

Openreach Northern Ireland Annual Review 2019/2020



Welcome to our Annual Report for 2019/2020

It's been a busy year here at Openreach and our teams have been working tirelessly to build, manage and maintain the broadband network across Northern Ireland (NI). Our annual review sets out what we have achieved in that time and what we have learnt in the last 12 months. It also outlines how we can provide even better performance in the coming year as well as detailing some of the exciting new initiatives that we have planned. We are proud of our achievements to date and excited to share this with you.

Yet, it is important to recognise the difficulties that people have faced and continue to face in these unprecedented times of crisis. We are proud to stand alongside other key workers and to play our part in supporting our health service, our public representatives, and ensuring our customers stay connected in these most difficult of times.

We also understand the responsibility that rests with us to continue to deliver the broadband network in NI and we believe that we can play an important role in supporting economic recovery and long-term growth. Within this review our Director, Mairead Meyer, shares some further insights and explains more about our future ambitions for Openreach in NI.

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A message from our Director, Mairead Meyer

Openreach NI is the engineering team who build and maintain the largest fixed communications network in Northern Ireland (NI). It is our mission to build the best possible network, with the highest quality of service, to make sure that everyone in the country can be connected.

The services provided by Openreach are crucial to people across Northern Ireland, but even more so during the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic - keeping hospitals, businesses and homes connected has never been more important. We're committed to building the infrastructure that is vital for the country's connectivity but also for the local economy.

Customer Service

Providing and maintaining a first class service for our customers is embedded in our day-to-day service delivery. Our team of over 750 people in Northern Ireland are hugely dedicated to the work that we do and that can be seen clearly in our delivery against our service targets. Our missed appointments reduced to 1.35% for 2019/2020, we had 2,592 less faults than in the previous year and we carried out over 272,000 provisions related to orders across all our products. We're committed to maintaining or improving our customer service in the year ahead.

Full fibre broadband in Northern Ireland

Full fibre broadband will provide Northern Ireland with a fast, future proofed and consistent service that will help renew towns and communities across the region and supports NI's position as a leading digital economy.

We made Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) available to over 187,000 homes and businesses last year and we are targeting a further 200,000 homes to be completed by the end of March 2021 which is another significant increase to our overall footprint. In March 2019, Openreach consulted with industry on taking an exchange-based approach to upgrading the digital infrastructure with GEA-FTTP and to stop selling our legacy copper products to those premises that have Ultrafast availability; we're delighted that Northern Ireland have recently announced 14 local Exchanges out of 118 UK wide*.

We're continuing to invest in building full fibre across NI, with an investment of approximately £28 million towards the expansion of our full fibre network in 2019/20 and we'll be investing heavily this year again.

One of the best big companies to work for

We're really proud to be one of the largest companies to work for in Northern Ireland, and part of an organisation ranked in this year's Sunday Times Top 25 Best Big Companies to work for. We have big ambitions to continue to grow our business and invest in jobs right across Northern Ireland. For 2020/21 we have just announced plans to recruit over 100 apprentices, offering a structured programme for young people to build and develop a career in Engineering or for those people looking a career change.

Looking ahead

We understand now more than ever, the vital importance of having a resilient, fast and reliable network for connecting people, both personally and professionally. It is with this in mind that we are really pushing ahead to exceed our targets and delivery in Northern Ireland, to minimise the impact of Covid-19 and keep NI at the forefront of digital technology during these very unprecedented times.

Mairead Meyer

Director, Openreach in Northern Ireland

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“We understand now more than ever, the vital importance of having a resilient, fast and reliable network for connecting people.”

*<https://www.openreach.co.uk/orpg/home/products/fttpupgradeconsultation/fttpupgradeconsultation.do>

The Year in Numbers

FTTP rollout – Over
187,000
homes benefited from our full fibre roll out in 19/20

Total FTTP footprint –
326,000
homes can now access FTTP as of March 20'



We delivered
691
cablelinks

Faults – We had

 **2,592**

less faults in 19/20 on our access network than in 18/19

Investment in the network –
Another massive year for us, investing approx.



