





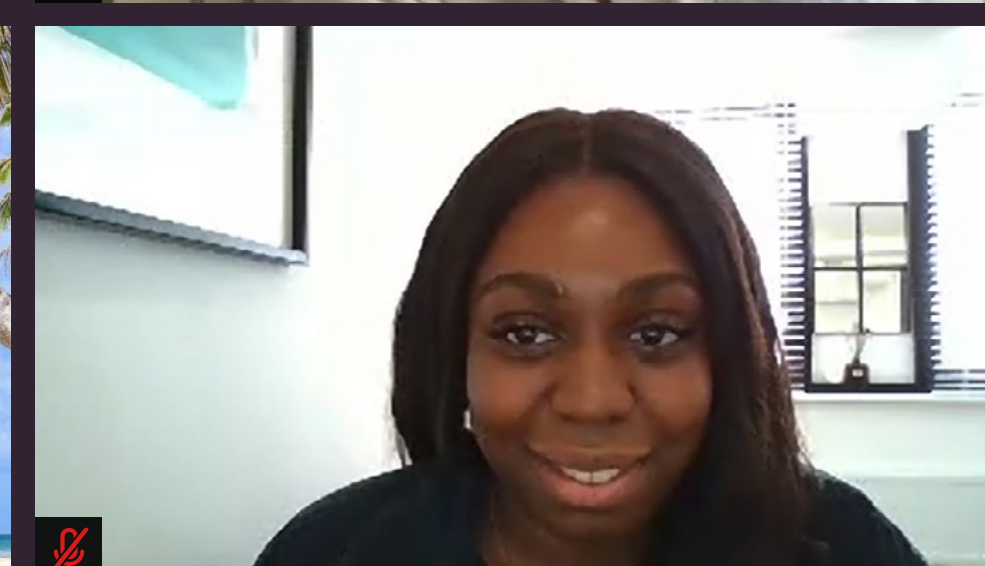
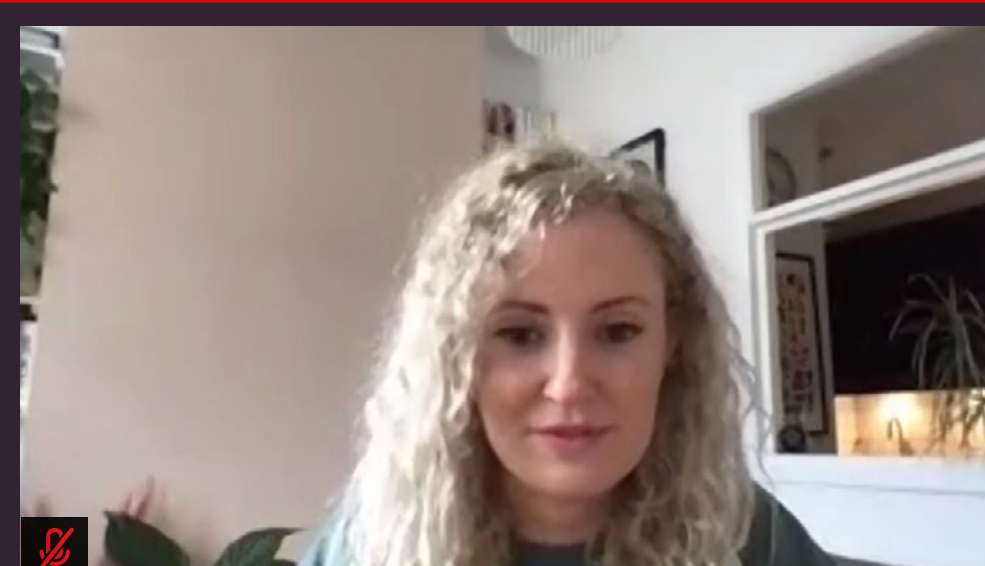
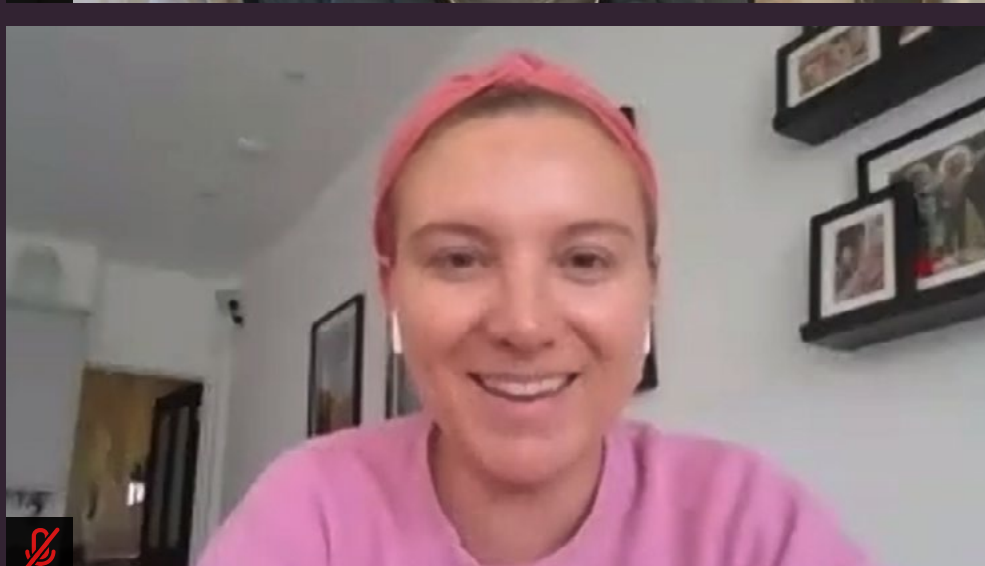


# Dialling into 2020

Our sustainability performance over the last 12 months.



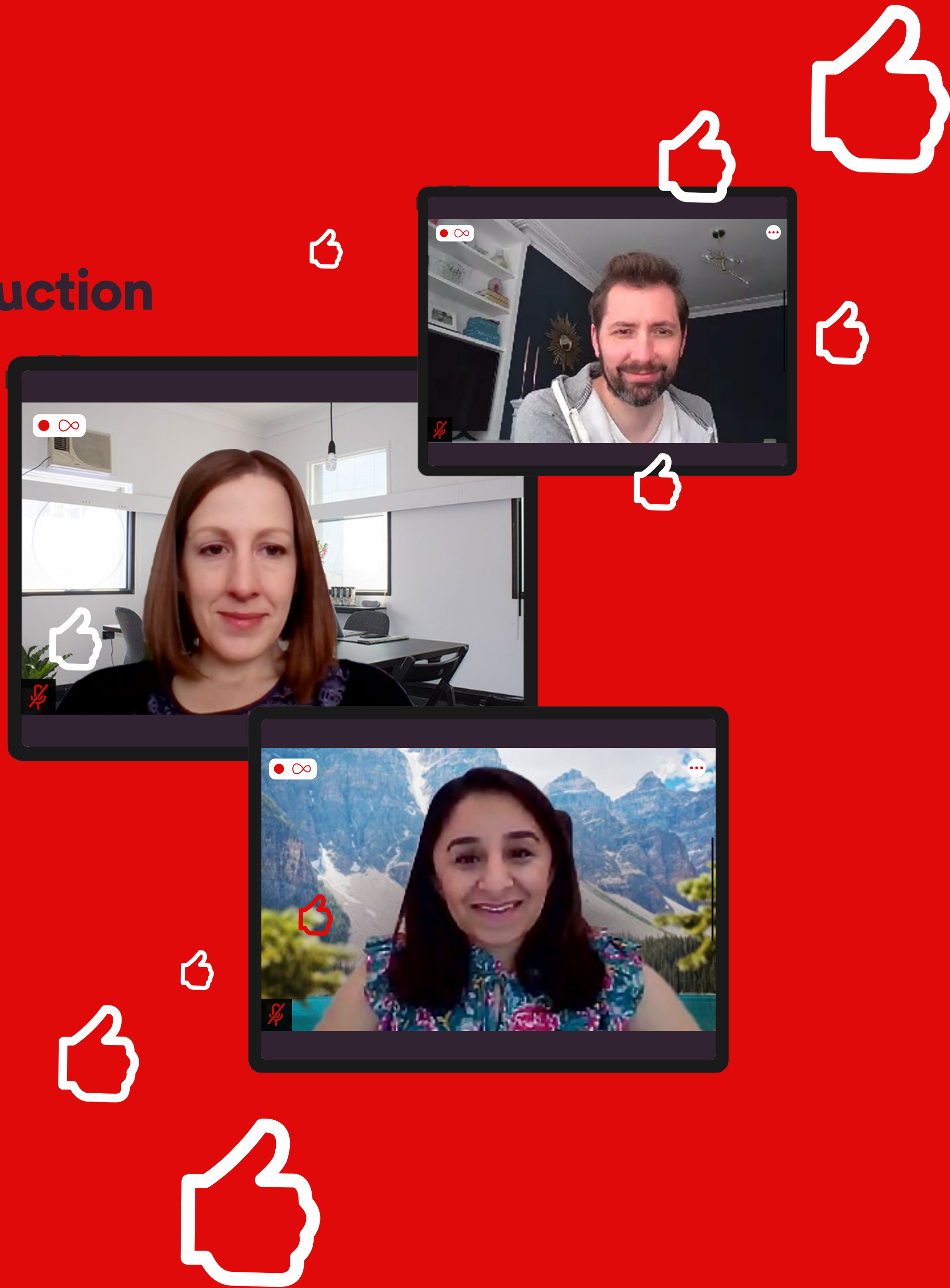
Let's dive in 



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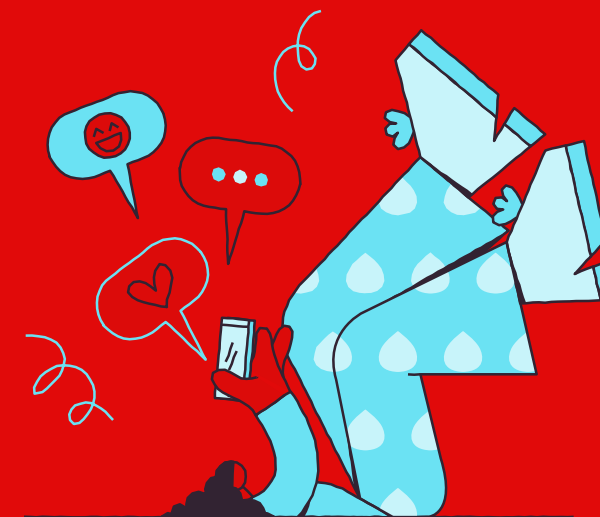
# What a ~~day~~ year

2020 saw us close out our '5 in 5' strategy – five ambitious sustainability goals we set ourselves back in 2015. We wanted to focus on doing a few things really well, to make sure we went about our business in a way that was good for people, communities and the planet.

We started 2021 with 6 million broadband, TV and home phone customers, and more than 3 million people on our mobile network in the UK alone.

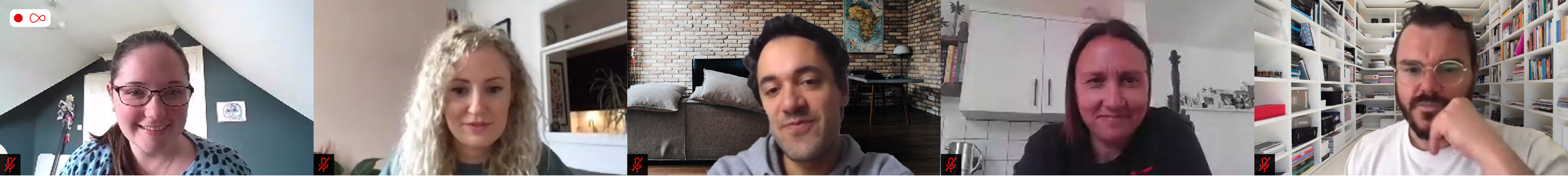
On top of this, our network expansion continued at pace – adding an extra 2.4 million homes and businesses to our network reach since we launched Project Lightning. That means our total network reach is now over 15.3 million.

Knowing that 2020 would be a transitional year for us, the Sustainability team was ready to kick-start a new sustainability plan to help us continue to grow and guide key decisions. So we started to link up with our people, customers and industry experts to look at what had gone well so far, how we could do better and where to focus our sustainability efforts over the next five years.



**6 million**  
broadband, TV and home phone customers

**Over 3 million**  
mobile customers



## Hold the *ph*one...

And then everything changed.

In March 2020, life went on pause for everyone. Inevitably, our visions shifted to shorter-term areas of focus to address the impact of Covid-19.

During these unfamiliar, often uncertain times, we knew just how important it was to keep our colleagues, customers and communities connected to the things they love most. This meant balancing short-term demands while we came up with longer-term plans for the next five years.

## Building meaningful connections

If 2020 taught us anything, it's that we all need meaningful connections in our lives – both physically and digitally. There's never been a better time for us to map out a sustainability strategy that not only supports our business to thrive, but also has a positive social and environmental impact in every community across the country.

