

An updating & alerting newsletter on  
ICT matters of strategic significance  
for senior LEA officers

Spring 2006

# ICT Update

Information for Directors of Education/CEOs/  
Directors of Children's Services

## ● Launching the Self-Review Framework

Education has a nationally recognised framework for understanding and improving the maturity of ICT in schools.

This provides consistency and clarity of what 'good/mature' is, providing clear guidance on the high standards required to be an e-confident school. Schools will be able to benchmark their development against others, develop an action plan and access relevant and appropriate resources and support to help them improve. This framework, known as Becta's Self-Review Framework, will be launched on 30th March and schools that reach the appropriate threshold will be able to apply for the ICT Mark to demonstrate their achievement.

The Self-Review Framework encourages institutions to develop effective use of ICT by delivering a clear message of what a good institution looks like. Based on the concept of a maturity model for an organisation, it also helps educational leaders to identify how far they have progressed on this framework and the next steps for further improvement.

Becta is co-ordinating the development of the elements with other national bodies including the NCSL, Ofsted, National Strategies, QCA and the Training and Development Agency. In addition, the themes of management and inclusion are present throughout and support for all the areas of work has been provided by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, ICT Industry Club, DfES, Naace, and the Confederation of Educational and Children's Services Managers, as well as the three other UK countries.

A school is able to evaluate its position on the framework within each of the elements by using an online tool. Guidance is then provided on which areas need improvement and how that may be achieved. This will be sustained by a range of online and offline support from relevant partners in order for institutions to progress to the next level on the framework.

With the support of their local authority, schools can work through and implement necessary changes. Once a school has reached a certain position on the framework, it will be informed that it is eligible to apply for assessment for a quality mark for ICT.

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The ICT Mark accreditation scheme is being developed in partnership with, and across, all four UK countries and will build upon the self-review framework, offering an optional accreditation route that all schools can adopt if they wish.

The Self-Review Framework offers several benefits for local authorities. It uses a nationally recognised framework to support school improvement through ICT and will be a powerful tool in helping them to identify their level of ICT maturity. Its national focus will also help to raise awareness of ICT issues – particularly for those LA colleagues not involved with ICT.

## **A national digital infrastructure for education**

As yet there is not an ICT system which is capable of facilitating a fully networked learning community which adds values to learners. Becta is working with the DfES and key partners to design a national ICT infrastructure for education that will provide significant system-wide benefits of coherence and interoperability together with allowing local choice of a range of reliable ICT services – at a sustainable and affordable price.

The planned national digital infrastructure will unify local, regional and national structures, providing an effective digital infrastructure for schools. There are four service components:

- **Learning services** – encompassing systems for organising content storage, personal online workspace, access to digital technologies, assessment, courses, learning resources and Children's Services.
- **Data services** – school management information systems, data exchange with local education authorities and the DfES, and DfES central data storage and distribution systems.
- **Connectivity services** – broadband connections for schools to the National Education Network (NEN), and authentication services to provide a secure single-sign-on to all the resources and facilities teachers and learners need. The NEN is a dedicated education network which will deliver unique content and services, enabling learning resources to be shared and the creation of a personalised learning experience in the classroom.
- **School infrastructure services** – encompassing school local area networks, hardware, operating system software, systems integration and technical support.

### **What does it mean for local authorities?**

Funding provided through the ICT in Schools Grant (Capital) for Connectivity and Learning Systems is aimed at:

- LAs providing and maintaining broadband connectivity and access to the NEN for every school by 2006; broadband connections should be supplied through the LA or Regional Broadband Consortium (RBC)
- LAs working towards implementing the specifications for network services
- LAs providing a personalised learning space, with the potential to support e-portfolios, available to every school by 2007–2008
- LAs ensuring availability of a learning platform with (at least) basic functionality to all their schools by spring 2008.

## The government's e-strategy

The DfES e-Strategy, *Harnessing Technology: Transforming learning and children's services* describes the use of digital and interactive technologies to achieve a more personalised approach within all areas of education and children's services. It is an ambitious strategy covering all education and aspects of other children's services for the next five years and beyond.

