

CASE STUDY

# Lambeth internet voucher programme connects 100 jobs in Stockwell with super fast internet

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Vincent's Yard in Stockwell now has reliable internet connection that is 20 times faster for the 15 businesses, many of whom are in the creative and digital industries

Soon after Lambeth's High-Speed Connect programme was launched in September 2021, the owner of Vincent's Yard and two of its tenants applied for grants to increase their internet from 25 mbps to 500 mbps. This case study shares their story.

## Introducing Vincent's Yard



Unit Z (left) is a coworking space for architects and The Corner Studios (right) is a creative workspace

[Vincent's Yard](#) is located at 23 Alphabet Mews (SW9 0FN) which is in Stockwell ward. It is configured as a courtyard with 7 commercial units. Two of the units are independent coworking spaces – both spaces welcome creatives, freelancers and small businesses. Current tenants include photographers, architects, illustrators & software developers. Other units at Vincent Yards include a print studio led by Michelle Avison and private offices.

100 people work from Vincent's Yard as freelancers and employees within 15 businesses in a diverse range of disciplines such as artists, chefs, DJs, software developers, gardeners, architects, inventors. Vincent's Yard is also home to Brixton Radio.

## How was the internet before?

Despite being in the centre of Stockwell, the internet speeds at the commercial units at Vincent's Yard were poor. Download speed was 25 mbps and upload speed was 6 mbps. This was part-explained by the courtyard being down an alleyway and far from the exchange box. There have been prospective users of the two coworking spaces who have tested the internet speed when viewing the space and potentially been deterred by the low speed.

The connection was unreliable, they would often experience dropouts in connection, which required them to frequently restart the router. Businesses at Vincent's Yard that needed to do large file uploads, such as illustrators and photographers found the internet was very slow and was a drain on their time.

All seven units within Vincent's Yard had their own internet connection which businesses were paying for separately. The ongoing costs were high, given the low broadband speeds they were receiving. For example, one business paid £700 a quarter for two broadband connections and two phone lines.

Dan Evans of Plan 9 (operator of Unit Z) was told about Lambeth High-Speed Connect by the council after they applied for business support through Lambeth's Economic Resilience Fund. They were already paying quite a high price for internet that was a low speed, so were keen to get a better connection at a lower cost.

Dan Evans of Plan 9 said that they had wanted to upgrade their internet connection for some time, but they *"didn't have the money or facilities to do it until this grant came along"*. The installation cost of a full fibre connection can run into thousands.

## **What did they apply for?**

Dan Evans applied for a Lambeth High-Speed Connect grant and coordinated grant applications from the owner of Vincent's Yard and Lisa Bretherick Photography (operator of The Corner Studios). They applied to increase their internet speed from 25 mbps download and 6 mbps upload to a 500 mbps connection.

The three grant applications were £1,500 each (total amount: £4,500) and this covered the costs of installation for the two coworking spaces and the other five commercial units within Vincent's Yard. The cost ended up being slightly higher, so the network provider (Business Technology) submitted evidence for increased costs, and the new grant amount is £1,689.66 each (total amount: £5,068.98).

## **How did they find the application process?**

Dan found the Lambeth High-Speed Connect application process very straight forward.

Dan Evans emailed all 11 of the High-Speed Connect approved network providers to ask for quotes for the installation of a full fibre connection. He received a response from all network providers within half an hour.

Dan Evans noted that this was quite overwhelming but identified a preferred network provider (Business Technology) based on value and the amount of interest shown by the provider as demonstrated by their offer to visit them. David Stone from Business Technology offered a site visit within a couple of days.

## **What was the installation process like?**

There was a substantial amount of paperwork to carry out with British Telecom which network provider Business Technology mostly took care of. There were numerous delays to installation due to British Telecom delaying work. Dan also notes that there were multiple visits by British Telecom and their contractors to complete small amounts of work.

Initially the connection was due for completion before by December 2021, the connection was completed in February 2022.

## What difference is high-speed internet making?

There are over 15 different businesses and up to 100 people across seven different units who are benefiting from the new full fibre connection.

Since installation of the full fibre connection at the end of February 2022, the biggest difference at Vincent's Yard has been reliability. There has been no drop in connection and no need to restart the router. Increased reliability and lack of drop of connection means businesses can continue working rather than dealing with internet problems and having to reset the router.

The three grant recipients have combined the payment of the ongoing internet into a single contract. As such the internet operational contract is now saving the businesses at the site money as well as offering a far superior service. These businesses are sharing the ongoing monthly costs between them. The building owner is charging each business according to various factors e.g. usage, no. of people etc.

Those businesses who rely on large file uploads have noticed a significant difference in the time it is taking to upload files. This has had a time saving implication for many of the businesses and they are able to carry out work more efficiently.

**Some of the businesses have found the file upload speed increased dramatically and what had previously taken overnight to upload is now complete within a few seconds.**

Businesses who rely on cloud-based software and storage are now able to use this software more efficiently. Video calls are also more reliable with a stable connection.

The benefits of having a high-speed connection within the two coworking spaces will be ongoing, it is a feature that many users and prospective users are looking for within coworking spaces. The new connection will allow Vincent's Yard to attract and retain new businesses and individuals that they may not have been able to with lower speed internet.

Dan Evans thinks that now there is a fibre connection within the area via Vincent's Yard, there is potential for residential areas to benefit from the fibre connection, perhaps through this grant with individuals who work from home but also through future support or schemes.

Dan Evans was asked on scale of 1-10, how likely are you to recommend Lambeth High-Speed Connect to other businesses. Dan responded with, "10, would definitely recommend the scheme."

<https://vincentsyard.co.uk/>

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