To bring this year's report to life, we're embracing the sentiment and spirit of 2020 by sharing our social and environmental performance update through things we can all relate to – video calls, virtual quizzes, social media posts and podcasts.

So, let's dial into 2020 and review the last 12 months.

Drop us an email: [sustainability@virginmedia.co.uk](mailto:sustainability@virginmedia.co.uk)

Tweet us: [@VirginMediaCorp](https://twitter.com/VirginMediaCorp) #vmsust



## Part 2 – Prioritising the pandemic



# Helping the UK stay connected

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic challenged – and keeps challenging – us to think differently about how we live from day to day. But one of the first challenges for friends and colleagues was a big one: how would we all stay connected?

Day by day, week by week, we took everything online. Work, classes, parties, gaming, quizzes, even gigs – thanks to our phones and broadband connections, it all happened at home.

All that extra streaming, videocalling and WFH-ing put our network under more pressure than ever – a task our teams rose to meet. At the same time, we reviewed and updated our ways of working to protect the health and wellbeing of our people and customers. Where possible, we'd help customers remotely – sending

them self-install packs instead of visiting their homes. And, if we did need to swing by, we took extra care before and during our visits – from increased hygiene measures and cleaning, to appropriate PPE.

The 'new normal' was here. And for everyone at Virgin Media, it was time for us to build more of those connections that really matter. Our services became more vital than ever as we helped people and communities stay online and in touch.



# Playing our part

## Putting frontline workers front of mind

We were more than proud to recognise and support the heroic work of our NHS staff. Throughout the pandemic, we've provided NHS Trusts, key organisations and businesses that deliver critical services with extra bandwidth and availability to help them work remotely. We also made sure anyone visiting NHS websites didn't have to use their mobile data and topped up NHS staff with more mobile data and minutes so they could stay connected to loved ones while they were apart.

## Learning how to do homeschooling

As the government announced the closure of schools across the country, parents and carers had to balance work responsibilities with their kids' education. We knew how tough homeschooling was going to be for every family, especially those without a reliable connection at home. To make their lives easier, we gave away 20GB of extra mobile data to families without any broadband connectivity and limited mobile data. We also sorted out free access to learning resources like Oak National Academy.

## Dialling up mobile minutes and broadband speeds

Some people needed additional support during this difficult period, and we wanted to be there for them as and when they needed us. We launched our Essential broadband plan for customers receiving Universal Credit in November 2020 – a time when many people were facing financial difficulty caused by the economic pressures of lockdown. We provided vulnerable Pay Monthly mobile customers with unlimited minutes and 10GB of data a month so they could stay online. And our Pay As You Go customers received 500 extra minutes and texts, along with a 1GB data boost each month. We even sorted a free speed boost for more than a million customers paying for broadband speeds under 100Mbps – upgrading them to ultrafast M100 Fibre Broadband.





## Part 3 – Social impact performance



# Scoping things out

We briefly mentioned our '5 in 5' strategy, which started in 2015. What we didn't mention was our decision to extend one of those five goals – our partnership with disability equality charity Scope – until the end of 2020.

We shifted our focus on disability employment part way through our '5 in 5' strategy and, with huge ambitions, needed more time to deliver the significant social impact we wanted to achieve.





# Our partnership with Scope

## A way into work

Our ambition was to create a clear pathway to employment for disabled people, promoting better ways to help disabled people besides government-backed employment initiatives.

**7.2 million**

disabled people are of working age<sup>1</sup>

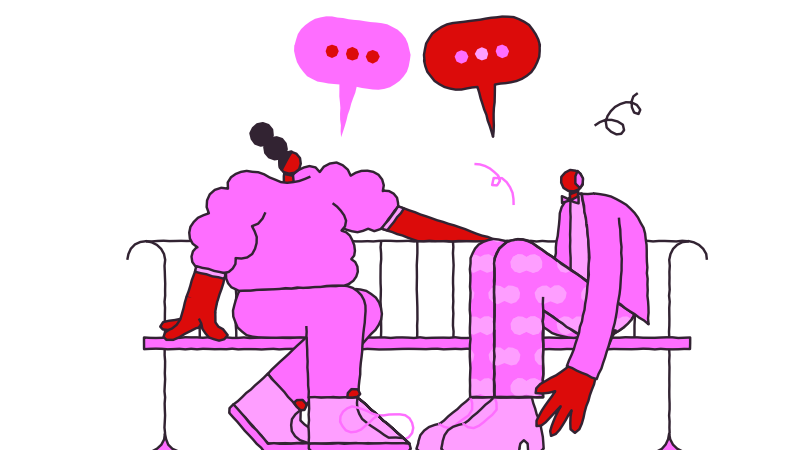
**3.6 million**

of those are out of work<sup>2</sup>

**For over 10 years**

the disability employment gap  
has been stuck at 30%<sup>3</sup>

Disabled people are being shut out of the workplace. Employers' attitudes need changing. Inflexible working practices need adapting. HR policies need updating. The support available needs improving. Only then can we create better employment opportunities for more disabled people so they can earn a steady income to live more independently.



# Supporting disabled jobseekers

With our brand's weight and digital connectivity, along with Scope's expertise, we had the skills and knowledge needed to overhaul the employment support and experience for disabled jobseekers – providing stable jobs for years to come.

We achieved this by focusing on two key initiatives:

## ① Support to Work

We created a national digital employment service for disabled jobseekers, aiming to support 1 million disabled people with the skills and confidence to get into, and stay in, work by the end of 2020.

It combined a 12-week tailored programme – delivered digitally with every person assigned an advisor to work with them on a one-to-one basis to develop their skills and confidence specific to their employment goals – and a self-service platform offering wide-ranging employment information and advice.

By the end of 2020, Virgin Media and Scope had...

Supported **1,204,427** disabled people with the skills and confidence to get into and stay in work

# 1,204,427

Our tailored service had...

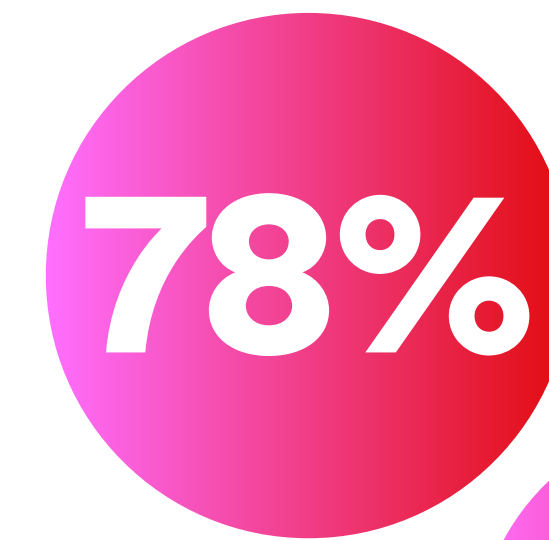


Improved the skills and knowledge of **70%** of disabled people to find, choose and apply for jobs



Boosted the confidence of **60%** of disabled people in their ability to work independently

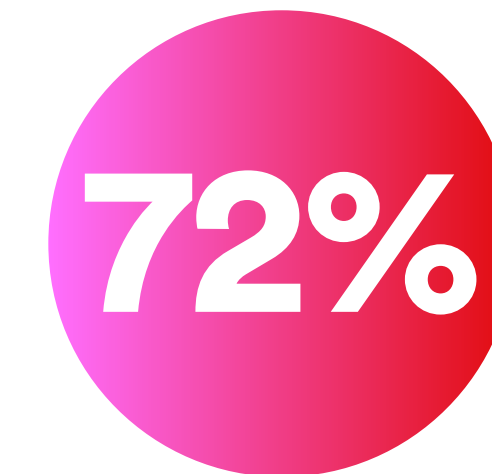
As for the self-service programme...



**78%** of disabled people say the content available is helpful



**70%** have better knowledge and skills to find, choose and apply for jobs



**72%** understand their rights around work a lot better, which has a huge impact on their ability to find work

To help shape the government's current strategy for supporting disabled jobseekers, we shared an evaluation of the Support to Work service with the Department for Work and Pensions to inspire change and share our learnings.



## ② Work With Me

We set up Work With Me – a community of businesses committed to thinking and acting differently about disabled people in their organisations – to break down barriers employers had put up to prevent disabled people getting into work.

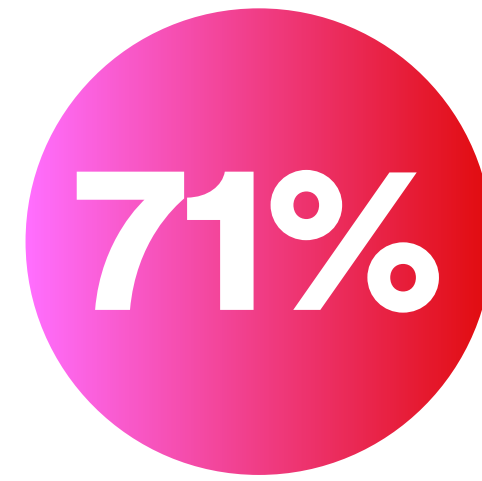
The community connected all kinds of people across all sorts of businesses, sharing their learnings, advice, resources, processes and practices on how they can become more inclusive of disabled people and help connect them to job opportunities.



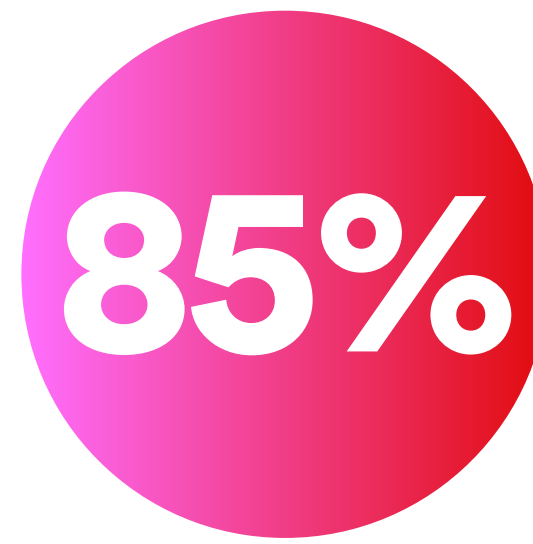
By the end of 2020, Work With Me had...



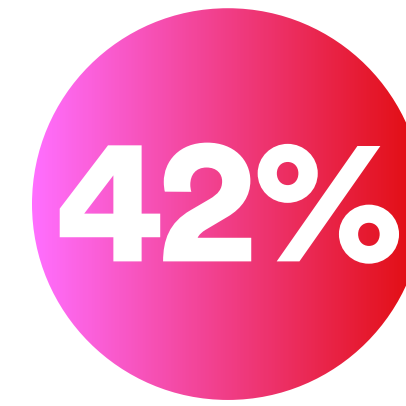
Gained more than **100 members** in the community from companies including Deloitte, American Express, Innocent, Ford and many more



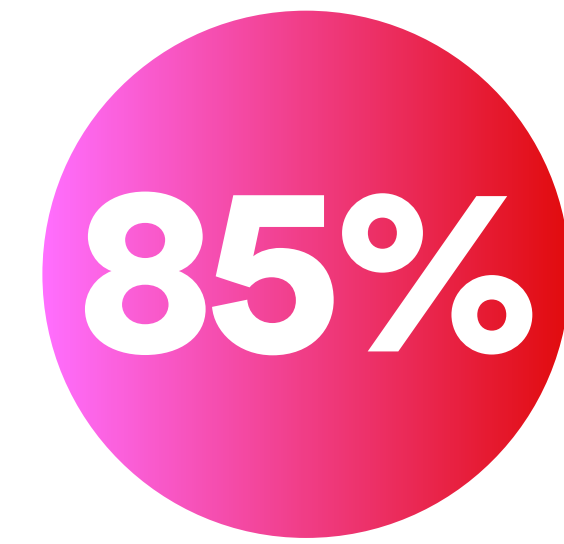
Helped **71%** of members understand how they can address disability inclusion so they can take action



Given **85%** of members more confidence in having conversations and taking positive action on disability inclusion



Offered something that **42%** of members said they couldn't get elsewhere



Encouraged **85%** of members to engage with resources and events





## Power to our people

Virgin Media people have raised

# £902,309

for Scope over the last five years. And, to round off our partnership, Virgin Media topped up the total amount raised to

# £1million

# Kaadaa-chinnng



From the end of 2018, we put every penny of fundraising into the Support to Work service, to significantly improve the employment journey for disabled people.

In the last two years of our partnership, our people have raised more than **£200,000**, which has specifically funded two new initiatives:

### 1. The Support to Work jobs board

We put the board up in October 2020 to help members of the Support to Work service pick roles in organisations that Scope verified as a good employer of disabled people. When members find a role they like the look of, they can go through the application process with confidence and support from their advisor if they need it.

### 2. Support to Work Local (Leeds)

The first of hopefully many on-the-ground services where advisors offer face-to-face support and advice.

# Done, but not **du**sted.

While our partnership with Scope officially ended in 2020, we know the struggle and fight for equality lives on. So, we're still offering our support to Scope to help them continue the great work we've done together.

