The Rt Hon Ian Murray MP
Minister of State for Culture, Media and Sport

Natalie Black
Group Director, Infrastructure and Connectivity

19 November 2026

Dear Ian,

Broadband affordability and social tariffs

I am writing to update you on the progress Ofcom has made in improving access to affordable broadband through social tariffs, and to highlight challenges with relying on the voluntary approach currently in place.

The cost of living remains a significant concern for the Government and for consumers as well as for Ofcom. While telecoms prices have generally remained flat or have fallen in real terms in recent years, some consumers struggle to afford the communications services that are essential to their daily lives.

As you know, we do not have regulatory powers to require providers to offer social tariffs. But we have worked with industry so they offer these tariffs, and set out clear expectations for their design and promotion. Around 30 providers now offer a social tariff, compared with three in 2020. Take-up has increased from around 55,000 households in 2022, to more than half a million in 2025.

However, awareness and take-up among eligible customers remain low: only around a third (34%) are aware of social tariffs; and fewer than 10% take one up. Following the commitments made by the signatories to the Telecoms Consumer Charter, we reviewed how providers were making social tariffs easy to find and take up. In July, we wrote to providers with strengthened expectations (see Annex 1) and set out the further action they should take. Providers agreed to make a range of changes, including improved signposting to social tariffs on their websites; better visibility of key information including prices; and simpler, more inclusive application processes, for example by removing the need for callbacks.

Despite this progress, there are limits to what can be achieved through the current approach:

- Improving consumer awareness remains a significant challenge. We recognise the recent interest from bodies such as the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee in seeing further progress here. Delivering a step change would likely require a substantially different approach, potentially including a wider public information campaign, such as on television. There is a risk, however, that driving further improvements in awareness and take-up would lead providers to increase social tariff prices due to the reduced commercial returns they offer, undermining the benefits for customers.
- We are also increasingly of the view that existing social tariffs do not fully meet the needs of customers facing affordability challenges, particularly those on the lowest incomes. Some social tariff prices have increased significantly over time. For example, BT's Home Essentials tariff (67 Mbit/s) has increased from £20 a month in 2021 to £25 a month today. New Ofcom consumer research has also found that, among eligible people who are aware of social tariffs

but have not taken one up, the two most common reasons are concerns that speeds may not be fast enough (31%) and not knowing they were eligible (26%).

In the context of the potential switch off of digital terrestrial television (DTT), the affordability of broadband will become even more important as broadband will be essential for viewing TV.

We would welcome the opportunity to work with the Government as it considers what further action may be needed to help ensure that everyone can access affordable broadband connectivity.

Yours sincerely,



Natalie Black

Annex 1

Our updated expectations of telecoms providers on social tariffs promotion and take up

1. Social tariffs should be prominent on provider websites, including in the list of broadband deals available and easily accessible in one click from a featured section of the broadband landing page (not just a link in a footer).
2. Social tariffs should be easy to find in site navigation and searches, as well as on interactive chatbots, third-party websites and through search engines.
3. Social tariffs should be signposted on webpages where customers may be looking for help, (for example customer FAQs, help pages, pages aimed at vulnerable customers and those having trouble paying bills), and in communications with customers who may be eligible (for example in End of Contract Notifications and customer service scripts).
4. Clear language should be used to describe the features and protections offered by social tariffs (such as the ability to switch without a termination fee). Prices and any restrictions should be set out clearly on your website.
5. It should be easy for eligible customers to take up social tariffs. There should be a choice of channel, and no need for customers to wait for callbacks.
6. Social tariff customers should be able to easily add commercial products, such as pay TV.
7. Social tariffs should be open to both new and existing customers