£28M

Demonstrating our commitment to bringing full fibre to the region

Community Fibre Partnerships (CFPs) –
7 completed covering

297

homes



SOGEA lines

SOGEA is one of our newly launched products. As we retire our PSTN network in 2025, we will use SOGEA to support in areas where we are yet to install full fibre. At the end of March 20 we had a total of

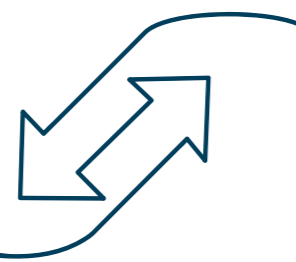
6,456

active SOGEA lines in Northern Ireland



Missed Appointments –
Missed appointments were down to

1.35%
for 19/20



Provisions – We carried out

272,260

provision related orders across all our products

Total faults per 1000 exchange connections -

136

which is the lowest in the UK

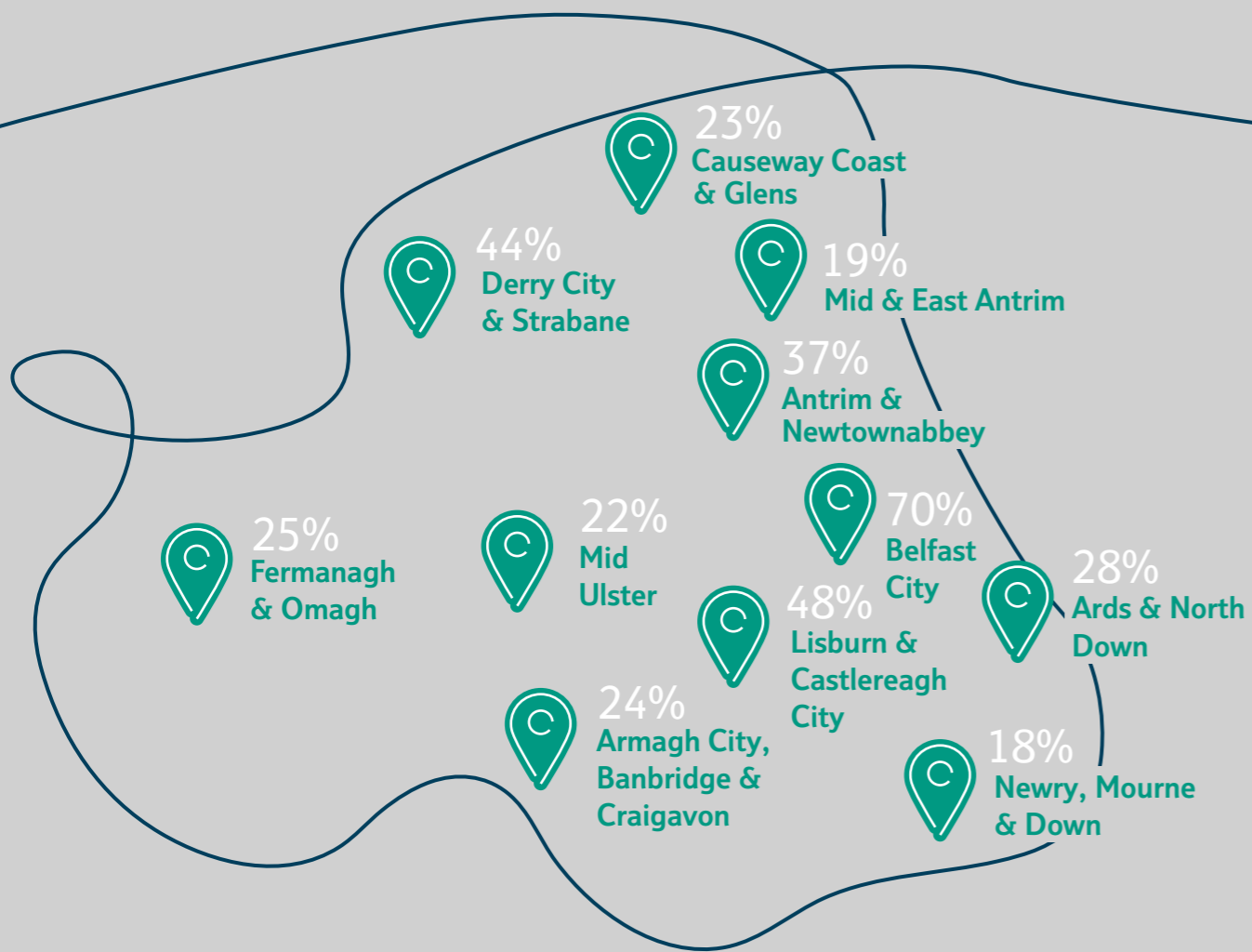
Our Fibre Broadband Build

Through our 'Fibre First' programme, we made FTTP available to over 187,000 homes and businesses last year – this increased our footprint to just under 326,000 homes.

Full fibre is more than just increased speeds. It provides a reliable, consistent, and dependable service that acts as a platform to drive economic growth. Our investment in the network each year proves how serious we are about this and in helping to drive this growth.

Last year, we invested approximately £28 million into expanding our full fibre network and this year, our investment ambitions remain equally as high. We intend to keep raising the bar and have set a target of enabling a further 200,000 homes by the end of March 2021. We are determined to build fibre as quickly as possible. We believe our ambition of a full fibre enabled Northern Ireland can become a reality soon, cementing our position as a leading digital economy.

Coverage by Council Area – as of March 20



CFP – In-flight –

11

THP –

1244

with the opportunity to do much more

Full Fibre Infrastructure Build

Openreach has brought an offering called 'Full Fibre Infrastructure Build' (FFIB) to market in Northern Ireland to support the government's 'Local Full Fibre Networks' (LFFN) initiative. This product allows public sector organisations and Communication Providers (CPs) to access our FTTP product built directly to public sector sites. This new product has been launched across the UK, and with all Councils in NI having secured funding under the LFFN programme, we hope that it can support Council ambitions to see FTTP more widely available in their council areas.

