

Reference: 1921243

Information Requests  
[information.requests@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:information.requests@ofcom.org.uk)

5 December 2024

## Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information about universal service obligations.

We received this request on 11 November 2024 and we have considered your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“the FOI Act”).

### Your request

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*“I’m currently investigating the universal service of telecommunication each country.*

*I have a question regarding the universal service obligations for telephone and broadband.*

*My understanding is that British Telecom and KCOM are designated as the universal service providers for telephone and broadband in the UK.*

*Does British Telecom have an obligation to provide nationwide coverage, i.e., does British Telecom have to provide service upon request, even in areas where other operators provide service?*

*Or is British Telecom not obligated to provide service in areas where other operators provide service?*

*In Japan, the universal service for telephony has changed from NTT's obligation to provide the service to all area, to a system where there is no obligation to provide the service if another operator is providing the service.*

*I would like to know how it works in the UK, for both telephony and broadband.*

### Our response

BT is designated for the UK excluding the Hull area and KCOM is designated in the Hull area only for both telephony and broadband. The consolidated telephony and broadband universal service conditions are set out [here](#).

Under BT’s **telephony** Universal Service Condition 1, unless Ofcom consents otherwise, BT shall provide the Telephony Services on the basis of uniform prices throughout the UK except for the Hull Area. Under KCOM’s telephony Universal Condition 1, unless Ofcom consents otherwise, KCOM shall provide the Telephony Services on the basis of uniform prices throughout the Hull Area.

BT’s **broadband** universal service condition A.3 says:

“Subject to the Conditions set out in Section 2, BT is required to provide Broadband Services where all of the following criteria are met:

- a) the Broadband Connection requested is to a fixed location which is a Premises;
- b) Alternative Broadband Services at a price less than, or equal to, the Eligibility Threshold:
  - (i) are not available to that location; and
  - (ii) will not be made available to that location through a publicly-funded intervention within the period of one year beginning with the date on which the Request is made;
- c) the provision of the Broadband Connection requested:
  - (i) will cost no more than £3,400 excluding VAT; or
  - (ii) will cost more than £3,400 excluding VAT, but any Excess Costs will be paid by the USO Customer.”

KCOM’s Universal Service Condition A.3 has the same wording.

There is further information in our 2019 [statement](#) *Delivering the Broadband Universal Service: Designating Universal Service Providers and setting conditions*.

The Eligibility Threshold is currently £56.20 per month so if you only have access to a decent service that is priced over £56.20 per month, you also have the right to request a universal service connection.

We hope this information is helpful. If you have any further queries, then please send them to [information.requests@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:information.requests@ofcom.org.uk) – quoting the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely,

## Information Requests

### Request an internal review

If you are unhappy with the response you have received to your request for information, or think that your request was refused without a reason valid under the law, you may ask for an internal review. If you do, it will be subject to an independent review within Ofcom. We will either uphold the original decision, or reverse or modify it.

If you would like to ask us to carry out an internal review, you should get in touch within two months of the date of this letter. There is no statutory deadline for us to complete our internal review, and the time it takes will depend on the complexity of the request. But we will try to complete the review within 20 working days (or no more than 40 working days in exceptional cases) and keep you informed of our progress. Please email the Information Requests team ([information.requests@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:information.requests@ofcom.org.uk)) to request an internal review.

### Taking it further

If you are unhappy with the outcome of our internal review, then you have the right to [complain to the Information Commissioner’s Office](#).