The aim in five years' time is to establish the common ground that brings all our education and children's services to the critical baseline of being able to use the technology effectively. The e-strategy sets out to:

- transform teaching, learning and child development, to enable children and learners of all ages to meet their highest expectations
- connect with hard-to-reach groups in new ways
- build an open accessible system, with more information and services online, and more cross-organisation collaboration to improve personalised support and choice
- move to a new level of efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of improved systems and processes.

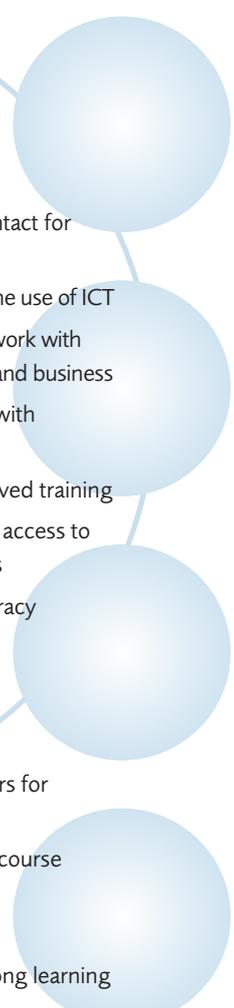
### The role of local authorities

Local authorities, working with Regional Broadband Consortia (RBC) have a key role in delivering the e-strategy by having an infrastructure in place that will ensure the completion of the National Education Network (NEN). This will also support in each LA area the change programme to deliver better outcomes, supported by a national infrastructure that enables easy transfer of data and rapid communication. Reforming children's services needs to reflect the changes that using ICT brings to better meet the needs of children, young people and families. Within the children's sector priorities LAs will need, for example, to:

- roll out implementation of electronic case records for vulnerable children
- introduce up-to-date electronic directories of children's services in each local area
- streamline data demands on children's services by ensuring that all DfES data collection relating to children's social services and education is co-ordinated
- provide the basis for efficient data transfer.

In addition to meeting the priorities given in the e-strategy, funds have been ring-fenced for education so that:

- LAs and RBCs provide leadership and support
- LAs ensure that all schools have access to broadband access by 2006
- LAs ensure each school has access to a Learning Platform by 2008
- ring-fenced funds are used by LAs for broadband and the provision of learning space that will support e-portfolios for all 14–19 students by 2007–08
- LAs prepare the online prospectus requirements in 14–19 education and the portability of assessment to support personalised progression
- it encourages aggregated purchasing to achieve value for money.



### Benefits for schools

- Broadband access in every school by 2006
- Further development of electronic information and contact for teachers, parents and learners
- The ability to assess their own progress by and through the use of ICT
- An integrated teaching, research and administrative network with common systems for electronic learning, administration and business
- Common standards to ensure ease of communication with other institutions
- Access to richer online curriculum materials and improved training
- A quality training and support package which includes access to quality ICT resources and professional online networks
- Sustainable information systems and reduced bureaucracy
- The facility to reach and re-engage reluctant learners.

### Benefits for learners

- More ways to learn and a wider range of subjects
- More flexible study and online access to informal tasters for further learning opportunities
- A personal online learning space to store coursework, course resources, results and achievements
- Supported progression through a personal identifier
- An electronic portfolio will record achievement in lifelong learning
- Over 14s will have access to flexible, co-ordinated courses, with the opportunity to learn at home, in work, in college or in other community settings.

### Benefits for the post-16 sector

- Greater flexibility and easier progression into further education for more learners
- Expert online services and resources to support practitioners and leaders through initial training and professional development
- Extensive access to online digital resources, services and networks.

Responsibility for strategic direction and policy development of the e-strategy sits with the DfES, advised by Becta and JISC, the department's lead strategic partners. A greater degree of cohesion in implementing technological solutions and opportunities will be required in order to ensure effective delivery of system-wide change. Becta and JISC will provide this cohesion by leading the delivery, development and co-ordination of the e-strategy. Responsibility for the delivery itself will be carried out by a wide range of partners, with Becta and JISC responsible for specific elements.

