

DECISION-MAKER:	CABINET		
SUBJECT:	HOME ACCESS TO ICT		
DATE OF DECISION:	29 JUNE 2009		
REPORT OF:	CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES		
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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

None

SUMMARY

The Home Access to ICT (Information and Communications Technology) programme has been established to provide computers and connectivity to families at home in order to enhance learning and to bridge the 'Digital Divide'. The initial phase of the programme will target vulnerable groups of learners and will benefit upto 180 Looked After Children/ Care Leavers. This decision will have a significant impact on those young people many of whom are both socially and digitally excluded.

The Local Authority's bid for £135,000 which is to be allocated to harness the programme has been approved by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and Becta (British Educational Communications and Technology Agency. Becta's objectives are to influence strategic direction and development of national education policy to best take advantage of technology and to develop a national digital infrastructure and resources strategy leading to greater national coherence).

This report seeks approval and acceptance of the Home Access to ICT initiative within the Capital Programme.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Having had regard to the provisions of the Community Strategy:

- (i) To accept the Home Access to ICT grant of £135,000 sourced from the DCSF/ Becta.
- (ii) To add in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules an additional sum of £135,000 to the Children's Services Capital Programme for the Home Access to ICT initiative.
- (iii) To approve in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules capital expenditure in the sum of £135,000 from the Children's Services Capital Programme for the Home Access to ICT initiative.
- (iv) To delegate authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services and Learning to do anything necessary to give effect to the recommendations in this report.

REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To enable and provide financial support to the proposed implementation of the Home Access to ICT initiative.
2. To ultimately ensure that 180 Looked After Children/ Care Leavers have access to an ICT provision within the home.
3. To empower vulnerable groups of learners with access to technology throughout their educational development.

CONSULTATION

4. The initiative has been developed in close consultation with Southampton City Council's Looked After Children and Foster Care Teams. These consultations have been established in order to obtain the detailed ICT requirements of individual learners. These requirements are to be assessed against existing ICT provision in the child's home. Further consultation will take place with the Standards and School Improvement team to ensure that the learning benefits of the investment is optimised. Becta will continue to provide guidance and consultation as an external body throughout the lifecycle of the programme.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

5. Not to accept the funding or provide home access to ICT. This has been rejected because across the UK there have been numerous educational studies which have closely assessed the positive impact that ICT has on learners. From these studies evidence has revealed that;
 - Learners have an increased level of achievement.
 - Learners have an increased level of motivation.Parental engagement has been improved thus raising attainment.
6. The failure to utilise available funding which has been sourced via a successful external bid will be detrimental to learners. This will therefore result in the loss of an invaluable ICT resource which has been set aside for vulnerable groups of children.

DETAIL

7. The Home Access Taskforce has established that approximately 1.4 million learners are without internet access at home, and over 1 million further learners are unable to access a computer at home. The Home Access to ICT programme will provide computers and connectivity to families at home, enhancing learning, pupil and parent engagement, attainment/ achievement and help to bridge the 'Digital Divide'.
8. The Home Access to ICT programme outlines a strategy which will challenge social and digital exclusion, contributing towards the Community Strategy plan.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Capital

9. Delivery of the Home Access to ICT programme will be solely funded by capital grants devolved from the DCSF and Becta. Southampton City Council will utilise the current grant of £135,000 to provide hardware and internet

connectivity to 180 Looked After Children/ Care Leavers.

10. The Home Access to ICT grant of £135,000 will provide the following technology for learners;

Hardware Solution(s)	Connectivity Solution(s)
180 x Desktop PCs <i>Or</i> 180 x Laptop PCs <i>Or</i> 180 x Ultra Mobile PC Devices	Static broadband internet connectivity for the homes of learners. <i>Or</i> Mobile Internet connectivity for learners.

11. As Home Access to ICT is a rolling programme it is understood that the DCSF and Becta are to announce future phases which are to be supported by additional grants.

Revenue

12. Ongoing ICT support and internet connectivity services are to be funded via the Home Access to ICT grant.

Property

13. None

Other

14. None

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:

15. Section 2 Local Government Act 2000 permits the Council to do anything likely to improve the economic, social or environmental well-being of the area, having first had regard to the Community Strategy. It is considered that the matters set out in this report will improve the social well-being of looked after children and care leavers.

Other Legal Implications:

16. None

POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS

17. The Home Access to ICT programme will contribute towards the aims of:
- Children's and Young Peoples Strategic Plan by empowering learners with technology and enhancing family learning and by raising achievement, motivation and attainment in learners.
 - Community Strategy by bridging the digital divide and reducing both social and digital exclusion for vulnerable groups of learners.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices

1.	None
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Documents In Members' Rooms

1.	None
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Background Documents

Title of Background Paper(s)

Relevant Paragraph of the
Access to Information
Procedure Rules / Schedule
12A allowing document to be
Exempt/Confidential (if
applicable)

1.	None	
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FORWARD PLAN No: CS03517 **KEY DECISION** YES

WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	ALL
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