Community Fibre Partnership

Our Community Fibre Partnership (CFP) initiative is enabling the extension of our FTTP footprint via local community-based engagements. We have 11 CFP schemes inflight, due to complete in 20/21, and have the opportunity to take on more in areas and support more communities across Northern Ireland.

Our New Service Delivery Structure

In 2019/2020 Openreach underwent significant changes, both structurally and in the ways we work. One of the biggest changes was within our service delivery teams. We changed our geographical scope for our field teams and introduced an additional layer of support in the shape of our Patch Leads.

These Patch Leads report to Patch Managers, providing support where required, and helping to coach and support engineers on the ground. We believe this new structure will help us deliver a better experience for our customers as well as providing our engineers with the support they need to do a great job every time. Below are insights into these new roles from one of our Patch Manager's and the associated Patch Leads.



Lynda Fox
Senior Area Manager, Northern Ireland



Lynda Fox

Senior Area Manager, Northern Ireland, Service Delivery

I joined the Service Delivery team in February 2019, having worked in various roles within the company for 19 years. Day to day I spend most of my time managing field teams and really enjoy the challenges that come with leading such a wide and diverse team.

Setting the team up to work effectively and building career progression for our people is a key focus for me, while making sure we fully support our engineers as they carry out day to day duties. Our new working model with clear patch ownership – including new patch manager and patch lead roles - has helped us to deliver better for our customers, and created a real sense of pride and teamwork within each patch. Completely restructuring our team was not easy, it's a journey we've all been on together and I'm really proud of how everyone coped with the changes we made and maintained complete focus on our customers throughout.

