

Spring 2007

# ICT Update

Information for Directors of Children's Services

## Improving schools through ICT

Since April 2006 schools have had an important tool in helping them get the most out of ICT to improve their organisation. Over 6600 schools have already used the self-review framework and the feedback from them has been very positive.

The self-review framework was launched last year by Becta, in consultation with a range of other education organisations. Its purpose is to help schools understand the potential of ICT to improve all aspects of their organisation.

Technology, used well and appropriately, can stimulate learning and engage children in many ways. It can also reduce the significant administration burden facing schools.

The framework provides a structured and comprehensive tool for schools to establish where they are now in ICT use and what to do next, in terms of planning for future investment and development. In a world of competing priorities for time and money, the framework gives schools the confidence that the decision-making process is informed and thorough.

The framework provides a systematic guide to assessing current performance and planning for the future in eight key areas. By working through the SRF, schools are able to identify where they are now, set out targets and establish an action plan to make improvements. Now adopted by schools in all local authority areas, the framework is not about having the latest equipment or top of the range software. It is about making the most of what schools have, and planning the next stage effectively. Importantly, the framework is flexible so it allows schools to use it in a way which suits them and their overall objectives and targets. In many areas it complements the work schools already do for Ofsted's Self-Evaluation Form.

Becta is very keen to work with colleagues in local authorities to support the adoption of the SRF to ensure that technology is harnessed to support learners and schools.

<http://www.becta.org.uk/schools/selfreview>

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## ● LSCBs and e-safety – the issues considered

Following on from the Green Paper Every Child Matters and the provisions of the Children Act 2004, Working Together to Safeguard Children sets out how organisations and individuals should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Each local authority has established a Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) as 'the key statutory mechanism for agreeing how the relevant organisations in each local area will cooperate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and for ensuring the effectiveness of what they do'.

Working Together further defines the role of LSCBs as follows:

- 3.3** The work of LSCBs is part of the wider context of children's trust arrangements that aim to improve the overall wellbeing (i.e. the five Every Child Matters outcomes) of all children in the local area.
- 3.4** While the work of LSCBs contributes to the wider goals of improving the wellbeing of all children, it has a particular focus on aspects of the 'staying safe' outcome.

It is here that the context for e-safety emerges. Although undoubtedly these aims were written with the 'real world' in mind, many equally apply to the 'virtual world' that children and young people will encounter whenever they use ICT in its various forms. For example, we know that the internet has been used for grooming children and young people with the ultimate aim of exploiting them sexually; we know that ICT can offer new weapons for bullies, who may torment their victims via websites or text messages; and we know that children and young people have been exposed to inappropriate content when online, which can sometimes lead to their involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour.

To ignore e-safety issues when implementing statutory guidance could ultimately lead to significant gaps in child protection policies, leaving children and young people vulnerable.

Additionally, non-statutory practice guidance issued in Working Together to safeguard children includes a section on child abuse and ICT (paragraphs 11.58–11.62). It states:

- 11.62** As part of their role in preventing abuse and neglect, LSCBs should consider activities to raise awareness about the safe use of the internet. LSCBs are a key partner in the development and delivery of training and education programmes, with the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP). This includes building on the work of Becta, the Home Office and the ICT industry in raising awareness about the safe use of interactive communication technologies by children.

This clearly sets the context for why LSCBs must be concerned with e-safety. To support LSCBs Becta has published 'Safeguarding Children Online', a checklist of recommendations, activities and linked resources. If your authority would like further advice and guidance on implementing the recommendations, please contact Ruth Hammond at Becta [ruth.hammond@becta.org.uk](mailto:ruth.hammond@becta.org.uk).

