

# Home Access Frequently asked questions

For local authorities

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## Home Access

### 1 What is Home Access?

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. The programme was developed out of the recognition that there are still a significant number of learners who lack access to a computer and the internet at home. Additional support for learners with assistive technology needs will be provided so that all children are able to benefit from the programme.

Following on from a successful pilot of the programme in Oldham and Suffolk local authorities, Home Access will be rolled out across England from December 2009. The programme aims to provide funding to over 270,000 households by March 2011. Please see [www.becta.org.uk/homeaccess](http://www.becta.org.uk/homeaccess) for more information.

## Eligibility

### 2 Who is eligible for a Home Access Grant?

Those eligible are 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 also be required to provide some additional evidence to prove receipt of the above benefits. This will be detailed on the application form.

## Packages / suppliers

### 3 What kind of equipment and connectivity packages will be on offer?

Becta has set the minimum requirements for Home Access packages. Packages comprise a computer, internet connection and support; requirements were gathered in consultation with industry and schools. The specifications are available at: <http://industry.becta.org.uk/display.cfm?resID=40449&page=1629&catID=1885>

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Grants should cover the cost of a basic package so there is no need for customers to spend their own money if they do not wish to. It is likely that approved suppliers will offer some packages for more than the Home Access Grant value, and families will be able to purchase upgrades with their own funds if they wish.

As Home Access has recently selected its first provisionally approved suppliers, detail of the specific packages or additional upgrade options will be available in the near future.

Details of the first provisionally approved suppliers can be found at:

<http://news.becta.org.uk/display.cfm?resID=41226&page=1658&catID=1633>

#### 4 How will the application process work?

In October, Capita was chosen to provide the grant administration services for the Home Access programme. Further details of the application will be released as they become available, but at a high level eligible families request an application form and, once complete, return it for processing. If their application is successful then they will receive a single use payment card and PIN number which can be used to buy a compliant computer and internet package from an approved supplier. Applicants will be provided with details of the approved suppliers with their award letter.

#### 5 Assistive technology

##### What options are there for different abilities, skills and necessary adaptations?

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 will come pre-loaded with a suite of assistive technology software. This has benefits not only for learners with additional needs, but for other family members too, for example those for whom English is a second language. This software 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 a specially designed mouse, 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.

#### 6 Local authority support and engagement

##### What is the time commitment from local authorities to deliver the Home Access programme?

Local authority support is desired as it has been shown that authority involvement can greatly add to the success of the programme. However, it will not be a requirement for local authorities to promote Home Access to customers. Instead it will be up to each local authority to decide the amount of resources to invest in the programme to ensure its citizens get the most of the programme.

Home Access can be beneficial to local authorities in a number of ways. For example, local authorities can benefit from the programme through an increased ability to deal online with Home Access Grant recipients, lowering the costs of service delivery. Local authorities can also make use of the Home Access national indicator map, which highlights to authorities the areas in which Home Access can help them to reach their national indicator targets.

#### 7 Is there a local authority quota and timescale for applications?

There are no local authority allocations and Home Access Grants will be available right across England until the programme ends. However, the geographical distribution of grants will be closely monitored at all stages, to help ensure balanced national coverage.

#### 8 Looked After Children

##### How will Looked After Children be supported by Home Access?

For national rollout of the Home Access programme, Looked After Children will be catered for by the main Home Access programme. However, it is important to note that Looked After Children who are deemed to have a Home Access need can be in years 1 to 13 inclusive, as opposed to years 3 to 9 for the main programme. Grants will be issued to the foster family and they will then use this to buy a Home Access package from an approved supplier.

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## 9 How does the Looked After Child make an application?

Importantly for local authorities, it is planned that they will identify a need and make an application on the learner's behalf at key review points in the Careplan and Pathway Plan reviews. This application should then be endorsed and verified by the relevant professionals – usually the designated social worker. 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.

Looked After Children who live in local authority maintained accommodation will not be eligible for the programme. Becta expect that appropriate facilities should already be in place.

Detailed guidance on this area will be made available later in November 2009. This will be sent to the Looked After Children Education Services (LACES) teams in authorities and be available for download from [www.becta.org.uk/homeaccess](http://www.becta.org.uk/homeaccess).

## 10 Who owns the package?

The Home Access package will remain the property of the foster household, except if the Looked After Child is over 16 years old or has received enhanced assistive technology which has been tailored specifically to the learner's needs. In both cases the package should remain with the learner if they move on.

In exceptional circumstances it may be decided that the learner would be disadvantaged if the package did not move with them when they leave the carer's home. If any exceptional circumstances arise where it is decided that it would be appropriate for the package to stay with the learner, the applicant must notify the supplier of these changes. This will ensure a continuity of service of the warranty and service for the package.

## Aggregation

### How does aggregation work?

In short, families can choose to participate in a local aggregation scheme and their local authority or school then pools the grants together to make a bulk purchase on their behalf. It is always optional for households to participate in aggregation. Some families will choose to make a purchase directly from an approved supplier.

The aggregated operating model and the workings of an aggregation scheme are set out in the local authority rules and guidelines provided to local authorities expressing an interest. Further information will be made available to local authorities who are successful in their application to run an aggregation scheme.

### When will schools be given the opportunity to aggregate?

The schools aggregation pack will be available on request from 1 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 28 February 2010. 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.

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 when building wider programmes to include those ineligible for Home Access grants. More information on school level and individual support grants is available from [www.elearningfoundation.com](http://www.elearningfoundation.com). Becta will be communicating more information on this opportunity to schools. However, local authorities can make their schools aware as well.

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