



“Home Access aims to provide practical and financial support to low-income families who may not be able to afford a computer or the internet. We will support these families to ensure that the educational and social benefits of 21st Century technology are available to them”

Diana Johnson, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools

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. Evidence shows that Home Access can engage and motivate learners and support parental engagement. More recent evidence has suggested that learners who use a computer at home for schoolwork are more likely to gain over 5 GCSEs and 1 A-Level, and improve grades attained.

Following on from a successful pilot in Oldham and Suffolk the Home Access Scheme begins its phased roll out across England from December 2009. Initially the programme will target learners in years 3 to 9 inclusive. The scheme aims to benefit more than 270,000 households nationally by March 2011 including over 2,500 in Surrey. Surrey has a notional grant allocation of £1,440,000.

There is no direct funding allocated for the administration or promotion of the scheme. Local authorities will need to look to existing structures to coordinate this work. Surrey's 23 confederations already represent a well established means by which extended services can be coordinated and developed collaboratively. The confederations will form a conduit for the scheme by marketing to schools and families, while signposting to specialist partners and local providers of services to enhance the offer for families.

Home Access Packages

Home Access packages are available for purchase by all families and one of the key innovations of the Home Access Scheme is the choice of equipment and supplier. Furthermore families who meet the set eligibility criteria can apply to Capita, the managing agent, for a Home Access Grant to cover the full cost of the package.

This will enable the purchase of a compliant computer and internet package from a range of approved suppliers including well know High Street names.

Home Access has been designed with a family's needs in mind. Packages include as standard:

- One year's service and support
- Pre-set parental controls
- Installed office productivity suite
- Firewall and an anti-virus package
- Award winning e-safety guide 'Know IT All for Parents'
- Enhanced warranty and reinstatement service in the event of theft
- Educational guidance

Online support includes the BECTA Home Access website to help ensure families realise the benefits of the scheme. Provision will also be enhanced locally via the confederations.

It is recognised that some learners will require additional support. All Home Access packages come pre-loaded with a suite of assistive technology software that may benefit learners and their families. Those with more complex needs can also have their package upgraded to ensure those needs are met.

A Partnership Approach

Surrey has a team of local authority specialists and other key providers working collaboratively to maximise the potential of the Home Access Scheme. Representatives of these have come together to form a steering group in order to effectively promote the initiative. Low income families, including those from minority groups, will be able to get specialist support to apply for a Home Access Grant. Each partner will lend their expertise to confederations enabling coordinated, targeted assistance for the most vulnerable families.

Home School Link Workers and other specialist family support workers can assist with not only access to the scheme but by signposting to ongoing support. This way of working will ensure that groups of young people such as children in care, children out of school or travellers will also be fully able to benefit from the scheme.

Monitoring and Evaluation

An independent evaluation of the programme has been commissioned from SQW Consulting and will be conducted nationally, between 2009 – 2011. In Surrey each of the 23 confederations has a locally agreed action plan which links individual school improvement plans, local area plans, the Surrey Children and Young People's Plan and other national indicators. The Surrey Home Access steering group will collate local evidence of the impact of the scheme to engage low income and minority group families in learning.

For further details please contact:

michelle.blackman@surreycc.gov.uk
Chair, Surrey Home Access Steering Group or
debbie.dart@vtplc.com
VT Group, Extended Services
Consultant

Case study

Rebecca is a single mum and lives in Failsworth, Oldham with Evan who is ten years old.

“The Home Access scheme has made a big difference to us because it means we have got access to the internet when we need it, not just when we can get it at the library. I used to be worried about Evan getting left behind. It's been a big change because I can just look up jobs or apply to different courses and just do lots of things I I wouldn't have been able to do”

“Every child and young person will be safe, healthy, creative, and have the personal confidence, skills and opportunities to contribute and achieve more than they thought possible”