## What next for the Support to Work service?

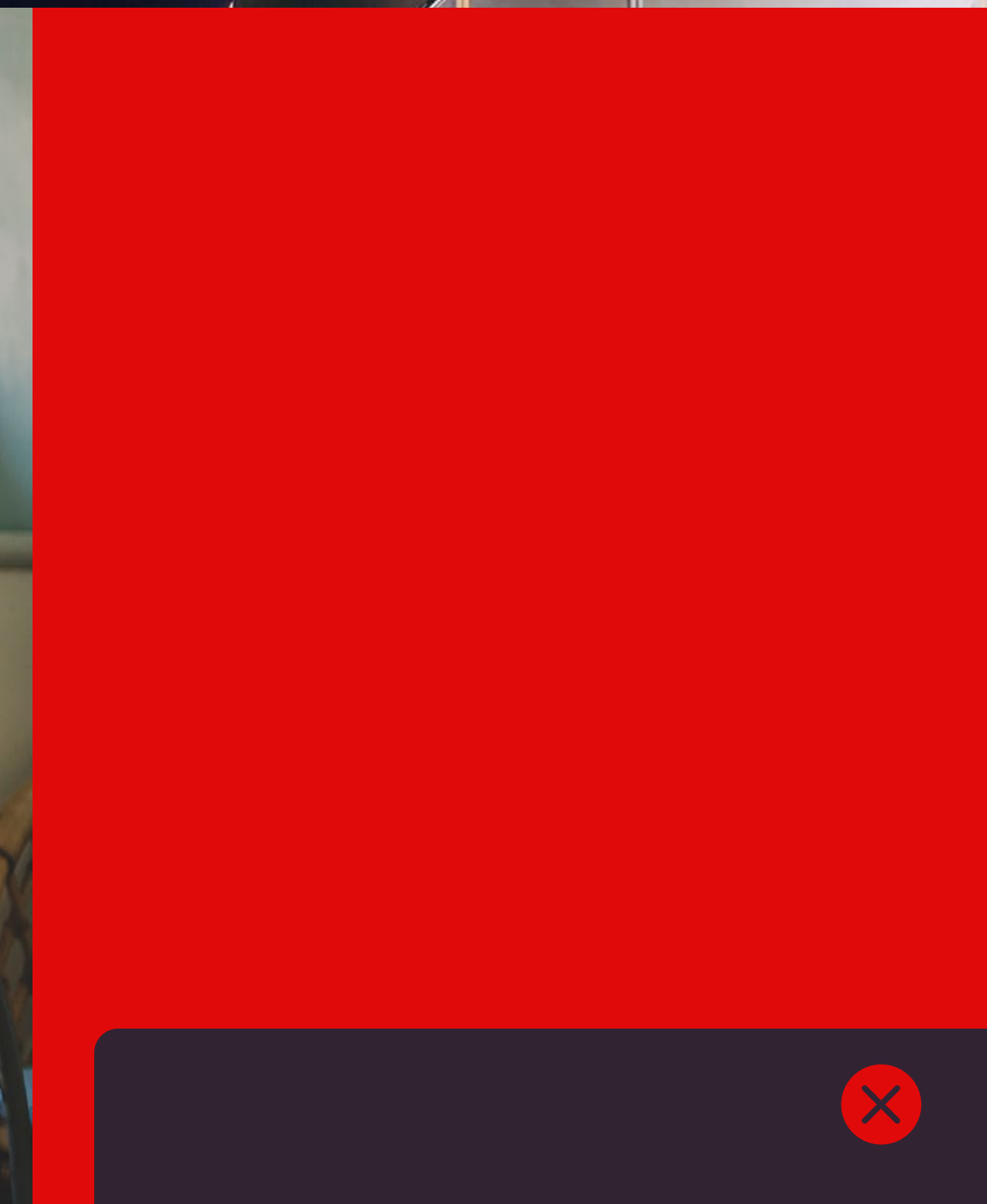
We made a legacy donation to fund and run the Support to Work service for another year. That way, Scope has the backing to introduce a new, streamlined route to all of its employment services – creating a more sustainable employment offer that consists of appropriate support and resources.

This, combined with the jobs board our people helped fund, will allow Scope to take the Support to Work service to more locations in the UK and help even more disabled people find employment.

## And how about Work With Me?

Scope took on the Work With Me community after we reviewed the programme to guide Scope on how it can develop it further. Our vision is for Scope to grow the programme and tailor it to small and medium-sized businesses in particular, encouraging them to take on board the peer advice and practical support available.

And, of course, Virgin Media will continue to be an active member of the community.

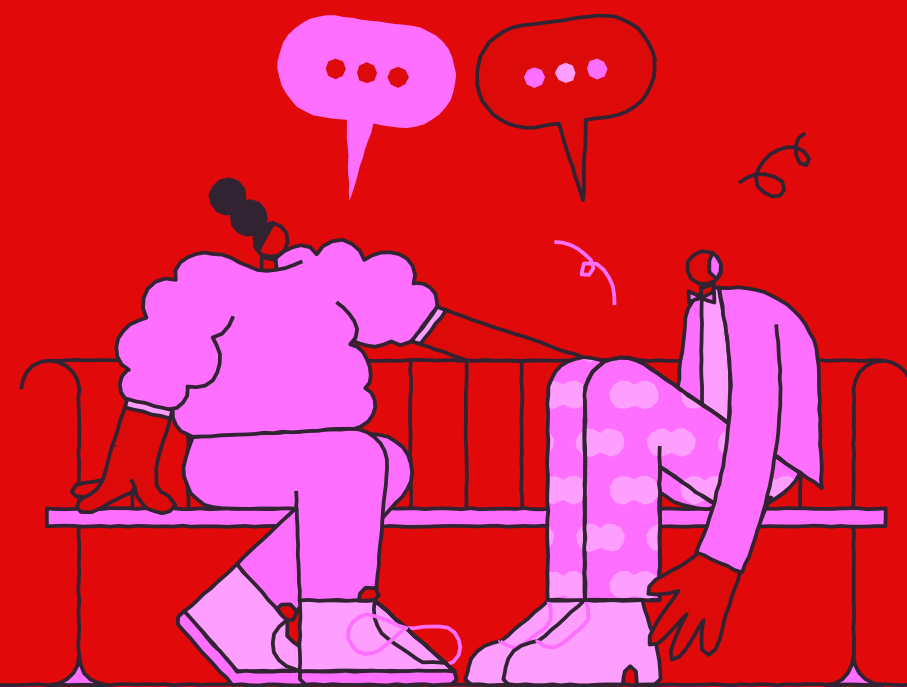


# The impact of our partnership with Scope, 2015–2020

Key insight in 2017	Partnership focus areas	Outcomes of our work together	Key learnings	Our recommendations	Our social impact
<p>Disability employment gap stuck at 30% for over a decade.</p> <p>On average, disabled people spend £583 a month on disability-related costs, so having a consistent income is really important.</p> <p>Inadequate access to tailored support, information and advice for disabled jobseekers.</p>	<p>Support to Work</p> <p>An innovative, digital employment service for disabled jobseekers, offering a tailored 12-week programme of support with an advisor and a suite of self-service resources.</p>	<p>Supported more than 1 million disabled people through our online self-service resources, which are focused on building skills and confidence to get into and stay in work.</p> <p>Supported 2,066 disabled jobseekers towards reaching their employment ambitions through the tailored service, with 407 people starting new jobs.</p>	<p>Disabled people need tailored advice and support that caters to more specific employment requirements. This doesn't exist anywhere else.</p> <p>Offering employment support through a fully accessible and flexible digital platform is one of the core benefits for customers and has driven demand and reach in tandem.</p>	<p>Government: To review the public provisioning of employment support currently available to disabled jobseekers. Consider the opportunity to create more accessible, scalable and tailored approach based on the recommendations in the 2019 Support to Work service evaluation.</p> <p>Service providers: Engage with employment support providers and careers advice providers by sharing the Support to Work evaluation and findings and supporting them to adopt a similar provision model.</p>	<p>44% of Virgin Media customers care that we have supported thousands of disabled people through our Scope partnership.</p> <p>The service has been visited by Esther McVey, Amber Rudd, Penny Mordaunt and Chloe Smith. Secretary of State Amber Rudd heard first-hand from Support to Work customers about their employment journey.</p> <p>Published the 2019 Support to Work evaluation, targeting the DWP and MPs with a view to influence forthcoming consultation on reforming the welfare system. Recommendations to the Government's Green Paper will be submitted in Q1 of 2021.</p> <p>Scope will use the evaluation as evidence in our response to the Work and Pensions Committee Inquiry into the disability employment gap.</p> <p>We used the evaluation as a best practice example of coproduction with disabled people in our response to an inquiry run by the Social Security Advisory Committee on how the Department for Work and Pensions can better engage with disabled people.</p> <p>The disability employment gap has reduced from 31% to 28% from 2017 to 2019. Last year, the gap increased slightly due to the pandemic and currently sits at 29.2%.</p>
<p>74% of disabled people lost out on a job due to an impairment.</p> <p>Disabled people are almost twice as likely to be unemployed as non-disabled people.</p> <p>85% of disabled people feel employer attitudes haven't changed over the last four years.</p>	<p>Work With Me</p> <p>A community of businesses committed to thinking and acting differently about disability in their organisations. Offering a platform for practical peer support, resources, events and opportunities to share experience and learn from each other.</p>	<p>More than 100 members. 71% of members said Work With Me helped to move on the dial on disability inclusion. 22% of respondents now have a specific disability action plan in place, double the number at the point of joining. 85% of members said being part of the Work With Me community has given them more confidence in having conversations and taking positive action on disability inclusion within their organisation.</p>	<p>We effectively linked up with The Valuable 500 to provide complimentary support to the changemakers in organisations where a member of the Executive Committee has signed up to V500.</p> <p>Through executive advocacy and programme managers with the right expertise, we can stay true to these commitments.</p>	<p>Disability Confident scheme: Review opportunities for Disability Confident to allow more members to access free support available through Work With Me and other organisations.</p> <p>The Government is to introduce mandatory reporting on disability for employers with 250 employees or more.</p>	<p>Moving Work With Me from a campaign to a programme allowed us to better engage businesses – offering a free space for them to meet and talk.</p> <p>Work With Me has been praised by the former Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Rt. Hon, Esther McVey, who attended a Work With Me round-table event in 2018.</p>
<p>2/5 disabled people feel they need to disguise their disability as a result of stigma and negativity.</p> <p>Signposting inclusive employers is an important step to empowering disabled jobseekers to apply for roles with confidence, knowing their impairment won't stop them from getting a role.</p>	<p>Support to Work jobs board</p> <p>A jobs board exclusively for customers of the Support to Work service, showcasing roles available at trusted, inclusive employers.</p>	<p>50 individual jobs posted. 521 customers have accessed the jobs board. For employers with large amounts of vacancies, the jobs board links directly to the employer's recruitment page. 521 customers have accessed the jobs board.</p>	<p>At present, we have 14 employers who have regularly promoted job roles on the jobs board. Current employers advertising include: private companies such as Virgin Media and Colas Rail, the Civil Service, and a number of third sector organisations. Employers can advertise one-off or multiple jobs. Support to Work customers said the jobs board has given them more confidence in applying for jobs.</p>	<p>Employers will use the jobs board and work with Scope to take advantage of it. Scope to proactively promote it across all areas of its business.</p>	<p>Scope will continue to monitor, review and evaluate the service in partnership with both businesses and customers to ensure it continues to deliver for all.</p>



# Social value



## Our local motive

We're constantly looking to grow our network and bring lightning-fast broadband to local areas, homes, businesses and local authorities.

In 2020, we won two big full-fibre contracts – one in Belfast, the other with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. And our social value commitments played a big part in delivering them.

In fact, last year, we provided more than **£380,000**<sup>4</sup> worth of social value through our B2B contracts, which goes towards things like reducing homelessness, promoting digital inclusion, offering skills and employment opportunities for young people and supporting women in business.

# £380,000

Talk about adding social value!





## Case study

### Jumping to lightspeed in Greater Manchester

At the beginning of 2020, Virgin Media Business was awarded the £23.8 million Local Full Fibre Networks Programme for Greater Manchester Combined Authority. It involved connecting hundreds of public sites across Greater Manchester to new fibre-optic broadband infrastructure.

Fast-forward to today and we've now completed the majority of this work, with around 75% of the workforce behind the delivery of the full-fibre network being based in Greater Manchester, which helped boost the local economy by nearly £12 million.<sup>5</sup>

We've also exceeded local employment targets, with 75% of the workforce behind the delivery of the full-fibre network being based in Greater Manchester.

