

**Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme
Supplier Bulletin #43
27th January 2021**

Closure of Scheme

This bulletin is a further reminder that the Rural (RGC) element of the Scheme will close to new voucher requests on 31/03/2021 (or earlier, should funding be exhausted ahead of this date). All vouchers issued in connection with requests made prior to the closure of the Scheme have a 12 month validity, during which time the connections should be made and vouchers claimed.

We can now also confirm that the last date a supplier will be able to submit a PRP application under the Scheme will be 5pm on Friday 19th February 2021 as after this point, there will not be enough time for a PRP to be submitted, reviewed and published before the RGC element of the Scheme closes. New PRPs will not be able to be submitted after this date as the functionality will be removed from the Portal.

Potential new UK Gigabit Programme vouchers

In Bulletin 42, we announced that we are considering over £250m worth of new funding for vouchers as part of the UK Gigabit Programme. In line with the Government's ambition to provide access to better broadband to many more of the hardest-to-reach communities in rural areas across the UK, we are considering that **the new voucher would no longer treat premises that are in an Ofcom Area 2 area as eligible to receive voucher funding**. This change would be in order to target the funding at delivery in the hardest to reach areas which are least likely to receive commercial rollout.

All details regarding the potential new vouchers as part of the UK Gigabit Programme set out in this bulletin are subject to the Important Notices section below.

Potential transfer of existing PRPs to UK Gigabit Programme

We are aware that there are a large number of in-flight, fluid projects which are delivering connections in the hardest to reach areas which don't feature any Ofcom Area 2 premises and that these PRPs have headroom for vouchers which may not be able to be requested prior to the closure of the Scheme on 31/03/2021. As a result of this, this bulletin introduces a process for a supplier to indicate a preference to transfer a PRP to any voucher funding that may become available as part of the UK Gigabit Programme. This bulletin also provides guidance for existing PRPs that do feature Ofcom Area 2 premises and therefore would not be eligible to transfer to the UK Gigabit Programme.

As is currently the case with the current Scheme, for vouchers issued under a potential UK Gigabit Programme, there will be other factors which influence whether a premises is eligible for a voucher, such as subsidy from other government interventions or available speeds and

a premises eligibility is only confirmed at voucher issue stage. All vouchers issued under the UK Gigabit Programme will be subject to the agreement and operation of new terms and conditions (including detailed eligibility criteria) which are currently being developed.

However, over the next few days we will write to all relevant suppliers to give our best indication of the impact of the potential Ofcom Area 2 eligibility change to supplier's existing projects that have been active in the last 180 days. (An active project is a project that has had at least one voucher requested, issued or claimed within the last 6 months, or has been submitted within the last 6 months).

Transfer preference forms

BDUK will provide relevant suppliers with (in the form of a transfer preference form) a list of all of their active PRPs with an indication of whether or not BDUK believe them to have Ofcom Area 2 postcodes within them:

- If they do not have Area 2 postcodes within them and suppliers wish to potentially transfer these to the UK Gigabit Programme, then suppliers should complete the transfer preference form and return it to BDUK in accordance with the instructions to be provided. This activity should allow suppliers to prioritise voucher requests across their PRP portfolio.
- If a PRP isn't on a supplier's transfer preference form and a supplier wishes to indicate a preference to transfer it, then please provide the PRP detail in the transfer preference form, providing full and accurate details to enable a potential transfer.
- Suppliers that do not have active projects will not be sent a transfer preference form and should contact BDUK by the end of 19th February to discuss the status of their projects, if required.

BDUK will be writing to the email address which is registered with BDUK on the Voucher portal, so suppliers must ensure that they check this email address for any correspondence.

We fully expect that further premises will become ineligible for the potential new voucher as the eligibility criteria for the new voucher is refined and other builds progress. Accordingly, a PRP featuring on a transfer preference form in no way guarantees eligibility or funding in any way under a potential new UK Gigabit Programme voucher.

Suppliers are reminded that BDUK's authorisation of any Pre-Registered Package is not a guarantee of funding support under the Scheme and that BDUK will only make payments in respect of vouchers which are issued by BDUK for eligible premises.

Important notices

We trust that the additional details relating to the potential new UK Gigabit Programme scheme as well as the potential transfer of relevant existing PRPs to the new scheme set out in this bulletin are helpful for suppliers. However, it is important to note that at the date of this bulletin the arrangements for the new scheme (and indeed its existence) have not been confirmed. Accordingly, suppliers should note the following:

1. We make no commitment or representation that (a) there will be any new UK Gigabit Programme scheme; (b) if there is a new UK Gigabit Programme scheme, it will have the relevant features (including eligibility criteria) described in this bulletin; and (c) any existing PRP (whether identified on a transfer preference form or not) will be capable of being transferred (or will transfer) to a new UK Gigabit Programme scheme, and DCMS and BDUK accepts no liability for any losses, damages, costs, expenses and liabilities of any kind associated with any reliance or expectation that may be placed on any of these aspects.
2. Any new UK Gigabit Programme scheme will be subject to a formal Government announcement and the agreement and operation of new scheme terms and conditions. In the meantime, this Important Notices section will continue to apply (including in respect of future supplier bulletins, emails and documentation issued by us that relate to a potential new UK Gigabit Programme scheme).
3. If suppliers wish to benefit from vouchers, requests for vouchers under the current Scheme for eligible PRPs should be made prior to the closure of the Scheme on 31/03/2021 (subject to funding being available).
4. All voucher requests under the current Scheme will continue to be subject to the Scheme terms and conditions and the submission of voucher requests provides no guarantee that funding will be provided. This principle will also form part of any new UK Gigabit Programme scheme.

For a broader overview of BDUK's work, please also see this webpage:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/building-digital-uk>

The Digital Connectivity Portal here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/digital-connectivity-portal>

takes suppliers through to some useful information and updates here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/resources-for-communications-network-providers>

If you have any questions about the Scheme please contact us using the Support function when signed into the website.