

# **What “Unlimited IT Support” Really Means: A UK SME Guide**

## Why “unlimited” causes confusion

If you operate a small UK business, you may have seen the term "unlimited IT support" advertised by IT service providers.

This can be a very comforting notion as it provides you with consistent monthly payments to budget for and you will no longer receive unexpected invoices when you contact them for assistance.

However, the definition of "unlimited" will vary greatly from provider to provider, contract to contract, and how you view "unlimited".

Some examples of these misunderstandings are:

- A director assumes that unlimited IT support means unlimited on-site visits.
- A finance manager assumes that hardware replacements (i.e. PCs and photocopiers) are included in their IT support agreement.
- A customer upgrades their software but believes that they also had their migration included in the cost of their IT support agreement.
- Staff members use the help desk for assistance with informal training about their equipment.
- A business has a legacy server fail and expects their IT service provider to provide them with full recovery support at no extra cost.

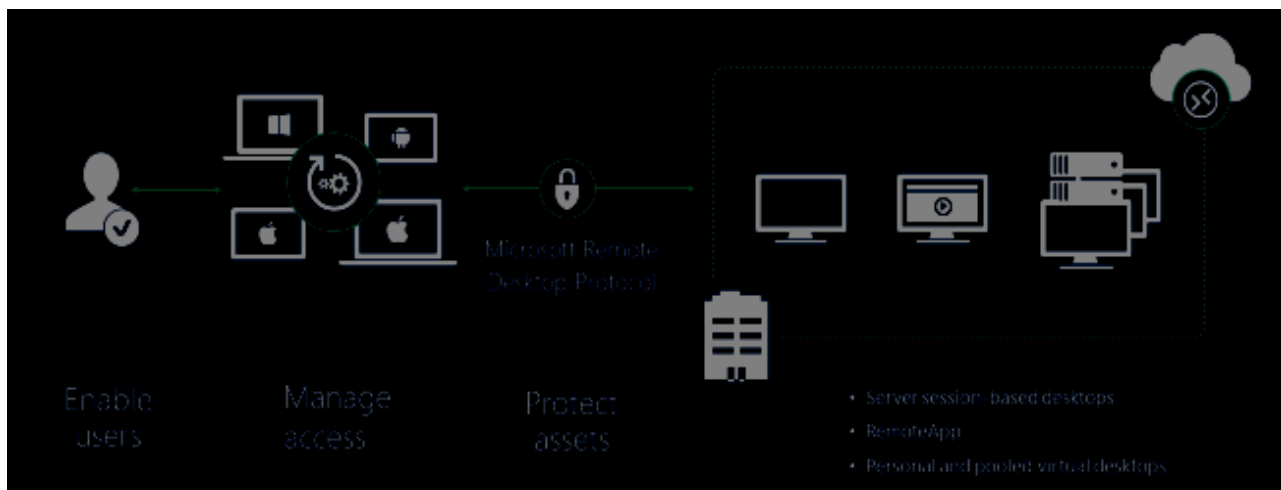
All of these assumptions are completely logical, but they don't necessarily align with what the service provider has included as part of their IT service agreement.

The purpose of this guide is to provide a simple description of what "unlimited IT support" usually means in the UK and what it does not mean.

## What unlimited IT support usually covers

For most of the UK SME market, “Unlimited IT Support” means that you will receive:

- Unlimited reactive support for your daily IT issues, within the scope outlined in the agreement, for your covered users and equipment.
- Most of the UK MSPs will offer IT support mainly via remote means (e.g. telephone, email, remote access tool)



The following items typically are considered to be included:

## **1. Daily Incidents**

An incident is an occurrence that disrupts the functionality of something.

Some examples include:

- Unable to access your Microsoft 365 account
- Unable to connect to the printer
- Unable to boot up your laptop
- Incorrect user permissions to a shared drive
- Unable to send an email

Unlimited normally includes fixing incidents that may occur multiple times from you

## **2. User Support**

- Access to Help desk within the agreed hours
- Resetting Passwords
- Unlocking Accounts
- Assisting with basic application errors
- Solving connectivity issues between devices

## **3. Supported Systems**

Examples that are typically considered as supported systems:

- Windows based PCs and Laptops
- Microsoft 365
- Standard Networking Equipment

As outlined in the Line of Business Software agreed upon prior to being in scope.

## **4. Base Liaison With Vendors**

Most contracts will allow a certain level of allowable interaction with a vendor, usually an outside party, to support problem resolution.

In reality, however, this will not usually be an unlimited basis (more information on this in a subsequent section).

## **5. Monitoring & Patching (If Part of Your Managed Contract)**

A managed contract usually provides the following types of services:

- Device monitoring
- Security patching

- Antivirus monitoring
- Basic reporting

This is usually done on a proactive basis, but may not be included in a "support only" package.

## What it often excludes (clearly explained)

This is where misunderstandings usually happen.

### 1. Projects vs Incidents

It is critical to know the difference between projects and incidents.