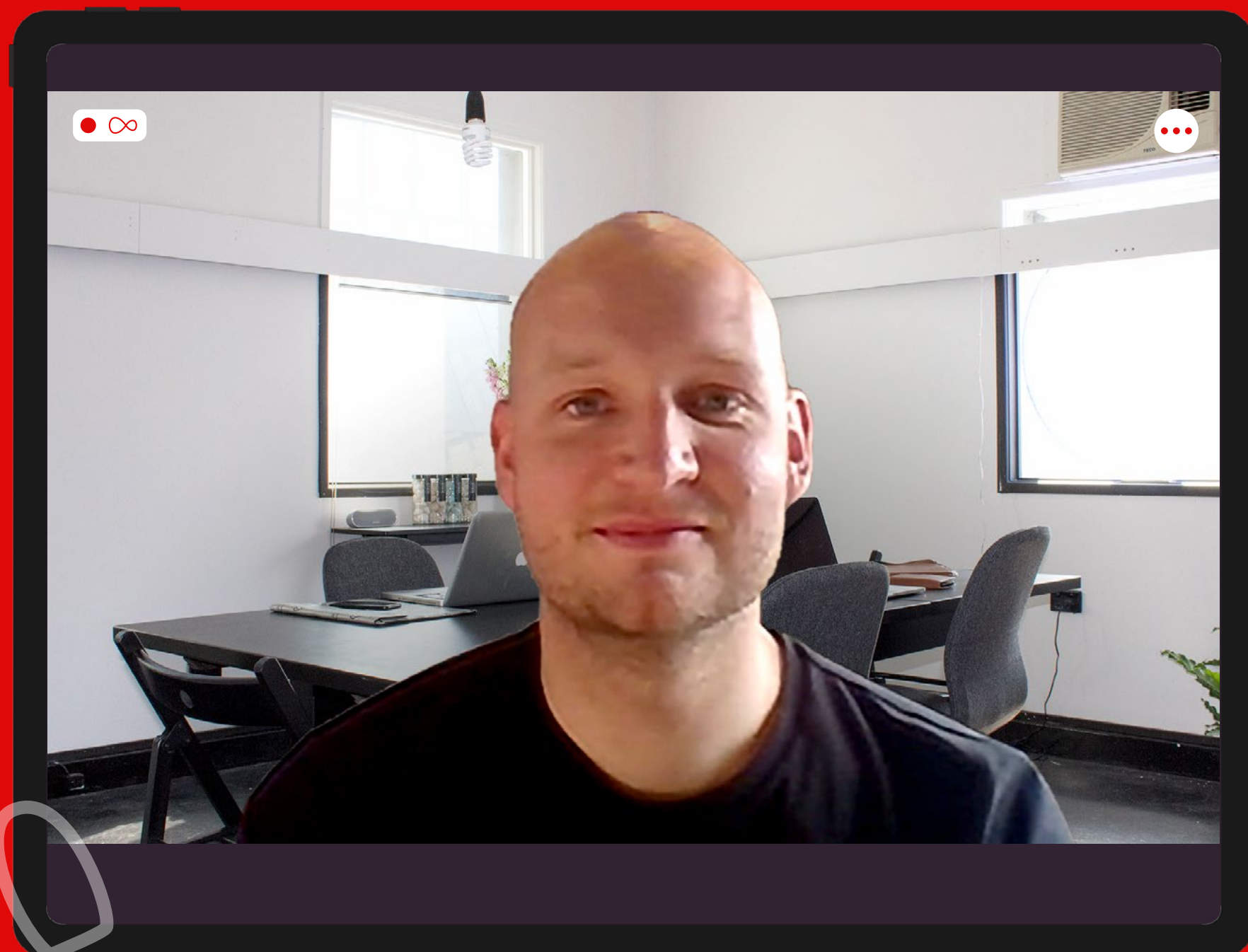
And that's not all...

We committed to even more initiatives that would add significant social value in the local area, including contributing to the Greater Manchester Tech Fund, which now provides connectivity and technology to more than 1,300 digitally excluded young people – empowering them to continue to learn remotely and bridge the digital divide.

<sup>5</sup> The £23.8M Local Full Fibre Networks Programme, with additional local authority investments, set out a plan for up to 2,700km of new fibre optic broadband infrastructure to be laid across the region – connecting more than 1,500 public sites and making this the UK's largest Local Full Fibre Networks Programme to date. See article: [Greater Manchester digital infrastructure investment delivers £12m economic benefit in first year | Virgin Media](#). March, 2021.



## Part 4 – Environmental impact performance



# Stepping up our climate efforts

We believe the climate crisis should be on the minds of every person, business and government. If we're to tackle climate change, we need to see change on a big scale – and fast.

Despite its heavy toll and widespread disruption, the pandemic has also given us a glimpse of the potential for the world to come together and respond meaningfully to the climate emergency. This has led to calls to 'build back better' when we return to whatever normal might look like.

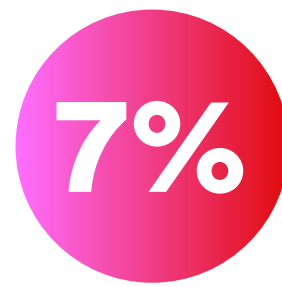
At Virgin Media, we continue to set and adjust our ongoing environmental commitments. We look for ways to use the power of connectivity to support the UK's wider climate efforts and get our own house in order at the same time – reducing energy, reusing millions of products and sourcing renewable energy as a member of the [RE100 initiative](#).



# Our commitment to change

## Shrinking our carbon footprint, one step at a time

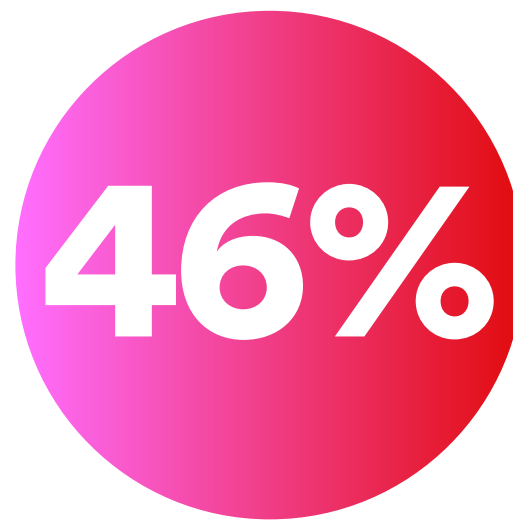
In 2020, we achieved...



lower operational carbon footprint (scope 1 and 2) against our 2019 baseline

2020 was an unusual year for our environmental performance, not least as the pandemic brought business travel – on the ground and overseas – to a halt.

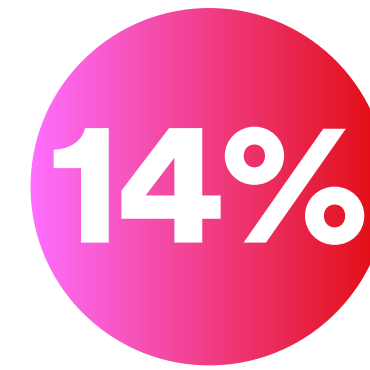
Our network remains under pressure to help millions of people stay connected to the outside world – work, education, entertainment. Yet, despite heightened demands and more data being used across our network, we were able to reduce our operational carbon footprint by 7% compared to our 2019 baseline, and 46% against our previous 2014 baseline. And, when comparing our carbon footprint to the unprecedented



lower operational carbon footprint than our 2014 baseline

amount of data used by our customers in 2020, we reduced our operational carbon footprint (per terabyte of data) by 50% since 2019 and 93% since 2014.

This drop came from our scope 2 emissions, which are based on how much electricity we use across our sites and network. Thanks to yearly investments in energy efficiency, and the fact we've replaced a load of legacy equipment, we're now using far less electricity than we have been over the last six years. In fact, our reduction in scope 2 emissions more than offsets an increase in scope 1 emissions, which came primarily from an increase in fire suppression discharges



less scope 3 emissions against 2019 baseline

in our technical sites. These infrequent discharges prevent fires but often use gases that have a high global-warming risk.

Now, our long-term plan is to cut the number of fire suppression discharges occurring and focus on using zero-carbon gases wherever possible. This should mean our scope 1 emissions fall in line with our 25% reduction target by the end of 2025, particularly as we switch our fleet to electric vans.

On top of this, we reduced our scope 3 emissions by 14% from our 2019 baseline, and 46% against our previous

And by the end of **2025...**

We plan to hit our target of lowering our operational carbon footprint by **25%**

2014 baseline. We can thank our Virgin TV V6 boxes for this, which are more energy-efficient than previous boxes we used, and the decarbonisation of the UK grid, which has reduced emissions associated with the power needed to run our products and services in customers' homes. Plus, as part of the RE100 initiative, we're continuing to source 100% renewable electricity.



# Waste not, want not



In 2020...

of our operational waste went to landfill



of our waste was recycled



products were refurbished and reused – bringing our total to over 8 million since 2014



of paper was saved – we've cut our paper use by 88% since 2014



As part of our new goal-setting process, we decided to bring together waste from our sites and logistics' supply chain – two areas where we're the producers – under a combined measurement for operational waste.

We managed to cut our total amount of operational waste by 20%. This was largely down to the impact that the pandemic had on the amount of waste arriving at our Big Red Shed, which was closed during lockdown.

We also recycled 80% of our operational waste, sending 19.1% to energy (incineration) and 0.9% to landfill. That meant we met the requirements to be considered as 'zero waste to landfill'\*. It's a great result, but there's still plenty more to do.

On top of lowering our overall waste, our main waste contractor changed how they reported where our site-based waste ended up, which complicated things when it came to comparing year-on-

year operational waste performance. We found that recycling increased from 75.9% to 80%, energy from waste (incineration) dropped from 22.7% to 19.1% and waste to landfill reduced from 1.4% to 0.9%.

Part of our waste efforts involved taking back over 1.5 million routers and set-top boxes for reuse and recycling, which we believe will help save up to 2,000 tonnes of raw materials being used. This took our total reclaimed products to over 13 million since 2014 – over 8 million of

which have been refurbished and reused in customers' homes.

There were a lot of paper cuts (the nice kind) in 2020, too. It's hard to comprehend the fact we used 12,187 tonnes of paper back in 2014. Now, however, thanks to new digital ways to communicate with customers and electronic bills, we've reduced the amount of paper we use by 88% – saving more than 11,000 tonnes – when comparing 2020 to 2014.

\*defined as all site-based and logistics supply-chain waste. Waste to landfill must be less than 1% of total waste volume.

# Logistics

We depend on our logistics supply chain for all sorts of things – getting products and equipment to our field technicians, delivering mobile phones and SIM cards to customers, taking back equipment for refurbishment. It's an operation that takes place in our Big and Little Red Sheds – our logistics centres that are dotted up and down the country.

Having achieved zero waste to landfill in 2013, our logistics team continued to work with supply partners to find innovative ways to operate even more sustainably. This has led to us recycling 90% of all waste produced at our Big and Little Red Sheds.

# 90%

of all waste at our Big and Little Red Sheds is recycled, compared to 88% in 2019

And our team didn't stop there.

Over the last few years, we've almost halved the amount of single-use plastic used in our logistics operations – from what we use to wrap pallets, to how we collect equipment from our customers. Now, with 17 ongoing initiatives spread across 10 operational areas, we're aiming to remove the final 50 tonnes of single-use plastic by the end of the year.



## In 2020...

It wasn't all about cutting waste in the supply-chain team. We carefully examined each part of the operation and supply partners to see where (if anywhere) they were contributing to our carbon footprint. This helped us map out a range of initiatives to reduce emissions.

Our supply-chain team has ticked off one task already, with help from our logistics partner XPO. Together, they've introduced gas tractor units for our large fleet, which moves equipment between each site, and improved route planning, which has helped reduce emissions from logistics' core fleet by 39%.

