

The Home Access programme: information for Sencos



Home access provides opportunities for pupils to develop study skills and work more independently, for a more inclusive and personalised curriculum and for parents to get more involved in their child's learning.

Why is home access important?

'Home access' means access to technology and connectivity at home. Evidence produced by the Institute of Fiscal Studies shows that children with home access to a computer are more confident and capable technology users and more independent learners overall. It also suggests that learners using a computer at home for schoolwork are more likely to improve the grades attained.

Home access can also help to increase parental awareness, interest and engagement with their child's learning, with schools able to update them on their child's progress more easily via online reporting. Increased levels of home access can also support school priorities for improvement planning and help build a bank of evidence to support their self evaluation form (SEF).

What is the Home Access programme?

The Home Access programme is the government scheme to reduce the technology gap between varying income groups that leaves some children at a disadvantage in their education.

Low-income families in England who meet set eligibility criteria can now apply for a Home Access Grant to buy a computer and internet package to support their learning at home. The programme will benefit more than 270,000 households who currently lack access by March 2011.

Assistive Technology software

Assistive Technology is part of every Home Access package and represents a fantastic solution to many learner's and family needs. Preinstalled programs include:

- TextHelp Read & Write providing support for learners with literacy difficulties with features such as text to speech, word prediction, powerful spell checking, a speaking dictionary and homophone checking.
- I-Zoom – helping learners who struggle

with visual access to the computer by providing screen magnification

- Mindview – helping learners to plan their work and organise their thoughts with mind mapping.

Eligible families with children who have additional Assistive Technology requirements can also apply for specialist hardware to help overcome some of the obstacles they experience using ICT and getting online. Depending on the needs of the individual, two different packages are available.

Assistive Technology package 1

This is designed for children who experience physical barriers to using a computer or getting online and includes alternative keyboards, adapted mice and keyboard stickers. Families applying for a grant are asked if their child has difficulty using a mouse or keyboard to help determine if the package is suitable.



"So often children with the most profound needs get thought about as an after-thought and an add-on. But with Home Access they are at the heart of it."

Kay, AEN Leader

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Assistive Technology package 2

This delivers individualised Assistive Technology provision for learners with more profound needs. Such learners will undergo an evaluation, from which a solution will be identified, agreed and then provided to meet their individual needs. As part of their application families are asked to provide supporting documentation, which might be a Statement of Special Educational Needs or proof that they receive a Disability Living Allowance for the child.

Alternatively, they can ask their school Senco or local authority to complete a section of the application form outlining the child's needs and their difficulties using a standard computer. Assistive Technology package 2 will be available from Summer 2010. To learn more about Assistive Technology, visit the Home Access collaboration space at: <http://collaboration.becta.org.uk/community/homeaccess>

Looked After Children

Recognising the importance of supporting Looked After Children, a

bespoke process has been developed by Becta, the DCSF and several Looked After Children Education Services (LACES) teams across the country.

The local authority makes an application on behalf of the learner and in most instances Home Access Grants will be issued to the foster carer for them to buy the package from an approved supplier as in the main programme. More information about Looked After Children is available from the Home Access collaboration space at: <http://collaboration.becta.org.uk/community/homeaccess>

How can Sencos get involved?

The Home Access programme can support the work of Sencos and you can play an important role in helping to deliver the benefits by:

- supporting families with their application for a Home Access Grant, especially where assistive technology packages may be required
- promoting the use of the school learning platform to provide parents with up-to-date information on their child's progress, attainment,

attendance and behaviour

- gathering accurate and up-to-date knowledge of the levels of home access, particularly amongst the pupils you support, and looking at ways to work towards access for all
- considering how to extend the school beyond the school day to provide a range of services and activities to pupils and their families via the learning platform
- promoting the use of home access across the school to address individual learning needs and support a more personalised curriculum
- being on hand to support the evaluation process for package 2 applications – this may involve answering questions about your student's needs and how technology might support them
- advocating the use of assistive technology across the school.



"Knowing that my whole class all have the same technology at home, I know that they have got all the same opportunities to reach their potential using technology."

Kimberley, teacher, special needs school

-  Home Access Grant helpline
Call: 0333 200 1004*
-  Minicom: 0121 748 1471
-  Support the programme
www.homeaccess.org.uk
-  Realise the benefits
www.becta.org.uk/homeaccess

*Calls may be monitored or recorded to maintain high levels of security and quality of service. Calls to this number cost no more than a call to a 01 or 02 number and count towards inclusive minutes in the same way as 01 and 02 calls. These rules apply to calls from any type of line including mobile, BT, other fixed line or payphone.