



Promoting Social Tariffs

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Background and objectives

On 27 January, LOTI held a workshop to explore boroughs' current challenges and potential approaches that might be more effective in raising awareness about social tariffs available to eligible residents. This session was held in collaboration with Ofcom's Economist and Behavioural Insights teams. The slides from the workshop can be viewed [here](#).

Objectives

The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Introduce social tariffs and Ofcom's work in this area.
- Understand the barriers to promoting social tariffs.
- Identify potential solutions and ways in which LOTI can support boroughs promote social tariffs to eligible residents..

Participants

The workshop was attended by colleagues from a number of London boroughs, VCS organisations and health partners.

Context and introduction

The workshop started with a short introduction to the Digital Inclusion Innovation Programme (DIIP). More details about DIIP and its projects can be found in [this slide deck](#) and on the [LOTI website](#).

As part of DIIP, LOTI have launched Providing Social Tariffs, a project which aims to combat data poverty by increasing the visibility and uptake of social value tariffs offered by broadband and telecommunications providers.

LOTI has created a [resource](#) for practitioners that captures the latest social tariffs offered by broadband providers and telcos and is now looking for further opportunities to increase the visibility of tariffs available to eligible Londoners.

Introduction to Ofcom and social tariffs

Ofcom shared details about their role as regulator for communication services, in particular their duty to monitor affordability and protect vulnerable customers. They then provided an overview of social tariffs and the associated issue of low take-up.

Group exercises

Participants were invited to discuss the following questions in small groups:

1. **What specific problems or barriers are preventing our desired outcome?**
2. **What can we do to raise awareness and uptake of social tariffs?**

Below is a summary of the main points raised for each of the above questions.

Problems and Barriers	Solutions
Knowledge	
Knowledge gaps of practitioners and residents	Produce an easy-to-understand resource of tariff information, clearly explaining customer commitments.
Fear of the financial commitment and setting up a direct debit.	
Differences between tariff offers	Simplify choice and what each tariff can do.
Confusing terminology or language used to describe social tariffs	Ask operators to standardise language.
Uncertainty whether the internet speeds set for social tariffs will allow residents to do what they need or want to do online	Create a guide to what internet activity can be conducted at different internet speeds.
Concern about the sign up process	Research the sign up process and produce a sign up guidance which can be shared with practitioners and residents.
Promotion and trust	
Identifying the best time to raise the subject of internet access.	Work with practitioners across different services to identify opportunities to raise the subject with residents. Create prompts / conversation starters for practitioners to use with residents. Focus on the similarity of the tariffs, rather than explain the differences.
Lack of trust of local authorities and broadband providers	Find and engage with local 'trust ambassadors' from NHS, voluntary and community groups.
People who need social tariffs are the hardest to reach with information	Promote social tariffs via traditional methods such as local newspapers and

	<p>magazines.</p> <p>Provide easy-to-use comms templates for practitioners to use.</p>
There is a stigma of being on a social tariff	Consider how social tariffs are promoted e.g. 'Join the Community'. Explain how social tariffs and getting online can help residents.
Digital exclusion	
Residents do not have the confidence to access the internet	Signpost residents to digital skills support.
Residents don't have access to devices to connect to the internet	Signpost residents to device gifting or lending schemes.
Identifying need	
Different population segments have different needs.	Take a person-centred approach when planning interventions. Consider the segments identified following a survey of residents across Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea.

Next steps

Suggested recommendations for next steps include:

1. **LOTI** to create a social tariffs toolkit for borough practitioners.
2. **LOTI** to promote the social tariffs toolkit with boroughs' digital champions/ambassadors.
3. **LOTI** to raise with Ofcom the issue and need to standardise the language and processes used by telecommunications providers when developing social tariff packages.

Get involved

The LOTI team is keen to continue to work with public, third and private sector colleagues to promote the awareness and uptake of social tariffs. Please contact sophie.nelson@loti.london if you would like to be involved in the design and testing of solutions.