

Home Access update for local authorities

November 2009

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Home Access is the government programme which will help to ensure that more children in state-maintained education in England have access to technology at home to support learning. Following on from a successful pilot in Oldham and Suffolk local authorities, the Home Access programme begins its phased rollout across England from December 2009. Initially the programme will target learners in years 3 to 9 inclusive. The programme aims to benefit more than 270,000 households by March 2011.

As the date for national rollout comes nearer, this is an exciting time for all involved. As the pilot earlier this year demonstrated, the involvement of local authorities in Home Access will be central to its national success. Local authorities in the two pilot areas played a key role, particularly in supporting schools and communities' work in raising awareness of the benefits of using technology to support learning.

Since the pilot, Home Access has worked with other local authorities and the DC10plus group, to develop material which will illustrate how the programme can contribute to the successful delivery of local priorities. One of the key outputs of this was a map which displayed the local authority National Indicators for 2009/10 divided into four categories depending on the impact that Home Access can have upon them.

This briefing is designed to be a follow-on to the Spring term regional forums and the Home Access conferences for local authorities which Becta ran at the end of September and beginning of October.

Specifically, it aims to provide greater detail or responses to the queries raised at previous events.

The offer

Under the programme, low-income families who meet set eligibility criteria can apply to a central body for a Home Access Grant to purchase a compliant computer and internet package from a range of approved suppliers (detailed below).

Eligibility criteria

Those eligible are firstly families with children in years 3 to 9 who attend state maintained school in England on a full time basis and did not receive a computer from the 'Computers for Pupils' or the 'Home Access' programme in the past. Of these families, the second criterion is that the family fits one of the following:

- the child is eligible for free school meals,
- parent(s)
 - on income support
 - receives income based job seekers allowance
 - receives the Child Tax Credit and has an income of less than £16,040
 - have guaranteed pension credit
 - have an income related employment support allowance
 - receive support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act.

Families will also have to submit their child benefit award statement along with their application. They may be required to

provide some additional evidence to prove receipt of the above benefits. This will be detailed on the application form.

Rollout and marketing plan

Getting the grant and acquiring the product

In October, Capita was chosen to provide the grant administration services for the Home Access programme. Capita's role is to liaise with Becta, local authorities, schools and other stakeholders regarding the application process, to process applications, to provide grants in the form of a single use payment card and to work with approved suppliers to ensure successful product delivery. Initially, liaisons between Capita and local authorities will go through Becta. Becta and Capita are currently in the process of agreeing the marketing strategy for national rollout. It is currently planned that there will be in a proving period prior in December to ensure operational robustness. January will see the beginning of high-profile activity, particularly during and after the BETT show from 13 January.

Approved suppliers

The first wave of provisionally approved suppliers and their partners for the Home Access programme are:

- Bli Education
- Centerprise (3 mobile, Phones4U, Apollo, Hughes, Brighthouse, Retra)
- Comet
- Misco
- Positive IT Solutions (Cartridge World)
- XMA (T-mobile)

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The current provisionally approved suppliers may elect to bring on board more partners in the New Year. Additionally a second accreditation opportunity is currently taking place and the deadline for application is 7 December.

Partners

Home Access is also working in partnership with a number of charities and government organisations to link Home Access into wider activities. These partners include:

- Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)
- Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)
- UK online centres
- QCDA
- TDA
- Race Online 2012
- Specialist Schools and Academies Trust
- Gingerbread

Looked after children

For national rollout of the Home Access programme, Looked After Children will be catered for by the main Home Access programme. All children and young people in foster care in full time education (Key Stages 1-5 /years 1 to 13 inclusive) will qualify, provided that they have not already been provided with a similar service and lack suitable access. Local authorities will identify a need and make an application on the learner's behalf at key review points in the Careplan and Pathway Plan reviews. The application form for Looked After Children will be available for download by local authorities. Home Access Grants will be issued to the foster carer and they will purchase from an approved supplier as per the main model. Detailed guidance on this area will be made available later in November. This will be sent to the LACES teams in authorities and be available for download from www.becta.org.uk/homeaccess.

Aggregation

Following an invitation on 2nd July asking local authorities to consider if an aggregation approach would be suitable for their area. Birmingham, Durham, Hull and Shropshire have been offered the opportunity to run aggregation schemes. Subsequent to this announcement, the aggregation opportunity will now be extended to schools that are not in aggregating local authorities. Academies can choose whether to run their own scheme or take part in the local authority scheme. Schools wishing to run schemes will have to be affiliated to the e-Learning Foundation.

The e-Learning Foundation also has access to additional funds to support schools build wider programmes to include those ineligible for Home Access grants. More information on school level and individual support grants is available from www.e-learningfoundation.com. Becta will be communicating more information on this opportunity to schools. However, local authorities can make their schools aware as well.

The schools aggregation pack will be available on request from 1st December. As with local authorities, schools will have to communicate the opportunity to families, ensure legal requirements are followed and purchase equipment from approved suppliers. The deadline for applications for this is 28th February. Unlike local authority aggregation, applications from schools will be reviewed as they are submitted. Therefore, once approved, schools will be able to launch their aggregation schemes without delay. More detail will be available at www.becta.org.uk/homeaccess.

Assistive Technology

Recognising that some learners will require additional support, assistive technology

will be available under the programme to allow those with additional needs to make full use of their Home Access package. All of the packages available under the Home Access programme will come pre-loaded with a suite of assistive technology software which includes text to speech, text prediction, mind mapping and screen magnification.

Additionally, learners may apply for extra equipment such as expanded keyboards, keyboard stickers or specially designed mice, as part of the application process and these will be issued at no extra cost. If learner's needs are not met by the software and hardware offering and they meet additional eligibility criteria, they can undergo an assessment for an individual Home Access package tailored to their needs. This unique and highly useful provision will then be available from April 2010, although applicants can apply before this date.

Local authorities and schools can play an important role in the provision of assistive technology, specifically around raising awareness of the benefits of Assistive Technology. During September Home Access events, local authorities stated a desire for a 'demo-disc' of the Assistive Technology software as well as enquiring if they would be able to purchase the software themselves. Becta are currently working on both of these requests and will continue to communicate updates

Contact us on:

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Find out more visit:

 www.becta.org.uk/homeaccess

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