1.5  
million

modems and set-top boxes  
were collected from our  
customers

2,000  
tonnes

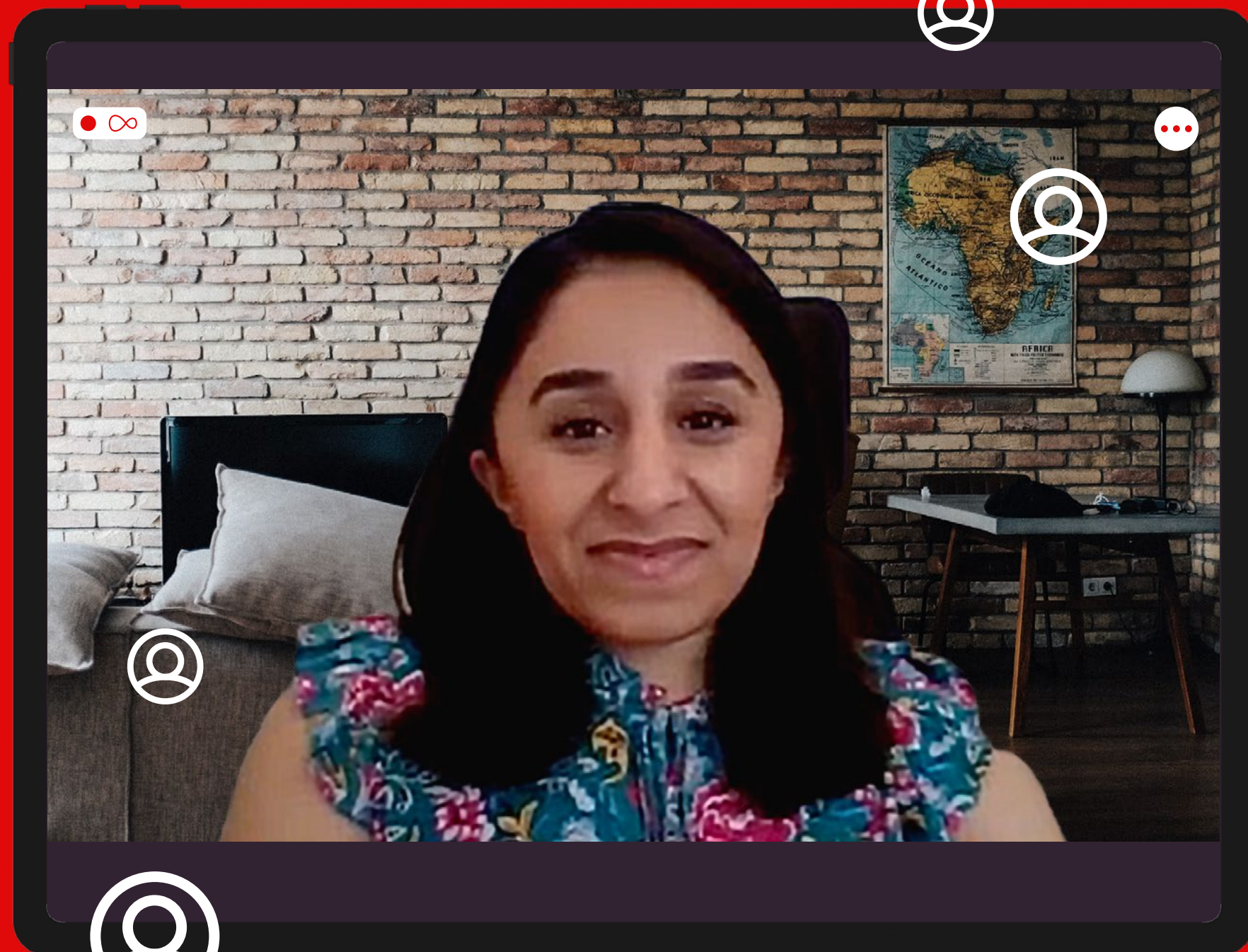
of materials were saved as  
we could reuse old kit in  
customers' homes

1.3  
million

pieces of kit were tested,  
repaired and refurbished  
through our specialist  
technology partner CTDI



# Part 5 – Belonging and people performance



## A place where everyone belongs

We're building a place where everyone is empowered to bring – and be – their whole selves at work. It's the only way we can truly work as one team, creating a high-performing culture that'll boost employee engagement and business results.

Last year, we took a fresh approach to diversity and inclusion and developed a company-wide Belonging strategy that put diversity and inclusion at the heart of our decision-making. It lines up with three commitments we made:

1. To build a diverse workforce
2. To create a safe environment where voices are heard and valued
3. To spread Belonging across our people, products, customers and society

	Gender	Disability	Sexuality	Ethnicity
Our 2020 representation	27.4% female 72.6% male	4% disabled	6% LGBTQ+	12% from underrepresented ethnic groups
UK economic benchmark	47% female 53% male	12% disabled	5-7% LGBTQ+	13% from underrepresented ethnic groups

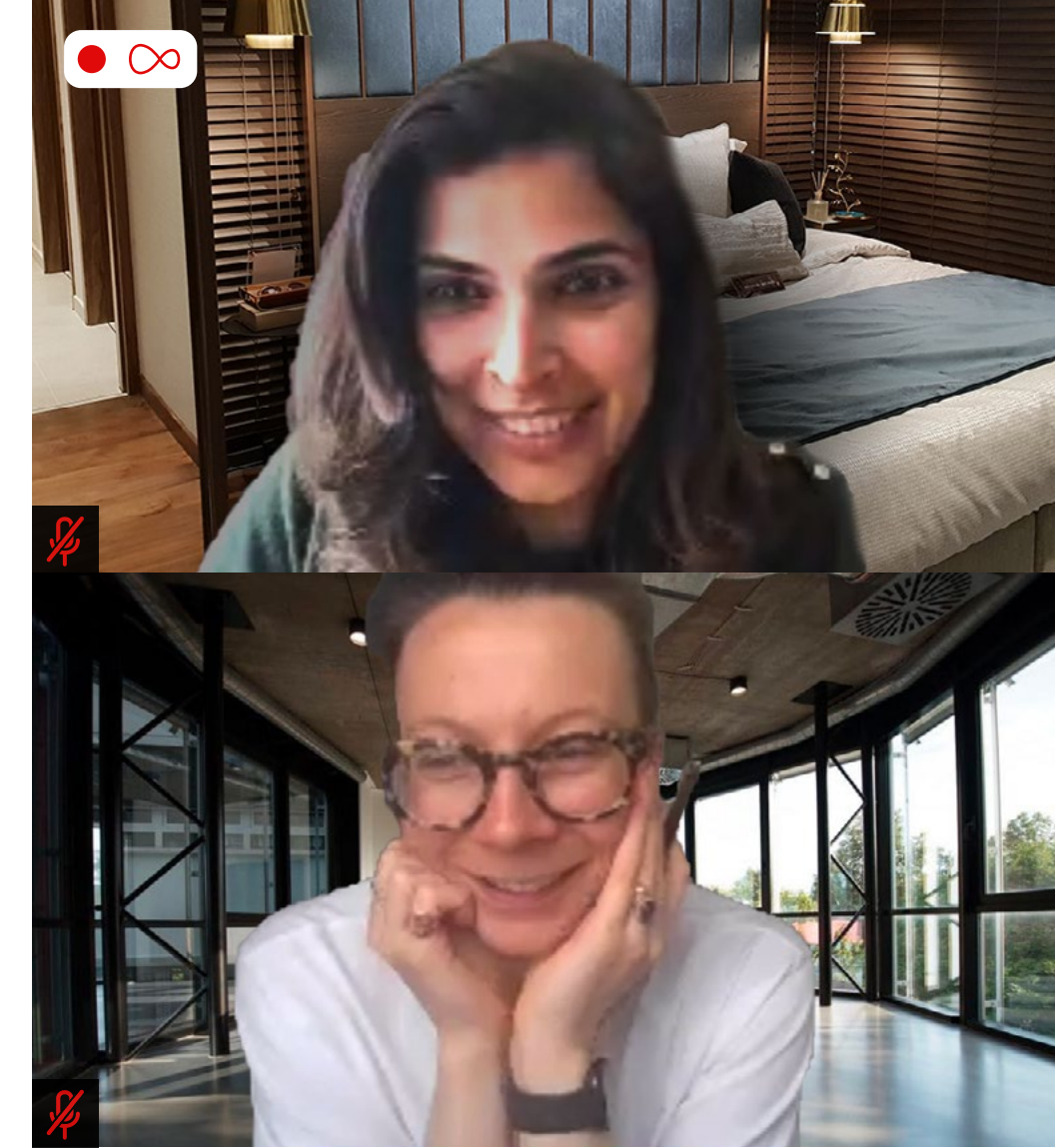
# Being a part brought us closer together

Every business faced unprecedented people challenges throughout 2020. Yet though our people were apart, we still managed to bring the nation closer together – keeping public services running and making sure our customers stayed connected to both their work and the entertainment they love, at home.

In everything we did, we kept our people and customers healthy and safe. We followed government and medical advice when our frontline staff were out and about connecting our customers throughout the pandemic. We focused on all four areas of our employee programme Thrive (social connections, as well as mental, financial and physical wellbeing), running campaigns throughout the year and encouraging our people to take time for themselves and their loved ones. And, recognising that many people have struggled with mental wellbeing this year, we partnered with wellbeing experts Unmind – giving all of our people free access to the Unmind workplace mental health platform. Plus, thanks to our Plus One programme, our people can gift access to Unmind to a family member or friend.



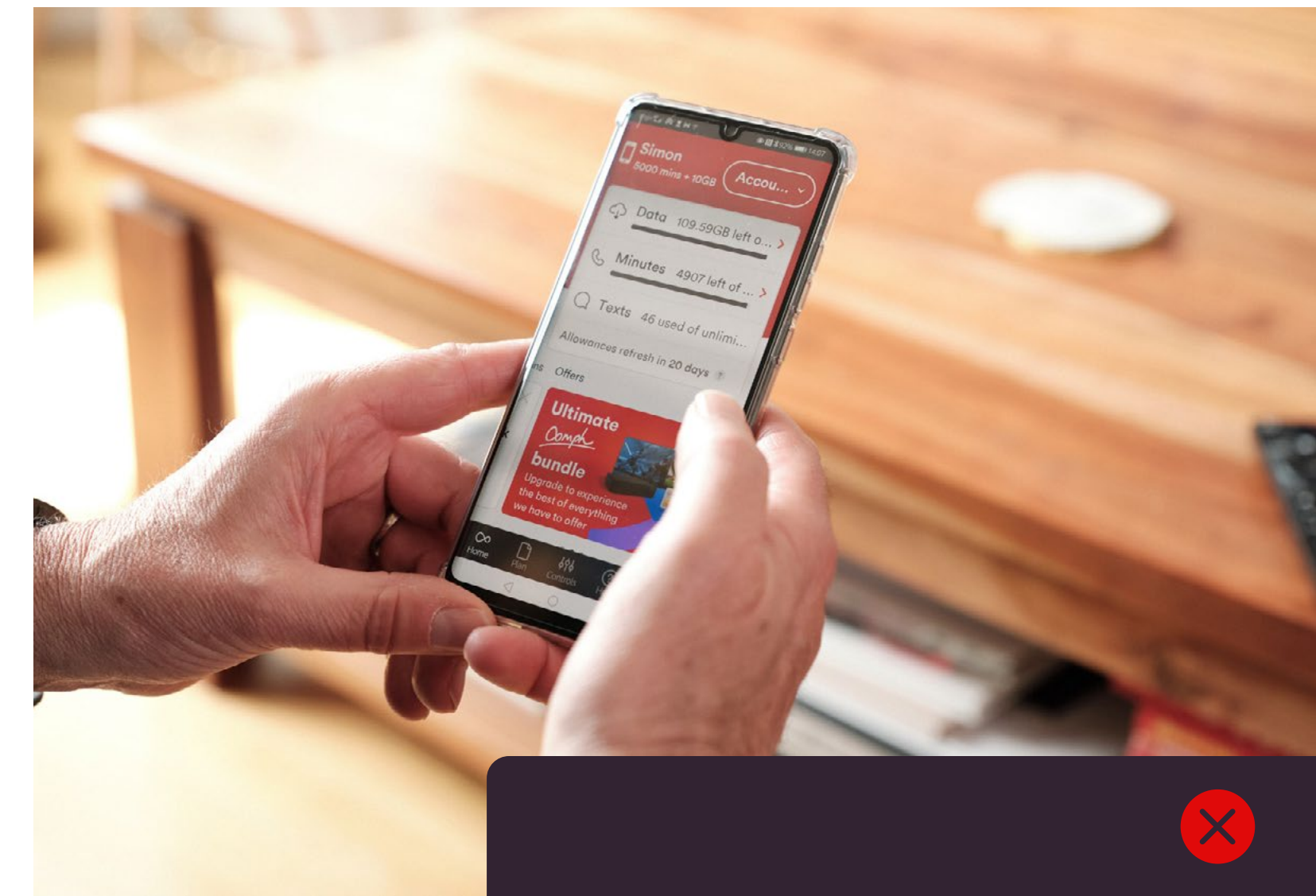
of our people who've downloaded the Unmind app are using it every week to support their mental wellbeing.



# Making things easier for our vulnerable customers

While we announced measures in 2019 for our **vulnerable customers**, we knew 2020 posed unusually difficult times for people. So, to make sure our customers could stay connected throughout the Covid-19 pandemic – regardless of their personal or financial situation – we gave them extra mobile data and minutes, prioritised their issues, and offered help and advice if they had concerns about payments or their bill.

Then there was our **Essential broadband plan**, which launched in November 2020. This gave anyone receiving Universal Credit access to affordable and reliable broadband, so they could get and stay online.





# Say hello to our Belonging Collective

In September 2020, we unveiled our Belonging Collective, which is made up of five new employee network groups. Each network works together to form one voice that share real-life experiences to help us make more inclusive decisions.

These include:

1. **Empower** (underrepresented ethnicities)
2. **Ultraviolet** (disability)
3. **Indigo Mind** (neurodiversity)
4. **Prouder** (LGBTQ+)
5. **Gender Equality** (gender)

Each network is sponsored by at least one member of our Executive Committee as an ally, supported by a senior leader, managed by a group of volunteers and coached by the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion team. Together, they report into a Belonging Board, which meets monthly and is chaired by our Chief Operating Officer (COO), Jeff Dodds, and drives awareness of our Belonging strategy far and wide.

The leads of each network are given dedicated time (one day a week) outside of their normal roles, and meet regularly as the Belonging Collective. This year, we've increased the budget available to our Belonging Board by 10 times the previous amount. This'll help us make permanent change, at scale, to improve our impact on the world and make sure no one is left behind on our journey to building meaningful connections.