## ● Every Child Matters: strategic leadership

As an outcome of the Every Child Matters agenda, all local authorities must keep information about each child or young person who is receiving education, health or social care. Maintaining systems that have a whole view of the child is a key challenge, especially if schools are using learning platform technologies that hold pupil information but do not interoperate with other systems. To meet this challenge, local authorities are evolving ICT systems and processes that enable the sharing and integration of information with schools, including:

- the ownership of information held on children
- authentication of users of information held on children
- authorisation of professionals to change information held on children
- the interoperability of systems
- the need for central systems to be more accurate.

Alongside these strategic priorities, the Government's e-Strategy has set requirements for the implementation of learning technologies. For example, local authorities need to provide 'pupils in every school with access to an online personalised learning space that has the potential to support e-portfolios' and must 'ensure availability of a learning platform with (at least) basic functionality to all their schools' by spring 2008. And, by 2010 every school should have 'integrated learning and management systems'. Additionally, schools are advised to 'think strategically' about learning platform provision, and to 'consult their LA and/or RBC about the services needed'. To ensure that these priorities are met, local authorities need to build capacity to support their schools and services.

## ● Personalising learning

The national agenda of personalising learning identifies ICT as having a key role to play. The recent 'Teaching and Learning in 2020', Gilbert report highlights this: 'technologies influence what, how and why children learn'. The move towards a personalised learning experience delivered through learning platforms will result in:

- broadening the range of learning material children are able to access, either guided by a teacher or as part of self-directed learning
- enabling quick interactive assessments, for example, using 'voting' technology
- promoting development of a broad range of knowledge, skills and understanding in new contexts and with virtual access to experts
- facilitating collaboration with peers (in the same school and in other schools)
- increasing the variety of learning resources, software and communication tools through new media
- helping schools to use a wider range of readily available resources and software to enhance learning, including making software available to children to use at home.

Supporting learning platform developments, home access and learning (through initiatives such as Computers for Pupils), good use of data, e-safety, improving standards and Building Schools for the Future will require strategic leadership from local authorities. This prompts an immediate question: do all local authorities have the capacity to do this?

- Does your Local Authority have the capacity to enable these developments to become reality?
- How is strategic leadership and professional support for ICT being organised?

Both of the above will be issues addressed by the new Information Systems and Technologies Policy Committee established by the newly formed Association of Directors of Children's Services. For more information contact the ADCS office on 0161 275 8812 or go to

[www.adcs.org.uk](http://www.adcs.org.uk)

## ● DQIs for Building Design and ICT

The Design Quality Indicator (DQI) for Schools is a tool which provides a framework for the assessment of school design. It is used to assist teachers, parents, school governors, pupils, people from the community, local authority clients and building professionals achieve design excellence in new or refurbished school buildings and grounds. The DQI for Schools can be used by both primary and secondary schools and should be used throughout the life of the project. It has four distinct stages, from the design brief through to in-use feedback.

Now, Becta and Partnerships for Schools, together with the Construction Industry Council, have developed a similar concept for ICT within a school. The ICT QI (ICT Quality Indicator) is based around the broad concept of the building DQI to achieve synergy and broader understanding of the design process. The ICT QI is organised around three main headings:

- Build Quality
- Functionality
- Impact.

Arranged against these headings are core elements of ICT within a school. Linked to these elements are aspects and subjective statements that are deliberately subjective in order to enable the debate to flow and a design blueprint to be developed. The statements are organised around a FAVE rating: F – fundamental ('My bottom line!'), AV – Added Value ('This is important to me, so I want this') and E – Exceptional ('This is so important I am willing to go that extra mile to achieve this').

The statements will form a toolkit for trained facilitators to use when working with key stakeholder groups in the school design phase. As with the building DQIs, the design aspirations that emerge from this process will enable schools to procure, design and build, and assess the effectiveness of the ICT design within their school.

The ICT QI process is designed to operate on two levels – both LA and school level. LAs may wish to include the ICT Quality Indicator process for any new build or refurbished schools, and to support schools reviewing their ICT provision.

You can find out about the School Building DQI process by visiting <http://www.dqi.org.uk/schools/default.htm>.

