

If you're looking for new offices for your business, what should you be checking? This handy guide will help you to make sure the premises have the right ICT set-up for your business.

The main areas to check are:

- Cabling
- Internet and Telephone Services
- Security and Access
- Wireless Signals
- Extended Services

Cabling for telephones, networking and Comms Room

- If cabling is not already installed, is there raised-access flooring to enable your own cables to be put in?
- If cabling is installed, does it meet the latest standards?
- Can every desk space be reached safely with cabling, either under the floor or from ceiling distribution via trunking? (Cables should not trail across the floor or be exposed on walls.)
- Are there at least two cable outlets at every place where you want to put a desk?
- Is there at least one power outlet at every place where you want to put a desk?
- Is there a dedicated, secure Comms Room? This room should be equipped for the purpose and be secure at all times.

Internet and Telephone Services

- Is there at least one telephone point for every desk space?
- Can each telephone point be dialled directly from the public telephone network?
- How quickly can a telephone service be made available or a new line added?
- Is there a reception and/or main switchboard service?
- Is there a connection to the internet at every ICT-ready work area?
- How quickly can an internet connection be made available?
- What is the bandwidth (connection speed) of the broadband connection? (Recommendations: For up to 20 people the minimum total uncontended bandwidth available should be 2 Mbps down/ 500 kbps up. For more than 20 people, there should be 100 kbps per user down / 50 kbps per user up.)

- How many organisations will share your internet connection? (Too many people sharing can slow your connection right down. The number of people sharing is called the contention ratio. Most broadband services aimed at the domestic market are unsuitable for the workplace because they are contended.)
- Can you upgrade the speed of your broadband connection?
- How is your internet connection secured? Does the security allow you to access the network easily and securely from other locations?

Security and Access

- What is the security set-up of the property, both of the building as a whole and of your office space?
- Are you able to get 24-hour access to your office?
- What other types of physical security, such as CCTV, are provided?
- If ICT equipment and services are provided on either a fixed or wireless basis, how are they secured? Also, how many other businesses are sharing the equipment and/or network? Is your data secure and separate from other companies?

Wireless Signals

- Do mobile phone signals work inside the building and in the offices?
- Are there any features of the building that would prevent you from using wireless networking or wireless internet access in your office?
- Is there wireless internet access throughout the building? Is it secure?

Extended Services

Extended Services are additional features, facilities or services available at a property that could prove useful for businesses. These can cover a range of areas including the internet, telephone and technology.

- What extended telephone services are on offer? This may include receptionist and voice mail services, group direct lines, extension numbers and conference calling.
- What extended internet services are on offer? This may include a back-up internet connection, email and web hosting facilities and the ability to manage bandwidth to provide a guaranteed minimum speed to each subscriber.
- Are there video conferencing facilities?
- Is there a data backup service available?
- Are there contingency plans in place in case of a disaster?
- Is there publicly available wireless networking in the public areas and meeting rooms?