

# **Break-Fix vs Managed IT Support: UK Cost Comparison for Small Businesses**

## Why This Decision Matters

A lot of small businesses in the UK deal with their IT support only when something breaks. For instance, when a computer isn't working, emails stop working and employees can't access systems - and then you call someone to get it fixed.

However, as your business grows, handling IT support only when something breaks becomes costly, disruptive and high risk for your company. Most companies start to consider managed IT support when they look for options for IT support; however, they tend to get confused when looking at pricing, contracts and terminology.

This guide is designed to clear the fog of confusion.

There is not a "one size fits all" answer for your business. Break-fix IT support and managed IT support are two completely different types of IT support. They have their own merits and shortcomings and depending on how your business is currently performing, what level of risk your business can accept and how heavily you are dependent on your IT system will determine whether break-fix or managed IT support is a better model for your business.

This guide will help you to:

- Simple understand the difference between both models
- Compare what IT should cost in the UK and the amount of risk associated with each model
- Identify the model that would be most appropriate for your business
- Recognise when to transition between support models

There is no sales pitch. There are no scare tactics. There is only good quality, practical information.

## What Is Break-Fix IT Support?

Break-fix IT support is a responsive way to get IT support. You only have to pay for IT support when something goes wrong with your system.

**This means that you:**

- Have a problem
- Contact an IT provider to solve that problem
- IT provider resolves the problem
- You pay for IT provider's time to repair or resolve the problem

**Here is what break-fix generally includes:**

- Ad-hoc or on-demand troubleshooting work
- Emergency repair work
- One-off tasks (setting up a new PC, resolving email issues, or resolving printer issues)
- Provisioning of advice upon request

**Here is what break-fix typically does not include:**

- Proactive monitoring of systems
- Regular system maintenance
- A defined schedule for security patching
- Proactive monitoring of security
- Strategic IT planning

**Many companies in the UK are still using the break-fix model, particularly:**

- Very small businesses
- Start-ups
- Independent contractors
- Companies that do not heavily depend on technology

The appeal of break-fix is that you only pay for help when you need assistance.

## **What Is Managed IT Support?**

Managed IT services provide proactive subscription based “managed” IT service that subscriptions for monthly fee are active efficient monitoring, maintenance and managing of your business's technology (IT) systems by an IT provider for fixed monthly fee vs. waiting on an issue to occur.

**Simply put:**

- You will pay regular monthly fee
- Your system will be monitored & maintained
- Issues will frequently be resolved prior to end user noticing them
- Support is included in the service.

**Typical features included in managed IT services include:**

- Unlimited &/or bundled dedicated technical support
- Monitoring of devices & systems
- Regular updates & security patches
- Backup management
- Anti-virus/end point protection
- Access to help desk
- Basic reporting & reviews

## **Definition of “managed” services**

While "managed" services provide faster resolution to issues, most importantly they reduce the rate of which an issue occurs.

## **Common industries that this type of service would usually be found in are:**

- Rapidly expanding SME
- Remote or hybrid workforce
- Client facing organisations
- Businesses who process or manage sensitive or personal data

## **Typical UK Pricing Ranges (2026)**

Pricing can vary across the country depending on the area being served, how long businesses have been operation, and what is being provided. However, below you will find an example of what can be expected for an overall average of those practices in the UK.

### **Prices for break/fix IT support will be as follows:**

- Hourly rate: £60 - £120/hour
- Emergency / out of hours: £120 - £180+/hour
- Minimum charge: Usually 1 hour
- On-site call-out may or may not incur travel charges