We've been performing really well against our QoS targets achieving our targets last year - but there's always room to improve. This year our focus will be to utilise the new structure to fix faults within the patch on the day and to offer a better customer experience while reducing the amount of failure going to desk teams. I have a great team of experienced engineers and know that we can improve to give a better overall experience to our customers and we are excited about challenging ourselves to do exactly that.

Now, more than ever broadband is key to people's lives – my team are at the heart of ensuring that homes, business and communities across NI stay connected. I'm very proud of the work that we do, and know that my team will continue to work hard to deliver a first class service to our customers.



Chris Collins

Patch Manager, Openreach in Northern Ireland

The introduction and implementation of our new organisational structure has given me the opportunity to broaden my leadership and management skills in the role of Patch Manager. Personally, having spent five years as an operational manager, I am comfortable with the day-to-day challenges that arise in the role. However, with a much larger team, and more customer connections, it's fair to say I have had to learn and adapt fast so that I was able to provide support to my team, through a significant period of change, while continuing to deliver for our customers.

Throughout the transition into our new structure, great credit must be given to the newly appointed Patch Leads. They have been on their own journey and each of them have played a key part in delivering messages, keeping teams informed and supported and ensuring we meet our key performance targets. With the structure now established across the board, we have the foundations in place to really grow as a Service Delivery team and I look forward to leading my team and delivering for our customers.



Raymond Hanna

Patch Lead, Openreach in Northern Ireland

I have been an engineer since joining the business in 2002 as an apprentice. When the new structure and the Patch Lead roles were introduced, I felt it was the perfect opportunity for me to take on a new challenge while still being able to use the engineering skills that I have developed over the years.

My new role as Patch Lead has been a welcome challenge. I am enjoying pushing myself and am constantly learning new skills, processes, and systems to enable me to perform the job better.

I am faced with different challenges to solve daily but through working closely with my team and our control teams, we always get the job done with outstanding results. I get great satisfaction in resolving these issues and ultimately providing a great service for our customers.

Our Workforce

We're really proud of our experienced and vast workforce in Northern Ireland. We have many employees who have reached the momentous milestone of 40 years' service with us, like the Magee brothers who have 85 years' experience with Openreach between them. We're really proud that people feel we're a company they want to work for long term. Openreach in Northern Ireland aims to recruit, train, develop and retain people who are motivated and enthusiastic about making a real difference for our customers. We also aim to attract people from different backgrounds and with various experiences to help us meet the needs of our customers. We continue to look at employing a diverse workforce with a focus on attracting more female talent into our engineering workforce.

Apprentices

With over 800 applicants for 54 places in 19/20 our apprenticeship programme offers highly attractive and sought-after positions across both desk and field engineering. Our apprentices get a mixture of hands-on-learning at our Training School in Antrim and in the network from an early stage. From the start, they are fully supported by an experienced engineer who acts as a mentor and buddy. At the end of the programme they achieve an NVQ (National Vocational Qualification), fully equipping them with the skills they need to deliver for our customers. With a competitive salary, attractive benefits, and real career prospects, we're proud of what we can offer apprentices.



Tim Whittaker

FTTP Apprentice engineer

Joining the Openreach apprenticeship scheme was the greatest decision I ever made. I am currently halfway through an 18-month apprenticeship training as an FTTP engineer. This is a customer facing role, delivering fibre from a CBT (Connectorised Block Terminal) either located on a pole or within the underground network right into the customer's premise. The addition of this cable into customers' homes drastically increases the capability of their internet speeds. It is really rewarding converting someone from 1/2Mbps all the way up to a maximum of 1Gbps. The apprenticeship scheme has been a great way to learn the ropes with excellent training and support. As part of the scheme, we're also given the chance to get the experience of other roles within Openreach which has been both interesting and informative. I'm thrilled to be a part of the next chapter of the network rollout and am excited to learn more as the build programme continues.



Graduates

We had over 100 applicants for our Graduate scheme this year. Our graduates benefit from a two-year programme where they get 'on-the-job' learning and experience, with real responsibilities and real business impact. They also get internal and external training and development to make sure they have the right skills and knowledge to succeed in becoming future leaders. Their fresh ideas, diverse thinking and different perspectives help drive our business forward.