## ● **Harnessing Technology – A new level of partnership**

Becta is responsible for the delivery of the e-strategy and the event 'Delivering the future for Learners: Harnessing Technology' held in November 2006 provided an opportunity to establish where we are with this agenda, to share achievements, identify areas for closer working and partnership and to commit to future action. Key partners from across all sectors of education met to plan how to work together. Our challenge is to work together to ensure that technology makes a real contribution to learning and teaching and strengthens continuity and progression between the sectors.

In addressing 'Every Child Matters' opportunities exist to align services, and establish data standards that will help to ensure that information for learning, teaching and self-assessment is more easily accessed and used by learners and the workforce. The challenge is to ensure that education and children's services can work together to find better ways of using technology to support the learning and well being of every child and young person.

This event helped to highlight current practice in the education system and through working with our partners we will begin to identify movement towards making the best use of technology for learners. An outcome of the conference is the report 'Delivering the future for learners: harnessing technology' and refers to a delivery plan that co-ordinates actions and gives an overview of what all sectors are doing. Key outcomes from the conference were the creation of two groups: National Strategy Group and National Delivery Group that would support the delivery plan.

The National Strategy Group will provide Becta with advice and guidance, and the National Delivery Group will act as change agents for ensuring that local partnerships recognise the opportunities Harnessing Technology can offer and that they take account of the work in other sectors in their planning. In this way we will develop a means of providing services for learners which are not compartmentalised by sector or organisation and which give a view of life-long learning as spanning schools, HE, FE, work-based learning and all other learning opportunities as a continuum.

Other actions being taken to support and co-ordinate the work of partners are:

- the secondment of key sector leaders as a resource to champion system reform in the context of Harnessing Technology
- activities and events to support sharing practice and building local networks for effective Harnessing of Technology for learners
- a phased evaluation to gauge the impact of this and other events
- key contacts within Becta are working directly with partner organisations to support their strategic and operational delivery of the e-strategy.

ADCS, and formerly ConfEd, provided advice and support for the conference as well as contributing to the above developments, will continue to address them through the work of the new Information Systems and Technologies Policy Committee.

## ● Strategic Technologies

Government funding for developing and improving the National Digital Infrastructure for schools (Standards Fund Grant 121) will enable local authorities to transform learning and teaching through the effective use of technology and continue to improve the overall infrastructure for their schools. The idea is that this funding will ensure that ICT is embedded within an institution, and provide local authorities and institutions with a combined spending power to give schools best value for money. The procurement of these regional or multi-authority competitions will be achieved using collaborative arrangements through the Regional Broadband Consortia and Becta's national framework agreements.

### **New frameworks for purchasing and interoperability**

Becta's Infrastructure Services Framework is an EU-compliant framework which enables schools to run mini competitions between suppliers who have already gone through a tendering process. This framework will allow schools to buy high quality, appropriate and affordable ICT services; comply with EU regulations on purchasing; achieve value for money through aggregating purchases with other schools; and develop reliable and coherent ICT in line with national strategies. Another new framework, the Learning Services EU Procurement framework covers the management, provision and availability of learning content. A Becta consultation on Functional Requirements for Information Management (MIS) closed at the end of September. The specifications, which are supplier-independent, will ensure interoperability of data transfer at local, regional and national levels. These specifications will make it easier for schools to exchange information with their local authorities and with each other. In the longer term, Becta's interoperability specifications will eventually be adopted by suppliers and incorporated into their services to ensure seamless exchange of data. This work also forms part of the Schools Interoperability Framework Association (SIFA), where Becta is exploring the viability of adopting a standard for interoperability. A pilot scheme with a local authority and its suppliers for MIS and learning platform solutions is currently taking place. This work plays a key role towards the next stage of development in linking schools, colleges, local authorities, government and communities together.

Further information and support on purchasing through the Becta frameworks can be found by registering at <http://www.becta.org.uk/schools/procurement>.

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