

USING YOUR PHONE IN LONDON

Important Pre-Departure Phone Decisions

During your time in London, you are **required to have an operating smartphone that can make/receive calls, send/receive text messages, and that has a data plan**. This is important so that Verto is able to contact you in the event of an emergency. This is mandatory – as outlined in the [Cell Phone Requirements Policy](#) – and is in the interest of your safety and well-being while abroad.

PLEASE NOTE:

If you plan on using your current phone, with a UK SIM or new SIM card, **your phone MUST be unlocked by your current cell phone provider prior to arriving abroad**. Unlocking your phone in the UK can be time-consuming and, in some cases, impossible – this is **best done well in advance of your departure**. *If you do not unlock your phone prior to arrival, you will be required to purchase a second smartphone for use abroad.*

Here are your phone plan options for London:

Option 1:

Prepaid Local SIM Card (Cheapest Option)

Verto London will provide you with a local SIM card that will give you your own English phone number for texting and calling, and data to use apps like iMessage, Facetime, and the internet. Your old number will still work via iMessage, Whatsapp, or other messaging platforms. Verto will start your plan with £10 of data, which you will then need to top-up yourself as needed.

How it works:

1. **Your phone MUST be unlocked** prior to departure to be able to use a new SIM card.
2. Once in London, your Care Team Leader will help you load the prepaid UK SIM card with a package.
3. You may top-up (meaning: pay for more texts, data, or call time) as needed at any local grocery store.

Option 2:

International Phone Plan with Home Carrier

Although not recommended due to high cost, you may choose to purchase an international phone plan with your current at-home phone provider prior to your departure to London. This option allows you to keep your current phone number. You must do this before you leave for your semester and ensure that your plan will have both data and calls/texts available internationally.

Option 3:

Purchase an English Smartphone On-site

If you'd prefer to avoid the risk of losing or damaging your phone from home, you may purchase an inexpensive smartphone in the UK, and use the provided SIM if you wish.

Once in London, **your Care Team Leader will help you purchase a local smartphone**, or you may choose to buy one and have it delivered to the Verto London Study Center. Basic smartphones range from £50-£70 from Argos, Carphone Warehouse, Tesco, Sainsbury, and Amazon.

IMPORTANT:

- It is wise to make sure you have comprehensive insurance for your phone in case it gets broken, lost or stolen.
- All plans must include data and calls/texts so that we can communicate in case of an emergency.

Option 4:

eSIM

An eSIM is a digital version of a physical SIM card that is built into some devices and allows them to connect to a mobile network. Before buying an eSIM plan, you should check if your device is eSIM compatible (most Androids and iPhone manufactured after 2018 are compatible) and ensure your phone is unlocked; otherwise, your eSIM will not work.

To use an eSIM, you'll need to buy a data plan online that works best for you based on how many GBs you will be using (the average traveler uses around 10GBs per month). It is recommended to download and purchase your eSIM plan before you travel so that when you land in the airport you can easily activate it.

Be sure to select a data plan that includes phone calls and text messages in case of emergencies, **as you are required to be in possession of a working cell phone with the ability to make and receive voice calls, SMS, and internet data capability per our [Cell Phone Policy](#).**

Please note that if you will be traveling out of the country while on-site, your plan may not cover the international destination, so be sure to purchase a plan that will cover your weekend travel plans.

All four of the UK's biggest mobile networks – [EE](#), [O2](#), [Three](#) and [Vodafone](#) – support eSIM. As long as you have an eSIM-compatible device, you'll be able to get an eSIM plan. You can go to a local phone shop and arrange this personally, although Verto London Staff will give all students a physical UK SIM on arrival - those students that can't use this can have the option of an eSIM if their phone supports this technology.

Airalo is the best overall eSIM for traveling the UK. Airalo offers eSIM plans designed for travelers, enabling them to access mobile data without needing physical SIM cards.

You must give your cell number to Verto staff during the first few days in London. Always keep your data switched on so that you can be contacted in an emergency.

Add Verto London's phone number to your contacts so that we can reach you during an emergency.