**Someone who shows their support and helps people who aren't necessarily like themselves to be heard and valued.**

Our networks are also members of Inclusive Employers, Business Disability Forum and the Valuable 500, and many of them have recently aligned to external partners and initiatives, including **Purple Space**, **Stonewall**, **Catalyst**, **WICT** and **Resources for Autism**.

While we've made great progress, there's still a lot of work to do for everyone involved in our Belonging movement. One area of focus is to increase the amount of people who feel comfortable and confident in sharing their personal diversity information. Disclosure rates for sexuality and ethnicity are still low, and while disability sits at 80%, too many people are still choosing not to say if they're disabled.

We have three top priorities for 2021:

1. Drive up disclosure rates and give people the confidence to be open and proud
2. Increase competence and comfort around inclusion – the language we use, allyship and insight to provoke curiosity
3. Redesign our decision-making process around equality and inclusion

With lots of our people having worked from home for over a year now, we've seen first-hand just how effective our digital channels are at taking our Belonging strategy, along with our new employee networks, to the masses – celebrating and raising awareness of key events, days and occasions that promote diversity and inclusion.

## Celebrating Black excellence

Black History Month traditionally focusses on celebrating historical events, but this year, we saw an opportunity to champion Black excellence happening right now and in the future. The month focussed on raising awareness of hidden Black icons, the Black economy and the experience Black people have lived through here in the UK. There was also an interactive panel event where we were joined by guests John Barnes and The Triple Cripples who discussed the topic 'When I realised that being Black was different'. Two businesses, Woke Babies and Epiphannie A, were also crowned winners of the Black History Month competition, which we created to support Black-owned businesses. They both took home a digital-makeover bundle worth over £10,000!

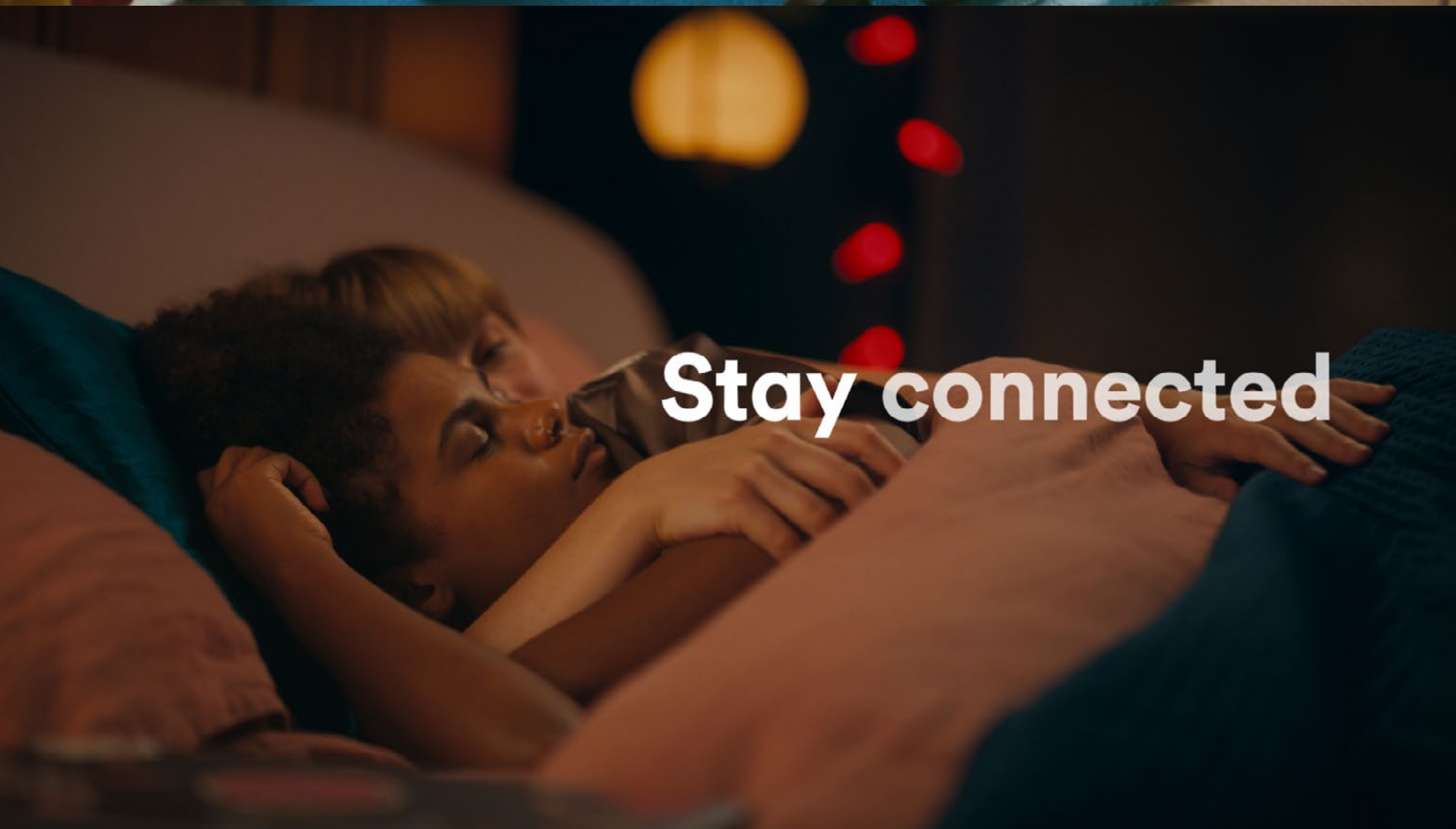
## Shouting about International Day for People with Disabilities



To raise awareness of non-visible impairments and health conditions – the theme of 2020's International Day for People with Disabilities (also known as #PurpleLightUp Day) – we turned our TV platform, social media channels and websites purple for the day. We were also joined by Keeley Cat Wells on an internal call – an entrepreneur and disability activist who's looking to change the perception of disability in the arts industry and increase disabled talent.

So far, we're seeing positive engagement results with our new Belonging strategy, with four out of five of our people saying they have a strong sense of Belonging when we asked them in our annual employee engagement survey.





Stay connected



## Case study

### Stay in Love, Stay Connected

To drive change, we need to use our platforms and brand voice in the right way. And what better way to reach people than through our advertising?

We believe everything we put into the world should be genuine and inclusive. We also believe it's important to give representation to under-represented voices and communities, without falling into the trap of virtue signalling.

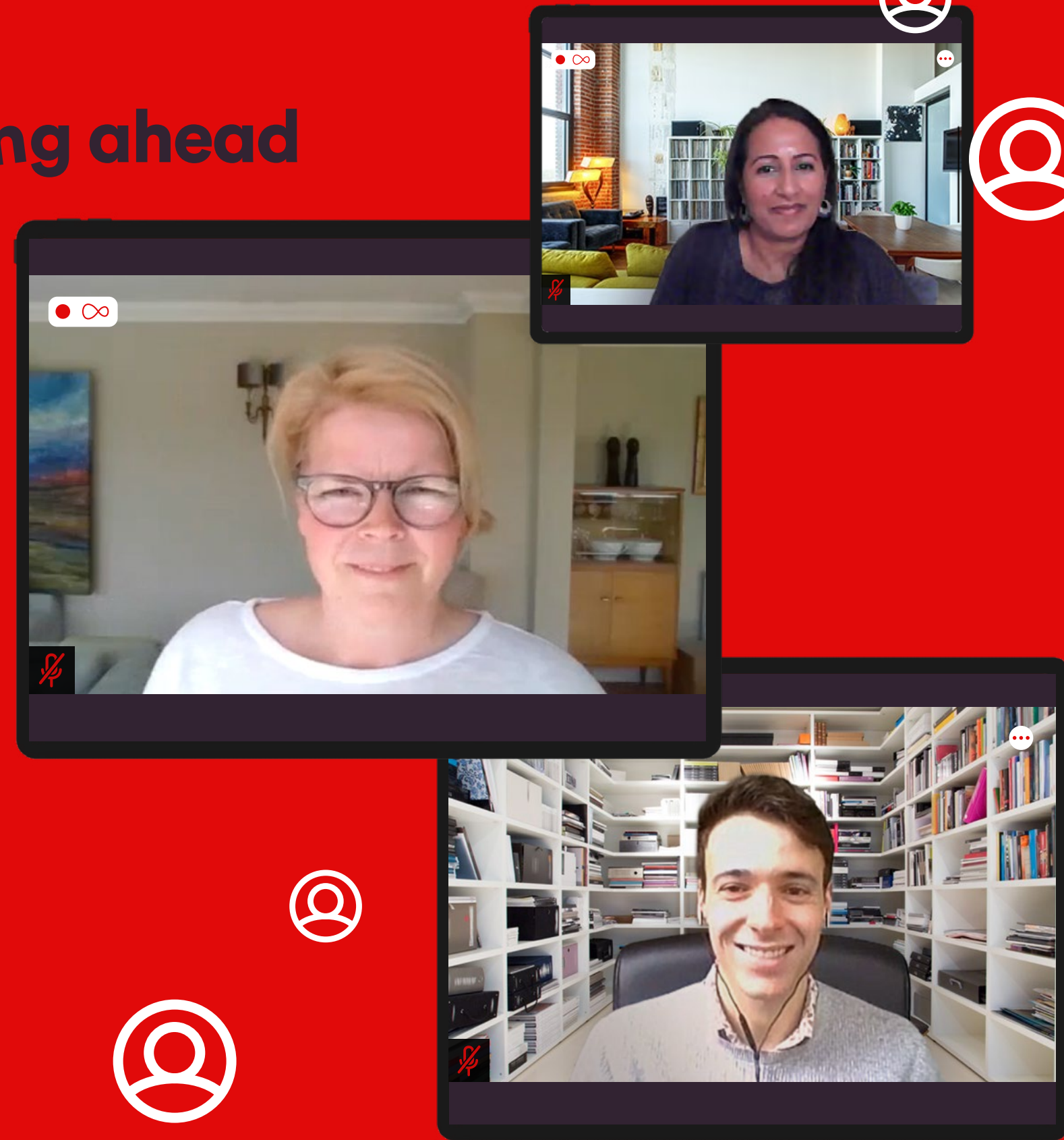
Our 'Stay in Love, Stay Connected' campaign, which launched across TV, print and email in September 2020, celebrated people of all genders, with different sexualities, from all kinds of backgrounds, united by one shared emotion: love. It featured an interracial lesbian couple as the lead cast members, as well as a male couple, older couple and teenage couples.

We learned a lot last year – from making sure our production companies have a fully accessible approach to production shoots, to factoring in audio descriptions and subtitles from the moment we start to conceptualise an idea.

With our principles in place, and our Belonging Collective of employee networks on hand, we've got a great platform to share even more meaningful experiences in our advertising campaigns for years to come.



Part 6 – Looking ahead



# Next steps in sustainability

When setting our sustainability ambitions for the next five years, we wanted to think bigger and aim higher, while remaining focused on how we can continue to create a positive impact up and down the country.

After completing extensive stakeholder research, a materiality assessment and sense checking all of this post-pandemic, we've landed on something pretty special: our meaningful connections plan.



## Our meaningful connections plan

Building connections that really matter for people, communities and the planet.





# Better for communities

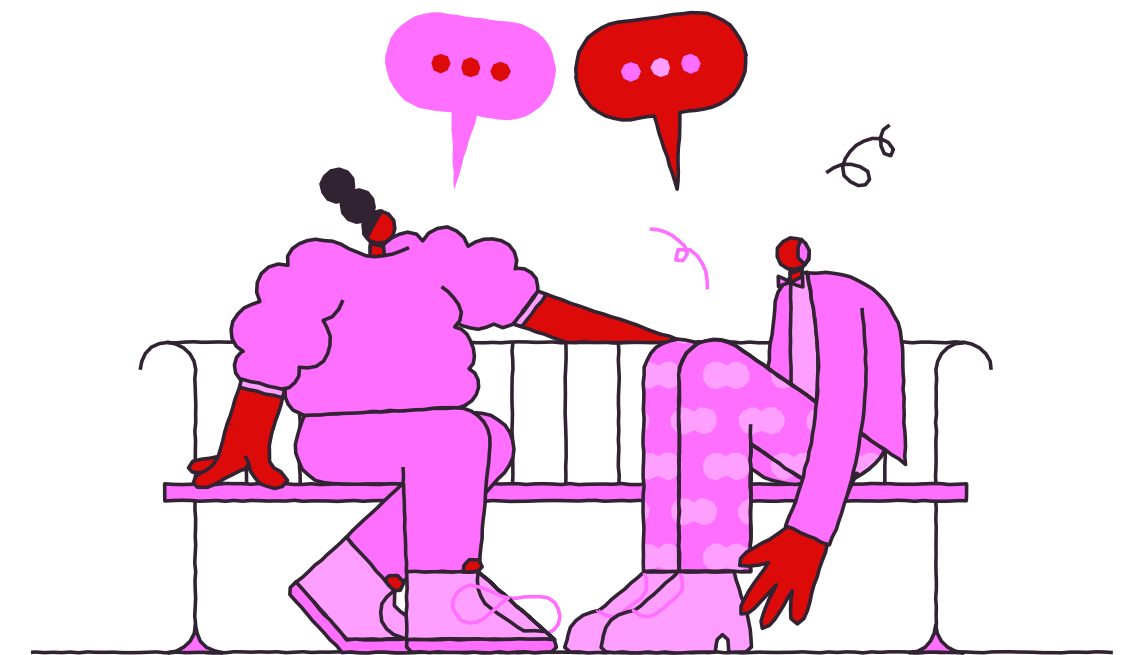
We're bringing people and communities closer together, creating a sense of belonging and reducing loneliness as we go.

