The first category only applies to **fibre to the home (FTTH)** services:

- **Test Category A:** Services with a top download speed of 100 Mbps or more, and a minimum download speed of 15Mbps.

FTTH services are those where the connection between the customer's premises (home or office) and the broadband provider (internet exchange) is entirely made up of fibre optic cabling. This type of connection generally offers the fastest connection speeds.

**Diagram 1: Fibre to the Home (FTTH)**

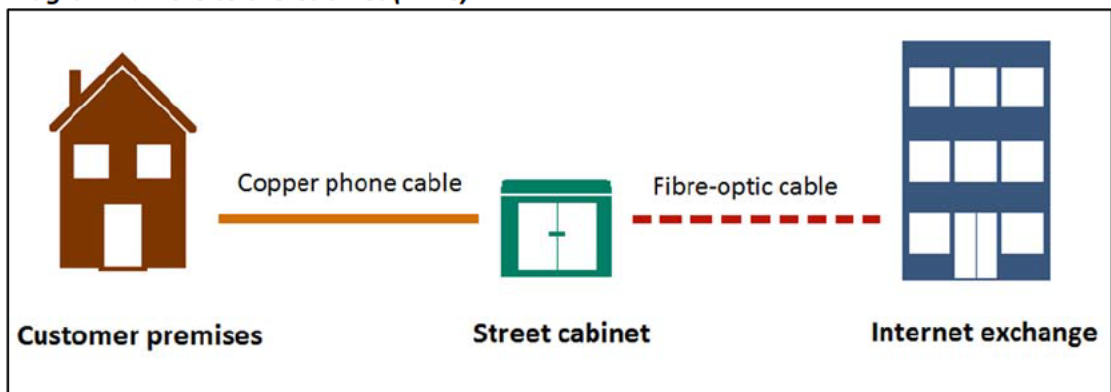


The other three categories apply to **fibre to the cabinet (FTTC)** services.

- **Test Category B:** Services with a top download speed of 60Mbps or more, and a minimum download speed of 15Mbps.
- **Test Category C:** Services with a top download speed of 30Mbps or more, and a minimum download speed of 10Mbps
- **Test Category D:** Services with a top download speed less than 30Mbps, and a minimum download speed of 2Mbps.

FTTC services are those where the connection between the customer's premises (home or office) and the broadband provider (internet exchange) is partially made up of fibre optic cabling. The fibre runs from the exchange to a street cabinet, and from there a copper phone line completes the link to the customer's premises.

**Diagram 2: Fibre to the Cabinet (FTTC)**



## What marketing terms can be used to describe different broadband services?

The agreement defines certain key terms and when they can be used by operators to describe their services:

- Services branded as **“Ultrafast”** must meet the criteria for Test Category A.
- Services branded as **“Superfast”** must meet the criteria for Test Categories B or C.
- Services branded as **“Broadband”** must meet the criteria for Test Category D.

This should help when comparing the features of the different broadband services on offer.

## What is being done to ensure that I get a good connection?

Operators will test performance when a service is first installed, and will carry on monitoring every individual customer’s service performance on a regular basis thereafter – at a frequency of at least twice a year.

Should an operator detect performance below the minimum standards, it will investigate it and make direct contact with customers to explain the likely root cause of the problem.

In addition:

- For issues caused by the operator’s broadband infrastructure, the operator will explain the steps it is undertaking to improve performance.
- For issues believed to be related to the choice of service or to the customer’s premises (e.g. internal wiring or Wi-Fi issues), the operator will provide advice on the steps it recommends the customer undertakes to resolve this.

## Why are broadband speeds sometimes slower than advertised ‘up to’ speeds?

For broadband services advertised with ‘up to’ download speeds (e.g. ‘up to 20Mbps download speed’) there are a number of reasons why you may not receive the maximum advertised headline speed.

The main reason is that for most broadband customers, the maximum speed available declines the further you are from the telephone exchange. Other factors which can affect broadband speeds include the quality of the internal wiring inside a customer’s premises, the capacity of the broadband provider’s network, the number of subscribers sharing the network, and the number of people accessing a particular website.

## **What if I detect a problem with my broadband service?**

If you detect a problem with your broadband service, please contact your broadband provider's customer services team directly – their contact details can be found on their website.

(Please note that the Commerce and Employment Department cannot provide advice on technical issues.)