

Aggregation opportunities in the Home Access programme

HOME ACCESS

NEXT GENERATION LEARNING

The Ministerial Taskforce on Home Access recommended that there should be a mechanism to enable local authorities, and schools, take a more pro-active role in the programme and have the opportunity to run an aggregation scheme. The approach to aggregation allows local authorities and schools to act as an agent for their parents and manage the ordering of Home Access packages on their behalf. In areas where local authorities do not run an aggregation scheme schools will be able to apply to run one themselves.

How does aggregation work?

If an aggregation scheme is available to them, parents choose whether to take part or to use their grant individually with an approved supplier. Local authorities and schools who run an aggregation scheme are responsible for promotion of the scheme and then the subsequent ordering of packages on their families' behalf. They can only order from the approved suppliers who have expressed their desire to take part in supplying aggregation schemes.

Families who wish to participate in their local aggregation scheme will still complete the standard application form which will contain a space for them to indicate that they wish to participate and enter the relevant aggregation scheme number. If this is not completed then their application will be processed as a normal application and they will be issued with an individual grant.

Local authorities or schools running an aggregation scheme will then be notified on a monthly basis about the number of grants which have been awarded under

the programme and issued with funds to order packages on their behalf.

Group ordering can deliver the following benefits for schools and local authorities:

- providing a choice of packages that will work best with systems such as individual school learning platforms
- managing the order will save families time and potential confusion
- help for families with completing the application form
- schools and councils will be able to help applicants better understand the programme and provide advice on how to use the equipment effectively if they are successful.

There are some drawbacks to aggregation however; for example, it may take longer for families to receive their package.

Local authority aggregation

In July 2009, Diana Johnson, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools, wrote to all Directors of Children's Services to inform them about the Home Access programme, and invited them to consider whether or not they wished to run a local authority aggregation scheme. Following this Durham, Hull and Shropshire have all been confirmed as running local authority wide aggregation schemes.

School and Academy aggregation

Schools that are not in aggregating local authorities can request an aggregation pack from 1 December 2009. They will need to be affiliated with the e-Learning Foundation in order to apply.

This arrangement offers a number of benefits to schools. Firstly, Becta and the e-Learning Foundation have been working in close partnership to ensure that, through their association with the Foundation, schools have the opportunity to combine Home Access Grants with wider parental contribution schemes. This will help support those families who are ineligible for a Home Access Grant. The e-Learning Foundation has access to additional funds for schools and can provide additional advice and support.

Due to their independent status, academies can choose whether to run their own scheme or support their local authority scheme if one is available in their area.

Should a school choose not to run an aggregation scheme, families in their area will not miss out on this opportunity. Home Access Grants will still be available for individual families to apply for personally, so while aggregation is one option for schools, there are other ways for schools to improve family access to technology at home and to get involved in the Home Access programme.

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.