Kathryn Cooper

Ultrafast Fibre Planner –
Graduate Scheme

My current role focuses on providing as many premises as possible with full fibre. This involves working across exchanges and ensuring all premises who should be eligible for full fibre can access it. It's really exciting to be involved in the rollout of the 'Fibre First' build programme across Northern Ireland and helping to 'futureproof' the region, ensuring the network is capable of handling future technologies. As part of the graduate scheme, I have had many opportunities to see every aspect of the company, including visits to London to understand how Openreach operates across the UK as well as taking part in multiple training courses. The graduate programme has given me the tools and knowledge to be very hands on in my role and try to make a difference. I have received so much support and I am very excited and proud to work for Openreach in Northern Ireland. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in the company to date and I am looking forward to seeing what is to come.

Northern Ireland Compliance

Regulatory Compliance

We are committed to having a strong compliance culture and Openreach has delivered its 2019/2020 compliance plan for Openreach in Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Regulatory Compliance Committee (NIRCC) was particularly interested in the two areas detailed below.

Accommodation Health

In November 2019, the Business Integrity team within Openreach conducted a health check covering the arrangements in place for Riverside Tower and Telephone House in Belfast. This was intended to:

- Determine if high risk groups belonging to Openreach were co-located with BT staff.
- Determine the measures taken to secure CI and CCI information.
- Identify and mitigate any areas of potential concern.

This was achieved by physical site visits and included interviews of staff to assess awareness of

correct practices using structured questions and witness statements. The health check found that those in sensitive roles were located separately from downstream BT CP staff. For the most part, physical separation was total and was achieved by card-controlled environments. Where this was not possible, proportionate measures such as secure printing and disposal of hard copy, as well as physical separation, such that conversations could not be overheard, and screens could not be overlooked. There were recommendations to strengthen the controls further and an extensive building restack is planned for Riverside Tower in 2021, and compliance guidance has been provided to ensure this work does not cause any compliance issues.

Openreach Brand Obligation

We have now completed the rebranding of all items subject to the brand obligation such as workwear, pass cards, and vehicles.

Compliance Summary

1. There have been no complaints directly from CPs across 19/20.
2. There have been no breaches of our Commitments obligations.
3. There has been one Ofcom enquiry, this is covered below.

FTTP deployment

In August 2019, a concern was raised regarding FTTP deployment to a local town. The Openreach Business Integrity team investigated and found that there was no issue to address as the deployment was part of a 'business-as-usual' activity addressing cabinet capacity. While the issue did not relate to the Commitments, Ofcom was taken through the outcome of the investigation and the results were also shared at the Northern Ireland Regulatory Compliance Committee attended by Communication Providers and other stakeholders.



Looking Forward

We have an ambition to bring full fibre to a further
200,000
premises in Northern Ireland during 20/21

We're investing at least
£40M
in expanding our network across 20/21

CFP – So far we've got 11 CFPs on our books for this year covering
1,244 premises and we'll be looking to do more to support communities across Northern Ireland.

RL2S (Remote Layer 2 Switch) Proposed Migration

Late last year we announced our desire to transform our remote exchanges to strengthen the reliability of our network and make it easier for CPs to purchase capacity to provide for their customers. We've been working alongside some of our CPs to bring them on this journey with us and hope to move forward with a trial before end of March 21. It's great to see our core network team always looking at ways to improve our network, and the service we provide to our customers.



Contact Us

Want to know more about Openreach in Northern Ireland?

Website – openreach.com/northern-ireland

LinkedIn – linkedin.com/company/openreach

Twitter – twitter.com/weareopenreach

Facebook – facebook.com/weareopenreach

YouTube – youtube.com/OpenreachOfficial

We'd also appreciate any comments and feedback you have on our review. Please send to Gabrielle Hicks – gabrielle.hicks@openreach.co.uk



openreach
Connecting you to your network