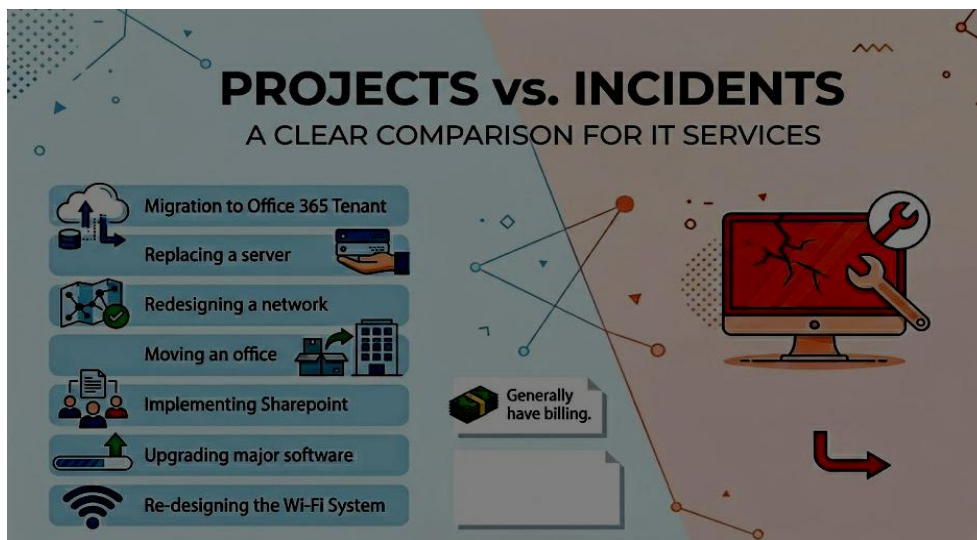
An **incident** is an item that is broken and needs to be repaired. A **project** is a pre-planned change, upgrade or implementation.

Generally, projects will almost always have billing.

Examples of projects are:

- Migration to Office 365 Tenant
- Replacing a server
- Redesigning a network
- Moving an office
- Implementing Sharepoint
- Upgrading major software
- Re-designing the Wi-Fi System

Generally, unlimited technical support does not include projects.



### 2. Onboarding & Remediation

Onboarding when switching IT providers generally includes:

- Auditing the existing infrastructure
- Auditing security and compliance status
- Creating documentation
- Fixing any identified issues

Many IT providers will charge a separate fee for onboarding and remediating a new account. This is because many of the “inherited” systems will sometimes require remediation to operate correctly before being placed under full support.

### **3. Replacing Hardware**

Generally, unlimited support will cover labour only, not hardware.

Generally, hardware that is not included in an unlimited support agreement would be:

- New laptop/desktop computer replacements
- Replacement servers
- Network infrastructure equipment
- Printer infrastructure equipment
- Upgrades to warranty

### **4. Cybersecurity Add-Ons**

Cybersecurity generally does not fall under the umbrella of core support.

Cybersecurity additional services may include:

- Managed detection and response (MDR)
- 24/7 security operations centre (SOC)
- Increased email filtering capabilities
- Penetration Testing Services
- Assistance for Cyber Essentials Certification

If it is not specifically listed, generally, it is not included.

### **5. Backup & Disaster Recovery**

Backup monitoring is likely included in most unlimited support agreements.

Disaster recovery planning, testing, resiliency, and cloud fail-over systems are generally separate services.

### **6. Training**

Unlimited support may not generally provide for training the end-user on "how to use excel" / FAQ type inquiries.

However, most MSPs will support you with functional issues.

## Reactive vs Proactive Support

**Reactive support** = Fixing problems when they occur.

**Proactive support** = Preventing problems before they happen.

Proactive includes:

- Monitoring
- Patching
- Capacity planning
- Security reviews
- IT strategy meetings

Unlimited support can still be reactive-only if not structured as a full managed service.

## Unlimited Remote vs Unlimited On-Site

This is one of the biggest misunderstandings.

Most UK providers are remote-first.

Unlimited usually means:

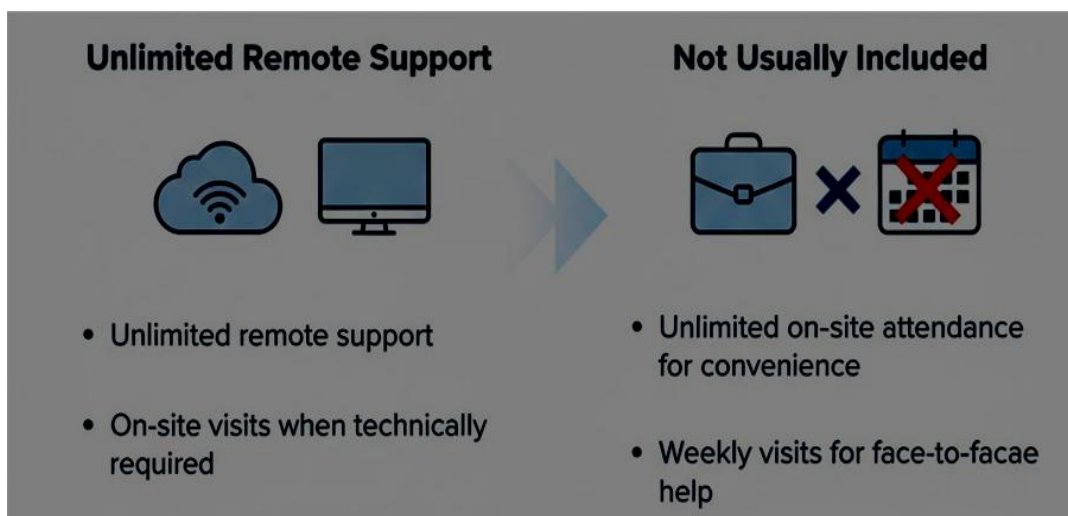
- Unlimited remote support
- On-site visits when technically required