## Safeguarding Children in a Digital World

Arrangements to safeguard and promote the protection of children are high on the priority of every local authority. *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* recognises that radical change is required in the whole system of children's services and that there needs to be the development of a shared sense of responsibility across agencies for safeguarding children and protecting them from harm. Statutory duty was placed on LAs by the Children Act 2004 and the new Local Safeguarding Children Boards are responsible for overseeing implementation.

Information and communications technologies have a fundamental role to play in achieving the changes which will be required. The DfES e-Strategy, *Harnessing Technology* outlines the role of ICT in transforming both education and children's services.

Ensuring the safety and welfare of children in a digital world is now key for all charged with this responsibility. The emergence of interactive communication technologies is having an increasing influence on the lives of children, providing new forms of educational and leisure opportunities. However, there are also risks. There is a need for an implicit understanding by all those involved in child welfare and safety issues that the term 'safeguarding' must automatically refer to both online and offline, real and virtual worlds when they consider the five outcomes for children, specifically that of 'staying safe'.

Becta has produced a number of publications which explain these issues and offer practical solutions for both policymakers and schools and which will have resonance across a wide range of children's services. These will be of particular significance to Directors of Children's Services in developing Children and Young People's Plans and in guiding the work of safeguarding boards.

In *Safeguarding children in a digital world; developing a strategic approach to e-safety*, the research findings have been used to support a series of recommendations by Becta's Safe Use of ICT in Education steering group. This publication provides a strategic overview of e-safety issues to policy makers and outlines a model for a co-ordinated approach by all of the key stakeholders.

Guidance for schools can be found in *e-Safety: developing whole-school policies to support effective practice*. This provides advice on developing appropriate policies and procedures to ensure safe use of communications technologies by the children and young people in their care. It outlines the risks, suggests an educational framework for schools, and gives an overview of the internet safety responsibilities of all the key stakeholders in a child's education. It also provides practical strategies to follow should major problems be encountered.

Copies of each of these publications were sent to each Director of Children's Services. You can also download copies from the Becta site <http://www.becta.org.uk/publications>.

In August 2005 Becta commissioned research on the experiences of schools in e-safety. The report *E-safety: the experience in English educational establishments* can be downloaded from <http://www.becta.org.uk/research/reports/esafetyaudit>.

## Becta news

### Becta appoints new directors

#### Executive Director for co-ordinating the e-strategy

Becta has appointed Tony Richardson as Executive Director for the co-ordination of this area of work. Leaving his role as Director of Online Learning at the National College for School Leadership (NCSL), Tony brings with him considerable experience in this sector. During his time at NCSL Tony has worked with public and private sector partners to bring about the development of the college's virtual presence and online learning which is now at the leading edge of communications technology.

In his new position Tony will be responsible for the co-ordination of national education e-strategy, working closely with the Becta Board and DfES. Commenting on his new role he said: "It is an immense privilege to have been appointed to this exciting role. The government's e-strategy sets out a clear vision on how ICT and other learning technologies can be utilised to aid the transformation of the education system. This e-enabled transformation will open up opportunity for learners, and empower them to make choices that will help them to acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding for life and well-being in the 21st century."

#### Director of Educational Content

Becta's new Director of Educational Content is Dave Hassell, formerly Assistant Director. Dave has a wealth of experience in the educational content industry, having spent over 10 years working for Becta and its previous incarnation NCET (National Council for Educational Technology). He has previously worked as a geography and PE teacher, for the Advisory Unit for Computer Based Education and the London Institute of Education before joining NCET as Software Manager.

Dave said of his new role: "I am very excited by the opportunity to lead Becta's content and software strategy and I am looking forward to working closely with colleagues across the content sector. Content and software provide the crucial interface between the technology and learners and teachers, and it's important to tap into the wealth of experience which resides within commercial and public sector providers."

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# Becta

British Educational Communications  
and Technology Agency

Millburn Hill Road

Science Park

Coventry CV4 7JJ

Tel: 024 7641 6994

Fax: 024 7641 1418

Email: [becta@becta.org.uk](mailto:becta@becta.org.uk)

URL: <http://www.becta.org.uk>

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