

PENNY MORDAUNT MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR PORTSMOUTH NORTH
Ground Floor, 1000 Lakeside
North Harbour
Portsmouth
Hampshire PO6 3EN

22nd June 2020

Dear Sir or Madam,

RE: Free WIFI access for children

I wanted to write to you with more information on BT's recently announced partnership with the Department of Education (DfE) to bring free wi-fi access to children and families with no internet access at home via their c5.4 million wi-fi hotspots, to help with online learning.

150,000 families in the UK have no access to the internet, meaning that many children have been at risk of falling behind during school closures. The government and BT have stepped in to fund the development and access costs for this scheme that, we hope, will provide tens of thousands of children with connectivity.

The ambitious plan follows the DfE's initiative announced in April, which aims to help England's most in-need children access vital online learning resources. Over the coming months, supporting the hardest hit families is more important than ever.

This will be an option of "first resort" for those who are most in need. The wi-fi access vouchers will give users unlimited data, on up to three devices at a time for 6 months. The vouchers will enable access with comprehensive content filtering to ensure child safety, and will point to online resources from BT's own [Skills for Tomorrow](#) and [Barefoot](#) learning programmes as well as BBC Bitesize and others.

Distribution is being handled directly by the DfE which will issue families with the necessary voucher usernames and passwords. Local Education Authorities and Academy Trusts in Portsmouth and across England will be invited to request vouchers, working with their schools to identify those children who are most in need.

BT is also announcing direct support for several key initiatives, offering access to the BT Wi-fi network as a pilot for the DfE scheme. These are:

- Schools Home Support has partnered with Raspberry Pi via the Bloomfield Trust to quickly provide devices for learning at home to the families they support that don't have them. These will now come with Wi-fi connectivity for 6 months.

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- Kids Out's 'Kids In' initiative to support families who are self-isolating in women's refuges after escaping domestic violence.
- Barnardo's support for vulnerable children and young people who may be locked down in homes where they suffer from 'digital poverty' and so do not have any access to fixed internet at present.

We hope this bespoke internet access will help as many as a third of those families without fixed connectivity at home, who the Government is supporting through this period of school closure and part-time attendance.

If your school would like to know more please email:

COVID.TECHNOLOGY@education.gov.uk

Please don't hesitate to get in touch with my office if you have any further questions.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'PM Mordaunt'.

Penny Mordaunt MP