It does not usually mean:

- Unlimited on-site attendance for convenience
- Weekly visits because staff prefer face-to-face help

Travel time may be included or charged separately.

Always clarify.



## Common Miscommunications

### Scenario 1: Unlimited Visits

**Client's Assumption:** Engineer can come out whenever and at no cost.

**Contract Supported:** Unlimited remote support and on-site visits when they are needed technically.

**Point of Clarification:** "How many on-site visits are included in the yearly allowance?"

### Scenario 2: Replacement of Hardware

**Client Agreed Upon:** If server goes down, the server will be replaced under contract terms.

**Contract Supported:** Only lobar associated with diagnosing the server problem.

**Point of Clarification:** "Does the lobar included in diagnosing and fixing the server include providing new replacement parts, or is it just for lobar?"

### Scenario 3: Migration to New CRM System

**Client Assumed:** As I move to CRM upgrade, I can migrate my data without limit.

**System Upgraded as Followed per Contract:** To be contacted for future support.

**Point of Clarification:** "What constitutes a project?"

## Break-Fix vs Managed Support

Feature	Break-Fix	Managed Unlimited
Monthly cost	None	Fixed
Predictability	Low	High
Monitoring	No	Yes
Proactive work	No	Usually
Budget control	Poor	Strong
Long-term planning	Rare	Often included

## What Good Transparency Looks Like

A good quote should provide you with:

- Clear inclusions
- Clear exclusions
- Defined SLAs
- Pricing breakdown
- Onboarding scope
- Exit terms

- Fair usage explanation

If anything feels vague, ask.

## **What a Fair Unlimited Model Looks Like**

A fair unlimited model would provide:

- Clear definitions of scope
- Reasonable fair usage
- Defined SLAs
- Remote friendly, clear project expenses
- Transparent billing for projects
- Proper onboarding process

Should not rely on unidentified extras.

## **FAQs**

### **1. Is there truly an unlimited amount of IT support?**

There are unlimited incidents within scope, however there is not an unlimited amount of projects, hardware or consulting.

### **2. Why do certain suppliers charge additional fees?**

The reason is that planned work, hardware, advanced security, or significant changes to systems do not represent daily incident types.

### **3. Does a typical supplier offer cyber security with unlimited support?**

Basic security usually does, however, advanced protection may not.

### **4. Is it more cost-effective to have unlimited support over extended periods?**

In the majority of cases, yes; because it is difficult to estimate and budget for emergency incidents.

### **5. What should a typical managed services agreement contain?**

Some examples are:

- Help desk support
- Monitoring and reporting
- Patching and maintenance
- Security baseline
- Backup monitoring and review
- Pre-determined SLA's (service level agreements)
- Clear list of what's excluded from service.

## About This Guide

This guide is produced by **Computer Support Centre**, a UK-based provider of managed IT services which has supported SMEs in the UK for over 15 years. Our focus is on delivering practical, clearly defined support agreements based on transparency of the services we will provide as well as their associated costs.

Our intention is to facilitate a clear understanding of IT Contracts so that business owners can make sound, informed decisions when they consider providers to meet their business needs. If you choose us, or another supplier, knowing what "unlimited IT support" really means will enable you to create a successful working relationship with your IT providers.

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

□ <https://computersupportcentre.com>

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## Conclusion

The term "unlimited IT support" is not an ambiguous phrase, but many people often interpret it in various ways. In most SME contracts in the UK, "unlimited" refers to day-to-day, remote support for an agreed-upon number of incidents, typically over an established time frame. However, unlimited support typically excludes significant projects, hardware replacements, large upgrades and advanced cybersecurity services unless specified.

The key to a successful support agreement is having clarity in terms of scope, exclusions, SLAs, onboarding work and appropriate use. When these items are clearly defined, unlimited support can lead to predictable costs, faster resolution of issues and proactive maintenance that reduces downtime in the long run.

Before signing any agreement, it is important to ask direct questions (including written definitions), and ensure that there is agreement on both sets of expectations. A transparent service provider will be happy to engage in those conversations.