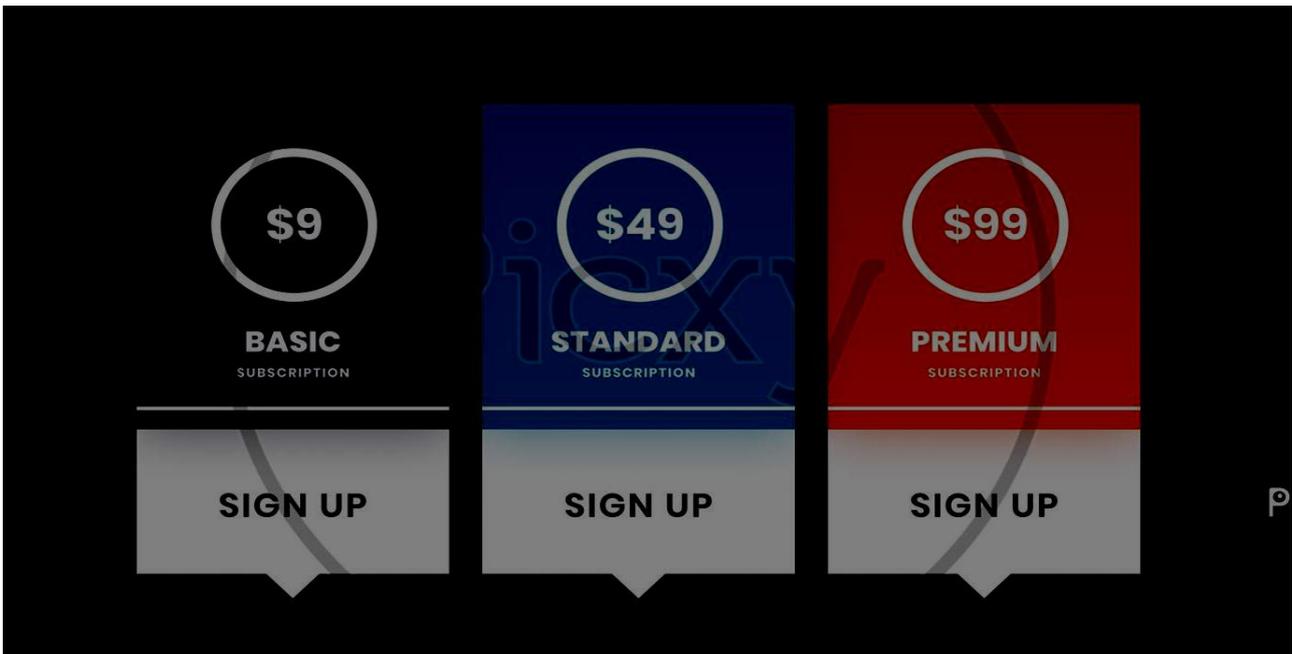
Providers located within Greater London and the South East will fall into the higher end of the pricing range for each of the above examples compared to other parts of the UK. However, for smaller service providers located throughout other parts of the UK, the prices will typically be lower than those within Greater London and the South East.

### **Prices for Managed IT Support will range as follows:**

- Per user per month: £25 - £95/user
- Per device: £20 - £75/device
- Onboarding/Set Up Fees may be charged in addition to the per-user/per-device price mentioned above.
- Length of contract-most providers are on a 12-month term with options for rolling thereafter.

### **Pricing is determined by:**

- Number of users
- Security requirements
- Support hours
- Compliance requirements
- Complexity of the network



## Cost Comparison Table

Factor	Break-Fix	Managed IT Support
Payment model	Pay when something breaks	Fixed monthly fee
Cost predictability	Low	High
Budgeting	Difficult	Straightforward
Support availability	Reactive	Proactive + reactive
Downtime risk	Higher	Lower
Security oversight	Minimal	Ongoing
Compliance support	Limited	Built-in (basic)
Best for	Very small, low-risk firms	Growing, IT-dependent SMEs

## Hidden Costs and Risks

The main distinction between two models is not their respective headline prices but the amount of exposure to risk.

### Downtime and Productivity Loss

Break-fix only provides a solution to problems that occur after there has been a substantial disruption.

#### Even small periods of downtime can:

- Hinder employee's ability to complete tasks
- Delay responses to customers
- Result in missed deadlines

- Increase employee's stress and frustration

The majority of small to medium-sized businesses in the UK do not quantify the cost of downtime simply as the amount of lost income; rather, they measure it as the amount of lost productivity and how it has affected their reputation.

Through proactive maintenance and monitoring of IT systems, managed IT services attempt to limit the number of incidents of poor service.

## **Compliance and Data Protection Risk**

Protection of personal data is required under UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, meaning the organisations are responsible for protecting that personal data.

While break-fix support may assist post-incident, generally speaking, it does not do the following:

- Reduce risk proactively
- Provide audit trails
- Support ongoing compliance efforts
- Managed support typically aligns better with:
  - Cyber Essentials requirements.
  - Cyber insurance expectations.
  - Basic compliance controls.

