

## Community Fibre Partnerships



### Can you dig it?

## Everything you need to know about digging your own network ducts

When you sign up for a Community Fibre Partnership with Openreach, you don't have to do a thing. Just sit back and we'll take care of it all – from planning and digging to connection and testing. But if you have the tools and resources, it could be possible to do some of the groundwork for your new fibre infrastructure yourself.

Some communities choose to dig and install their own network ducts as it's a way to cut costs and speed up deployment. If you'd like to 'self-dig' you just need our agreement that it's appropriate for your project and that everything meets the right specs.

There's no minimum or maximum amount of self-dig: it's simply down to what your community wants to do based upon your own fibre solution.

### Self-dig: What you need to do

1. Send us a list of the premises that form your community so we can assess if you have the capability and desire to self-dig early on in the process
2. Outline where you want to dig to so we can incorporate this into the design.
3. If you want to proceed with a self-dig quote, you'll need to then:
  - a. Confirm addresses for all premises in the community set to benefit from the new fibre infrastructure
  - b. Identify land ownership and any potential premises that are capable and willing to be part of self-dig work
  - c. Identify any natural boundaries that stand between premises and road links (i.e. rivers, streams, woods, hills etc.)

Picture above showing members of the Ditcham fibre community team with pupils at the Ditcham Park School



## Things to consider

### Who owns the land?

You'll need to get the owner's permission and contact them about the proposed work.

### Who needs access?

You'll need to coordinate wayleaves (legal access rights), if needed, and think about how heavy machinery will get in – or how engineers will access the network in the future.

### DIY or contractor digging?

Do you have the skills, manpower and machinery? Are you using a contractor or doing it yourself? A contractor may not be cheaper than paying Openreach to do the digging.

### Will roads need to be closed?

If the duct crosses a road you'll need to get permission from your council's highways department and work within set dates and times. Ideally you want to avoid your route crossing a road – or Openreach can dig these parts and your community self-dig either side.

### Are there any natural barriers?

Try and avoid rivers, woods, bridges, rail crossings, canals and wet ground wherever possible. If not, your self-dig options may be restricted and existing network routes may have to be used.

### Keep it straight

Ideally the route will have long straight lengths, to minimise jointing chambers and avoid sharp bends.

## Identifying the areas to dig

Sometimes the existing network is the best route, but if not, we'll indicate areas where the community can dig. We'll also highlight where you may need to dig back to from individual premises.

Your community can help by:

- **Digging the fibre spine out to the community**  
This is the main duct into the heart of the community from a connection point in our network.
- **Digging in the lead in to the premises**  
If your premises are far from the service distribution point you might want to dig from the road to your property to reduce the cost of the overall solution.

## Health and safety, and risk assessment

Our engineers and the contractors have all been given appropriate health and safety training. They have a full understanding of the risk assessments to ensure safe working practices.

BT Group and Openreach won't accept liability for damages to people or property incurred as part of a self-dig for a Community Fibre Partnership, made by a contractor commissioned by the local community or by works carried out by local community members themselves.

## Case study

### Community enjoys ultrafast download speeds of up to 330Mbps thanks to self-digging

Residents of Ditcham, a rural hamlet in Hampshire, got in touch with Openreach after realising they were not part of the current fibre broadband rollout plan.

They opted to self-dig to save money and help speed up the fibre deployment process. They hired two sub-contractors to do the digging – one to carry out open field digging and the other to dig roads and soft verges, using a small machine digger and completed 6.5 kilometres of trenching in less than six weeks.



**“Openreach were incredibly supportive from the get-go. By working with the Community Fibre Partnership programme and opting for self-dig, Ditcham's school and community has saved itself well in excess of £100,000. What's more, we've now got access to ultrafast speeds of up to 330Mbps – and that is undeniably brilliant.”**

**Chris Tae, resident and broadband campaigner**