

## **A Guide to Broadband and WiFi in village halls and community buildings**

Village halls and rural community buildings are increasingly looking to offer broadband and WiFi access to their users. This can support a range of community activities and enhance the facilities offered as a venue for hire. However, there are a number of issues to be considered when planning connections including costs, security and coverage.

Connecting Cambridgeshire has produced this short guide as part of our work with Cambridgeshire ACRE to help to improve digital connectivity for rural communities and businesses.

### **Getting an initial Broadband Connection**

Before you can get Broadband and WiFi connections the building will need to have a telephone landline installed unless you can access cable or fibre to the premise (FTTP) or fixed wireless options in your area. This needs to be on a business (not residential) contract as it is for public use.

- Place an order for a new telephone line with BT.com then upgrade to broadband, or
- Find out more about getting broadband without a landline here  
[https://www.uswitch.com/broadband/guides/broadband\\_no\\_landline/](https://www.uswitch.com/broadband/guides/broadband_no_landline/)

Some halls do not have an official post office address, which can cause problems as some Internet Service Providers (ISPs) may not accept an order without a formal address. If this is the case:

- Request an official address from the Post Office here:  
<https://www.royalmail.com/personal/receiving-mail/update-your-address>
- Or find an ISP that will accept an order from an 'unserved' building. This may involve an initial survey before an order is confirmed.

### **Potential costs and issues**

- Initial installation and connection costs if a new telephone line and broadband connection is required, plus the on-going line rental and data usage charges.
- Additional costs could also be required if you need to boost your WiFi signal, or need work to keep your WiFi router in a secure location.
- Use the postcode checker on the [www.connectingcambridgeshire.co.uk](http://www.connectingcambridgeshire.co.uk) website to see if superfast broadband is available and find useful advice on how to upgrade,
- Village halls need a Business (not residential) contract. Shop around for the best phone and broadband deals available on price comparison websites to balance cost with reliability and data usage limits. Business landlines will incur VAT.
- Check the ISP's Terms and Conditions allow you to make your internet connection available to the general public before placing an order.

### **Security**

It is strongly recommended that access to your WiFi signal is managed and filtered. The risk of allowing unmanaged access is that people may use your broadband service to view, access or distribute information that is illegal, criminal, copyrighted or pirated. This could lead to a degree of liability for those providing the

WiFi. However, security is easy and quick to manage, and should not put you off establishing a WiFi service within your community building.

Some simple steps should be taken to minimise the risk of inappropriate use:

- 1) Make sure your wireless router is in a secure area (a high shelf), which limits physical access to authorised users only. Allowing someone to log in to the router with a direct (Ethernet) cable is a risk, as they can make unauthorised changes.
- 2) Protect your passwords. The passwords required to manage and access your WiFi connection are usually displayed somewhere on the wireless router. If you are concerned that these can be accessed by people that are not authorised consider changing the User ID and administration password. This will be explained in the user guide provided with your router.
- 3) Change the public access WiFi password on a regular basis to prevent unauthorised access. This will mean that people using your WiFi connection will have to be re-issued with the password, but can limit others using your WiFi without your permission.
- 4) Make sure the parental control setting is switched on to prevent access to unsuitable website. Use any Firewall settings on the router to set the level of restriction (see router instruction manual).

### **Extending WiFi Coverage**

Choosing where you site your WiFi router may affect coverage as the signal strength reduces further away from the router. In a large hall or building the signal may not be strong enough to cover all areas. The recommendation that your wireless router be secured in a location that only authorised people can access may also mean that the WiFi signal is kept to one area, often not in a central location.

If the signal is not strong enough to reach all areas that you want, it is quick and easy to install devices that extend the WiFi signal to other locations within the building. The simplest way is via powerline adapter(s) (using the electrical wiring and sockets), or a WiFi extender(s) to boost the signal strength.

### **Good Practice guidelines**

- Include the use of WiFi in your hiring agreement for those using the hall. Cambridgeshire ACRE can help with a model agreement.
- Display a notice to make it clear to potential users that the use of the WiFi service is at their own risk - users should be careful about transmitting sensitive information and ensure that their wireless device is protected with an appropriate firewall.

### **Case studies**

If you are still unsure whether a broadband and WiFi connection will work for your village hall or community building, you might find it useful to contact other halls that have done so,

For further information, contact: Lisa Chambers, Community Development Officer for Cambridgeshire ACRE, email [lisa.chambers@camsacre.org.uk](mailto:lisa.chambers@camsacre.org.uk) or call 01353 865048.