Last year, we completed our largest-ever materiality assessment. This involved identifying, refining and assessing potential environmental, social and governance impacts that could affect Virgin Media or that our business could have on communities and the environment. Our results – the views of more than 1,200 employees, 500 customers, 300 business customers and key industry experts – helped us shape our strategy and set targets.

You'll find more on our material issues and the assessment we completed [here](#).



## Our 2020 assessment



# Bringing back a sense of belonging

Over recent years, the country's sense of belonging has declined, while loneliness and isolation have been on the rise.

1/5

of the population say they're always or often lonely<sup>6</sup>

62%

of people feel lonely when they don't have time to connect with friends, family and loved ones in person<sup>7</sup>

39%

of UK adults report they haven't had a meaningful connection with someone in the last fortnight<sup>8</sup>

To help tackle loneliness and bring communities closer together, we need to start building more meaningful connections by combining digital connectivity with on-the-ground relationships, and providing the right support through our people, partnerships and connectivity.

## More meaningful connections

We define them as 'human or digital connections that help reduce loneliness and build community belonging'. That might include:

- Regularly interacting with friends, family, neighbours and people in communities
- Accessing social networks or community groups that didn't exist before
- Making sure people have someone they can rely on
- Digitally connecting community groups, organisations, people or places
- Participating in community activities



<sup>6</sup> Kantar Public, 'Trapped in a bubble: An investigation into triggers for loneliness in the UK', December 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Census-wide research conducted for Virgin Media, November 2020.

<sup>8</sup> British Red Cross, 'Lonely and left behind', 2020.



# Calling all unpaid carers

Many people, including unpaid carers themselves, aren't aware of what an unpaid carer is. It's **anyone who provides unpaid care and support to a family member, friend or neighbour who has a disability, illness, mental health condition or who needs extra help as they grow older.**

It can be a full-time job, without the salary. Unpaid carers often have less time to spend socialising and building their own relationships, and that often puts them at risk of becoming lonely and isolated.



carers in the UK<sup>9</sup>



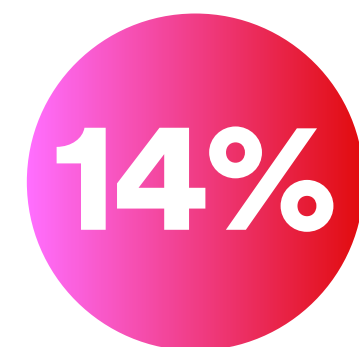
more likely to be lonely compared with the general population<sup>10</sup>



carers have felt lonely or socially isolated as a result of their caring role<sup>11</sup>



of our cable customers are unpaid carers<sup>12</sup>



of our people identify as an unpaid carer<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> UK Census, 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Carers UK, Carers Week, 'Getting carers connected', 2019.

<sup>11</sup> Carers UK < Carers Week, 'Building carer-friendly communities', 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Customer research conducted for Virgin Media, February 2021.

<sup>13</sup> Employee Zoom survey, March 2021.



We've teamed up with the charity **Carers UK** to help **build meaningful connections that make life better for 1 million carers by the end of 2025.**

How? By connecting more unpaid carers to each other and their communities to make sure no carer ever has to feel lonely. We'll make it happen thanks to our people, platforms and knowledge of digital connectivity.





# Better for people

We're building a business where no one's left behind and all our people and customers feel they belong.

As we mentioned earlier, creating a high-performing culture helps us be more innovative and make better decisions.

While we're making strides in establishing a stronger sense of belonging, we also know there are still too many people from underrepresented communities in the UK being left behind. Women in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) roles and leadership positions. Disabled and neurodiverse people. Underrepresented ethnic groups. Ex-offenders. Refugees.

Society has put up barriers that block underrepresented communities from simply receiving the same fair treatment and opportunities as everyone else. It's up to us, along with other businesses, to change these attitudes and inaccessible working environments, systems and processes that stop people from getting into and staying in work.

Our big goal by the end of 2025 is to help hundreds of people from underrepresented communities find employment at Virgin Media and upskill in their roles.

We aim to do this through our three Belonging commitments opposite.

## Building a more diverse workforce

### Right now, we're...

- Creating partnerships to actively provide skills for, and recruit from, underrepresented communities
- Removing barriers throughout our recruitment and onboarding experience
- Providing educational programmes to all people managers
- Rolling out a new workplace adjustments process for employees with impairments and health conditions
- Putting inclusive employee policies in place, especially for unpaid carers
- Supporting more women and underrepresented ethnic groups into leadership roles

- **By the end of 2025, we're...**
  - Aiming to exceed the UK economic benchmark of underrepresented people working for Virgin Media

## Creating a safe space

### Right now, we're...

- Giving our people a voice through our employee networks
- Providing company-wide training on inclusive language, allyship and micro-aggression
- Offering wellbeing tools to help people better understand mental wellbeing
- Creating a culture where our people feel confident in sharing their diversity information with us
- Celebrating diversity not just through one-off events, but by carrying on conversations throughout the year

- **By the end of 2025, we're...**
  - Aiming to increase our employee diversity disclosure rate to more than 90% for all characteristics
  - Looking to achieve an employee Belonging score of over 90%

## Making sure no one's left behind

### Right now, we're...

- Applying Tidal Equality's principles around equity and inclusion to our employee and customer policies, processes and products
- Testing new products to make sure they're inclusive for all our customers
- Training our frontline teams to make sure they're using the right language and having the right conversations
- Making sure we're being diverse and inclusive in our advertising
- Developing customer propositions aimed at more diverse market sectors

- **By the end of 2025, we're...**
  - Hoping to have applied Tidal Equality's Equity Sequence™ to all our projects, which will positively affect our employee and customer journeys





## Better for the planet

We're making a zero waste, zero carbon future happen faster.

Our materiality exercise at the start of 2020 showed just how much people are concerned about climate change and the impact our products have on our planet. So we went away and came up with our new meaningful connections plan, which focuses on three key pillars – one of which is to be better for the planet.

We believe entertainment and digital services are at their best when they're truly limitless. That said, our planet's far from limitless.

As a digital enabler that provides ultrafast connectivity to millions of people in the UK, we're leading the way towards a green revolution – empowering more people to work from home, launching smarter technology and powering intelligent ways for people to travel.

It all sounds great, but it'll count for nothing if we don't act now and change the way we work. Only then will we be able to make a zero carbon, zero waste future happen faster.

# By the end of 2025

**we want to achieve net zero carbon and zero waste operations**



## So, what's the plan moving forward?

We're focusing on two areas that'll help us be better for the planet: climate and circularity.

It's crucial we act now to address the climate emergency, reducing emissions in line with what science requires and achieving net zero as quickly as possible. We call this part of our plan our 'net zero future'.

With a more circular economy, we can start to value materials more – using the earth's resources to their full potential. This part of our plan is 'nothing wasted'.

These two areas overlap with our products – millions of which are in customers' homes and make up a big part of our carbon and waste footprint throughout the product lifecycle. That's why our products have to remain a pivotal part of our plan.





## Net zero future

We know that, when it comes to our future, there's no room for compromise. So, moving forward, we're adopting an approach that rewards investments in both renewable energy *and* efficiency.

Here's what we'll do:

- We'll drive energy efficiency by moving our fleet to electric vehicles as part of our science-based target to reduce our operational footprint by 25% by the end of 2025 (on a 2019 baseline). This will put us on track to support Liberty Global's Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) approved target of reducing scope 3 emissions by 50% by 2030.

Reduce by  
**25%**

- We'll invest in 100% renewable electricity and commit to carbon-offsetting schemes for our remaining emissions, with the aim of achieving net zero operations by the end of 2025.

**100%**

- We'll reduce emissions across our supply chain, focusing on the lifecycle impact of our products, which will further support our parent company Liberty Global's SBTi-approved target of reducing scope 3 emissions by 50% by 2030.

Reduce by  
**50%**

- We'll support the decarbonisation of the UK economy by providing a platform of connectivity for the low-carbon digital revolution, rolling out on-street electric-vehicle charging units through Liberty Global and using our TV platform and partnerships to amplify and encourage climate awareness.

- We'll continue to support the **Media Climate Pact** and the commitments that come with it.





## Case study

### The pact we've made

Virgin Media was a founding signatory of the [Media Climate Pact](#) when it launched in November 2020.

The pact is a coalition of media companies committed to tackling climate change in the industry, and commits to:

#### 1. Implementing science-based targets on climate change

These targets need to drive actions that are consistent with a 1.5-degree pathway to achieving net zero as close to 2030 as possible, and by 2050 at the very latest.

One of which is to achieve net zero carbon operations by the end of 2025. We'll do this by reducing operational emissions by 25%, using renewable energy and offsetting carbon to bring our remaining emissions down to zero.

We'll also be supporting Liberty Global to deliver its 1.5-degree science-based targets of reducing scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions by 50% by the end of 2030.

#### 2. Encourage a climate-friendly lifestyle through the power of our brand

While we don't actually commission any of our own TV shows, we can still play an active role in bringing audiences to the amazing content our partners produce.

Through our meaningful connections plan, we'll raise awareness of climate change through our TV platform and partnerships. We're currently mapping out a plan for this, which will involve picking out relevant programmes across different channels and promoting them to our customers through our TV service, digital channels and comms.



## Nothing wasted

Being straight up – like many other big businesses, we produce our fair share of waste. We've got millions of electrical products in customers' homes. Our logistics operation sends equipment up and down the county. We dig trenches miles long to expand our network. And our workforce of almost 12,000 people are based all over the UK. It's on us to create a more circular model where we value materials and use them to their fullest – cutting back on how much we waste.

With that in mind, we're working towards a number of key goals, which we're aiming to hit by the end of 2025:

95%

- Achieve zero waste operations – reusing or recycling at least 95% of all potential waste created by our business

75%

- Make sure every broadband or TV product we send to customers contains at least 75% recycled plastic or has been refurbished – saving around 5,000 tonnes of materials by the end of 2025

100%

- Reuse and recycle 100% of returned broadband and TV products
- Eliminate single-use plastic from our packaging – making it 100% recyclable
- Set a target for excavated waste by working with our network-expansion and field partners





# Our meaningful connections plan



Building connections that really matter for people, communities and the planet.

<b>The promise</b>	 <b>Better for people</b> We're building a business where no one is left behind and all our people and customers feel they belong.	 <b>Better for communities</b> We're bringing people and communities closer together, creating a sense of belonging and reducing loneliness as we go.	 <b>Better for the planet</b> We're making a zero waste and zero carbon future happen faster.	
<b>The big goal – by the end of 2025</b>	<b>Create opportunities:</b> By giving hundreds of people from underrepresented* communities across the UK access to skills and employment at Virgin Media.  <small>*Women in STEM, disability, LGBTQ+, underrepresented ethnicities, neurodiversity, social equity</small>	<b>Building meaningful connections in communities:</b> 1.5m people more meaningfully connected to communities and each other.	<b>Shrinking our impact:</b> By achieving net zero carbon and zero waste operations.	
<b>Focus areas – the how</b>	We're building connections to... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create more opportunities for people who need them the most</li> <li>• Become the employer of choice for carers</li> <li>• Create a workplace where everybody feels safe to share their experience and know their individual voice will be heard, valued and respected</li> <li>• Make our business and products inclusive for all</li> </ul>	We're building connections to... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce feelings of loneliness for carers and connect them to their own communities</li> <li>• Empower our people to bring people and communities together through volunteering</li> <li>• Create neighbourhoods that enable community belonging and reduce loneliness for individuals</li> <li>• Help organisations that are tackling loneliness and building community belonging</li> </ul>	We're building connections to... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce our impact on climate change and support the low-carbon economy</li> <li>• Make sure nothing's wasted and resources are used and reused for as long as possible</li> </ul>	
<b>Supported by</b>	<b>Better Business</b> Running our business in a truly responsible way, just as our people and customers would expect			
<b>Our focus areas</b>	<i>Prioritising wellbeing</i> Helping our people to stay healthy and happy, by supporting their physical, mental and social wellbeing.	<i>Secure data</i> Working to the highest standards of privacy, security and ethical data usage across our business for our people, customers and partners.	<i>Sustainable supply chain</i> Keeping a transparent and responsible supply chain while making sure human and labour rights, health and safety and responsible environmental practices are baked into our work with suppliers.	<i>Safer online experiences</i> Providing the tools and knowledge to help our customers and their families connect to and use the internet safely and healthily.



## Part 7 – Our focus in 2021



# Our immediate priorities in 2021

So, you've seen our meaningful connections plan. Through it, we're building connections that really matter for people, communities and the planet. It's our way to have a positive impact on society, bringing people closer together, providing a stronger sense of community belonging, and working in a way that protects our planet.