## **When Break-Fix Stops Making Sense**

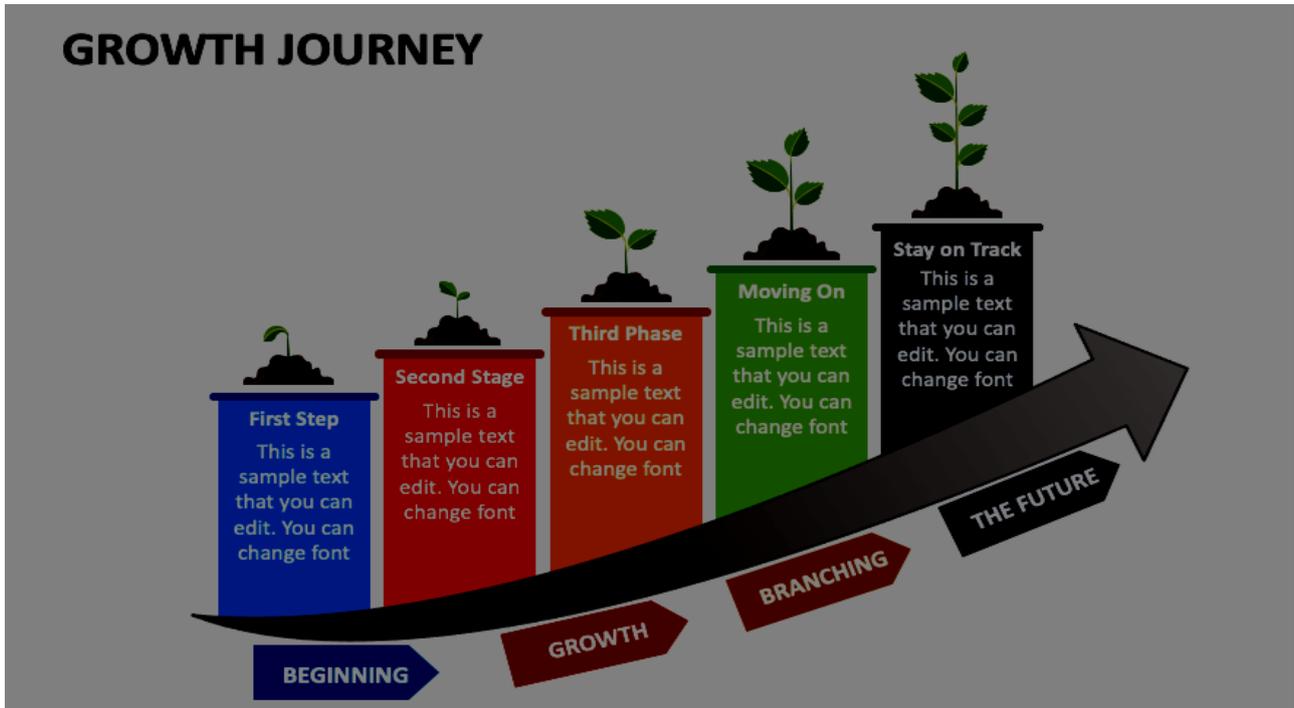
There are warning signs that indicate when Break-Fix no longer makes sense:

- Frequent emergency service calls
- An increase in total annual IT costs with little or no added value
- Multiple security breaches and/or near misses
- Employee complaints regarding slow repairs
- Difficulty in budgeting for IT Services and Equipment
- Once IT is a critical part of the business, Break-Fix or reactive service becomes a problem.

## **Common Myths and Misunderstandings**

- The model of managed IT is different than just expensive to break/fix but rather about preventing issues from ever developing.
- As mentioned before; small business's tend to be targeted because their defenses tend to be weak.
- Being able to plan ahead and have visibility provides you with much more control than waiting to respond when there is an emergency to deal with.

- Therefore, while nothing will eliminate your downtime based on having managed IT services; companies providing managed IT services can help reduce your downtime, but can't guarantee it.



## FAQs

### ➤ Is it worth it to have Managed IT Support?

For companies who depend on IT every day, a reduction in downtime, risk & unpredictability will more than offset costs.

### ➤ Why does managed IT cost more at the outset?

You are paying for ongoing maintenance, monitoring & preventive measures; not just repairs.

### ➤ Can small companies use break/fix methods to begin?

Yes, but many do. The trick is to identify when that model is no longer suitable.

### ➤ During the transition phase what occurs?

A reputable provider will conduct system audits; create proof of access; stabilise systems prior to any modifications being made.

### ➤ Do managed service contracts require you to be locked-in?

Some do; however, ensure the terms are reasonable (generally 12 months) and provide multiple options for exit.

## About This Guide

**Computer Support Centre UK** created this guide. We have many years of real experience providing support to small/medium-sized companies throughout the UK. The purpose of this document is to

give you honest, useful and helpful information regarding IT Support without the usual sales tactics and technical jargon associated with these types of documents.

The information in this document is written for individuals with little or no technical knowledge who require a simple explanation of all the options available along with the actual cost comparison for each solution. The content is designed to educate you the reader, but it is not considered a legal or financial advisory service.

If you learn more about **Computer Support Centre**, our services, and our approach, please visit our official website:

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## **Conclusion**

Choosing between managed IT support and break/fix IT support depends on which option fits your requirements now, not on which one is superior. Both types of service are appropriate, but different for the size, budget, and reliance on technology of a business.

When assessing your two possible options for providing IT support – break/fix and managed IT services the key is knowing the real costs, risks, and limitations of each approach. Therefore, by making an informed decision, you will experience less disruption, fewer surprises, and greater long-term stability.

The purpose of this guide is to help you make a well-informed decision regarding IT Support with confidence and clarity.

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