Here's a little look at what we'll be focusing on for the rest of this year...





## 2021 – Better for communities

### Our goal by the end of 2025?

To make sure 1.5 million people are more meaningfully connected to their communities and each other.

### Our priorities for 2021

#### ● Connecting carers

Our main goal is to build a strong strategic partnership with our chosen charity, Carers UK – putting the right governance in place so we can hit the ground running through 2021 and beyond. One of the big things we'll do with Carers UK is create better digital solutions for carers. We're focusing on further developing and improving Carers UK's existing app, Jointly, and increasing awareness of this amazing platform. We're also looking at some exciting new solutions to support unpaid carers to connect with each other, their loved ones and peers – helping to tackle loneliness and make carers' lives easier. We're busy pulling together a plan to support customers who are unpaid carers – making sure the products, services and experiences we offer meet their needs.

#### ● Connecting our people

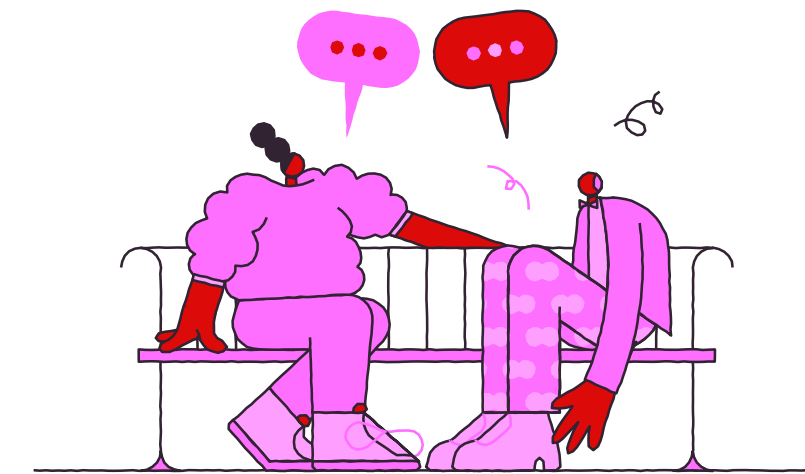
We've upped our people's paid volunteering leave from one to five days. It's an initiative called Take Five, and it allows our people to take off a whole working week across the year – spending their time building meaningful connections that create a greater sense of belonging in communities and reducing loneliness. By spreading this time across a whole year, our people can take part in regular activities to build more meaningful connections.

#### ● Connecting neighbourhoods

We've committed to creating more opportunities for anyone who feels lonely to connect with their local communities digitally and in person. This year, we're focusing on supporting unpaid carers. While our Community Leads are busy expanding our network in different neighbourhoods, it makes sense for them to check in on residents in the local area. We'll train our people so they can have the right conversations and signpost unpaid carers to Carers UK's expert support and information.

#### ● Bringing others onboard

We'll work closely with our Customer and Brand teams to make sure we use our platforms and partnerships in the best possible way – helping us to amplify the issues and themes we're tackling through our meaningful connections plan. In fact, we've already run a customer awareness campaign, encouraging any of our customers who might be unpaid carers to identify themselves in the 2021 census. This'll help us and the government gain a more accurate picture of how many unpaid carers there are in the UK, so we can better plan for future sufficient resources and support.





# 2021 – Better for people

## Our goal by the end of 2025?

To create more opportunities for hundreds of people from underrepresented communities across the UK to access skills and employment at Virgin Media.

## Our priorities for 2021

### ● Building a more diverse workforce

While we've done some great things to make sure our workforce is more diverse than ever, we still have a lot of work to do.

We need to break down barriers from our recruitment and onboarding processes and offer better training, more inclusive job advertisements and smarter AI selection tools.

We'll pilot a new Women in Leadership programme to support women into senior roles, as well as an emerging talent programme for underrepresented communities, and a programme with schools to attract more diverse talent and support local economies in underrepresented communities.

For our disabled people, we're looking forward to introducing them to our new workplace adjustments process, which should make every day at Virgin Media easier.

Finally, we're reviewing and updating our policies and guidance for our people who identify as unpaid carers – making sure they get the support they need to juggle their work commitments with their caring responsibilities.

### ● A safe space for everyone

We've seen just how important our network groups have been in giving our people a voice that's heard and valued across our business. So, we're excited to announce our sixth employee network, specifically dedicated to supporting unpaid carers.

We're also launching company-wide training on inclusion, allyship and micro-aggression, and we'll be celebrating diversity and intersectionality through different events across the year.

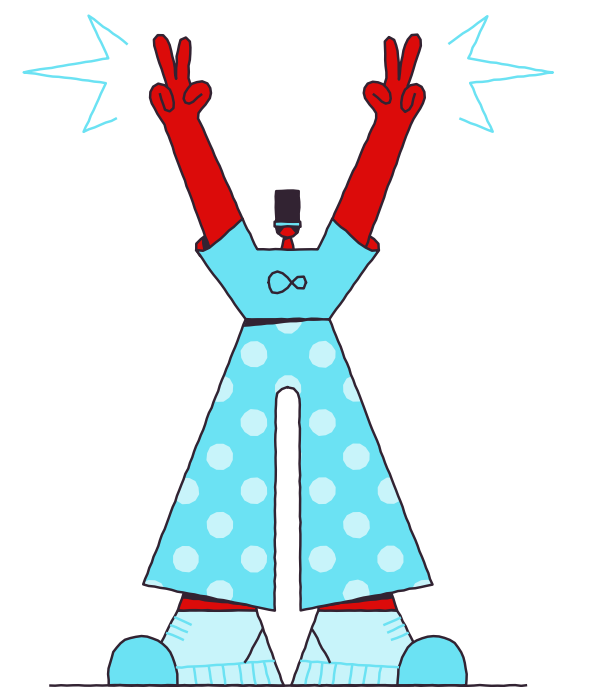
On top of this, we're creating Belonging Circles, where our leaders can explore areas of our Belonging strategy, like leading conversations and learning how to get comfortable with being uncomfortable.



### ● Leaving no one behind

We're rolling out Equity Sequence – five equity-specific questions that can be applied to any key decision to make sure they're inclusive and unbiased. We're also assembling a group of frontline champions for disabled or vulnerable people and setting up a user-testing panel to make sure new projects and products take into account feedback from our people with impairments and health conditions.

Our big goal for 2021 is to give hundreds of people from underrepresented communities across the UK access to employment and skills at Virgin Media. And the only way we'll do this is by developing well-thought-out plans and delivering on our Belonging promises.





## 2021 – Better for the planet

### Our goal by the end of 2025?

To reduce our impact on the planet by achieving net zero carbon and zero waste operations.

### Our priorities for 2021

#### ● **Shrinking our operational emissions**

Our plan is to reduce our operational emissions by at least 25% by the end of 2025. We're already well on our way to achieving this, having shrunk our emissions by 7% in 2020, and we've got some big ideas as to how we can boost that in 2021, including the transition of our fleet to electric vehicles, with the aim of running a fully electric fleet by the end of 2030.

#### ● **Reusing and recycling our products**

We're still looking for new ways to tackle scope 3 emissions, one of which is reducing the impact of our products across their lifecycle. That means taking back millions of products from our customers so we can reuse them. We'll also step up our collaboration with suppliers so

that, together, we can increase the amount of recyclable materials we use – helping us hit our target of using 75% recycled plastic in our kit.

#### ● **Spreading the word**

Our climate crisis needs to be talked about on a wider scale, and we're in a great position to help spread the word. Using our TV platform, we'll promote programmes about the environment – making them easier to find so millions of people can watch them and start to think about how they can have a positive impact, and hopefully act on it too.

#### ● **No more waste**

Our focus is on how we can work side by side with our waste contractor to change where

our waste ends up and increase the amount of materials we can recycle.

#### ● **Liberty Charge**

This joint venture – owned by Liberty Global and Zouk Capital – will see us bring on-street electric-vehicle charging network to forecourts, car parks and other places across the country. They'll be supported all the way by our operational teams.





# Everything's under control

We know we've set ourselves some pretty ambitious sustainability goals as part of our meaningful connections plan. So, if we're to achieve them, we need robust governance across each of the three pillars (better for communities, better for people, better for the planet).

## Our governance structure

- **Executive Committee sponsorship**

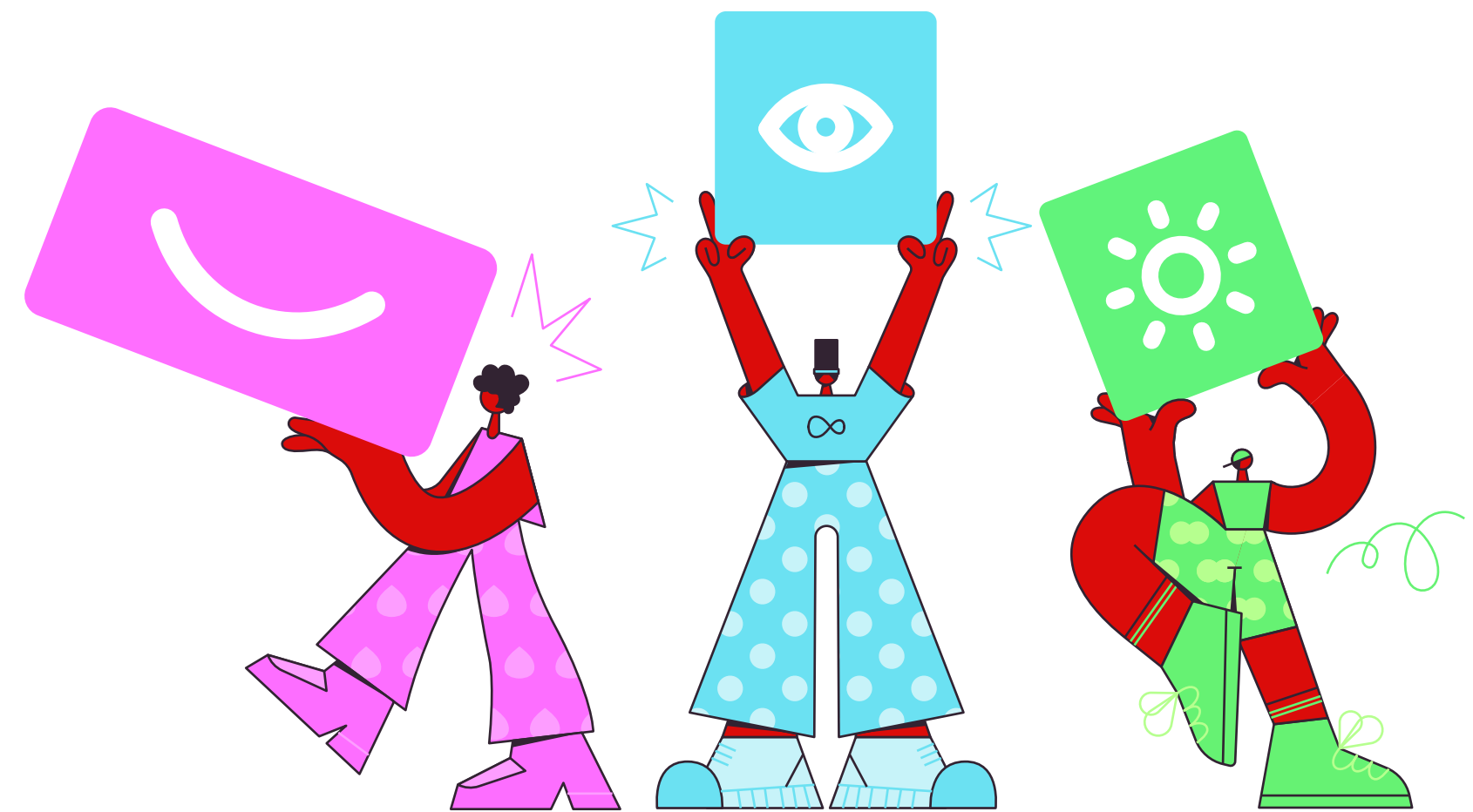
We have Executive Committee sponsors who are aligned to the three pillars of our meaningful connection plan. They head up each pillar and keep a close eye on our progress towards delivering key targets. They also join the Head of Sustainability at Executive Committee meetings to update everyone on our progress and performance. While we don't have a regular dedicated meeting for sustainability, we do provide quarterly updates to the Executive Committee to make sure it's integrated into our day-to-day business operations.

- **Quarterly sub-committees**

Chaired by a relevant Director and attended by an Executive Committee lead, along with senior sub-committee members, this quarterly meeting is the engine of our governance approach and gives us a chance to drive forward and discuss the progress we've made against key targets and any changes to the plan itself – detailing key actions we need to take.

- **Dashboard reporting**

Tracking and analysing how we're doing against our targets is essential to our long-term success. Thankfully, we've got a pretty nifty dashboard to help us out with it.





**Air high fives all round**

Any questions or feedback? Send them to us by email or on Twitter.

✉ [sustainability@virginmedia.co.uk](mailto:sustainability@virginmedia.co.uk)    🐦 [@VirginMediaCorp](https://twitter.com/VirginMediaCorp)    #VMSust

