CORPORATE PLAN

1999-2002

6 May 1999

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INTRODUCTION

MINISTER'S LETTER

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communications technology (ICT) is essential to education. Research shows that ICT can improve subject learning, develop independent learning and research skills, strengthen communication skills and enhance learners' motivation. It is opening up opportunities previously denied to some learners and teachers in isolated or deprived environments. ICT is more than just a teaching tool. It can also reduce the time-consuming administrative burdens on teachers and enhance their training and professional development.

Photograph

The development of ICT is a key goal in its own right contributing to a modern education system. ICT can also support the government's strategy to raise standards and increase the level and quality of inclusive education. As a vital part of this, the National Grid for Learning (NGfL) will revolutionise the world of education, enabling teachers to exchange ideas with one another, offering the latest quality educational resources and professional development materials. As the government agency for ICT and education, Becta's role is central to underpin government initiatives. We will work across the education community to ensure that our educational institutions are getting the best and delivering the best that ICT has to offer, and it is timely for us to consider how we can ensure that good ICT practice reaches all teachers and all learners.

The role of Becta in the wider educational context

Becta's expertise is best deployed by working in partnership with those who are specialists in their areas. Over the next three years, Becta will strengthen such partnerships. We will continue to work with government departments and agencies, Local Education Authorities (LEAs), the commercial sector, professional associations, subject specialists and researchers to gather and disseminate evidence. Becta will work to bring together the commercial and educational sectors to advance the development of new materials and we will work with them to improve the quality and range of these products. We will also collaborate to explore new models of good practice and help inform LEAs' strategic thinking

The need for 'joined up developments'

Heather Du Quesnay, CBE

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Becta's first three-year Corporate Plan.

The role of information and communications technology (ICT) in education has reached a watershed. The government has generated a new and pragmatic vision for the future use of ICT in education. This vision is clearly exemplified through the NGfL which links ICT infrastructure, content and practice into a coherent framework. The NGfL is an extraordinary challenge to us all to generate the educational opportunities that will improve standards within our schools and colleges.

However, ICT has not always delivered its promise of instant success. Recent reports indicate a degree of under-achievement. For many complex reasons, schools and colleges have not always been able to develop sustainable ICT infrastructures of practice and resource that bring about change in educational standards.

The challenge over the next three years is to ensure success and to prove that ICT is educationally indispensable, because of what it offers our teachers and learners, and that it is sustainable financially.

As the lead government agency for ICT and education, we will do our job in supporting the government's initiatives. We will also work to connect these initiatives with the needs of the educational institutions, teachers and learners across the system. Becta is in a unique position. Whilst we are a relatively small organisation, we are able to look across the field of educational and ICT developments.

The government has set out its vision as a challenge. It is a challenge to the learner, to those providing education and lifelong learning services, and to the industry. All of us must meet this challenge.

Over the next three years, our efforts will concentrate on ensuring that technology supports closely the government's efforts to drive up standards in core curriculum subjects, in the teaching of key skills, in institutional effectiveness, and more widely in the development of lifelong learning. We have a contribution to make to our society in the 21st Century, by ensuring that all young people leave education with the information and communication technology skills needed to meet the challenges of the Information Age.

Owen Lynch

Becta's first year

Meeting expectations

Becta's unique role

The next three years

BECTA'S PURPOSE AND STATUS

Becta exists to further the use of information and communications technology (ICT) to raise educational standards and to improve the effectiveness of educational professionals and institutions.

It is a controlled, executive, Non Departmental, Public Body, serving the needs of the UK as a whole. It is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status.

Becta is the government's lead agency for ICT in education and is charged with developing the National Grid for Learning (NGfL).

The remit of the organisation is to work closely with government departments and agencies, and the wider community to provide the advice and support needed to assist the government in meeting its objectives of

- ensuring that technology supports closely the government's efforts to drive up standards in core curriculum subjects, in the teaching of key skills, in school effectiveness, and more widely in the development of lifelong learning;

- ensuring that young people leave school and college with the information and communication technology skills that they will need for the 21st Century;

- and in both of these areas ensuring that the requirements of people with special educational needs are addressed.

This work has three interrelated components:

Infrastructure - the hardware, networks and services that provide the backbone to the NGfL and wider use of ICT

Content - the software, databases, information and other services available through the NGfL and elsewhere

Practice - how people and organisations use the Infrastructure and the Content.

Margin notes: Standards and Effectiveness · Lead Agency · Remit · Three areas

AIMS

To meet its purpose and remit, Becta has four aims:

Aim 1

To develop and implement a quality framework of ICT infrastructure and provide advice which helps improve provision and accessibility.

Margin note: Infrastructure

Aim 2

To foster the development and organisation of suitable educational ICT content in order to improve its scope, accessibility and quality for educational users.

Margin note: Content

Aim 3

To identify, develop and promote effective practice in the curriculum and management use of ICT.

Margin note: Practice

Aim 4

To be an effective and communicative organisation, evaluating its own performance, anticipating developments and being responsive to the changing needs of the education system.

Margin note: Organisation

BECTA'S WAYS OF WORKING AND VALUES

To carry out its remit, Becta will work in specific ways.

In particular, it will work in partnership with government departments and agencies, LEAs and other bodies, providing them with advice based on accurate evidence and professional judgement. Becta recognises that ICT supports many aspects of education and it is important that our work assists other national agencies and initiatives aimed at improving standards.

Government

Becta's remit is to serve the needs of the UK as a whole and it will ensure that England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland all benefit individually from its work as well as benefiting from the collective sharing of information and expertise. Becta's work covers all sectors, particularly schools, FE colleges and libraries, and as community grids for learning develop, the wider community.

Across the United Kingdom

Becta's expertise is best deployed by working in partnership with those who are specialists in their areas and Becta will seek such partnerships where appropriate. Advice about the use of ICT is best disseminated through existing networks or initiatives. Becta will establish close working relationships with LEAs, professional associations and others to achieve its remit. Becta recognises that much of the drive and momentum for ICT development will come from the commercial sector. It will work with commercial organisations to improve the quality and range of products.

Partnership

Becta will ensure that all of its work aims towards a more inclusive approach to ICT in education, wherever possible decreasing the gap between those who do not have access to ICT and those who do. In particular, it will pay specific attention to the benefits of the effective use of ICT for learners with special educational needs, the disadvantaged and the disaffected and ensure that this is embedded in all of its work.

Inclusion

Technology necessitates a global viewpoint. The UK is one of the leading countries in educational ICT, but it can still learn from what others are doing. Great educational benefit can come from learners and teachers communicating and collaborating with their peers overseas.

International

Becta will ensure that its advice to government is based on accurate evidence by carrying out monitoring activities where appropriate, and by maintaining an up-to-date picture of the use of ICT in the UK and elsewhere. It will also look to future developments, both in technology and in educational practice to inform this advice.

Monitoring

Where necessary, Becta will evaluate new and emerging technologies as they apply to education, and assess their usefulness to schools and colleges. It will also evaluate new ways of using the more established technologies and assess their effectiveness in raising standards. Having carried out evaluations, Becta will report to government and others.

Evaluations

It is important that Becta's work is based on good quality evidence produced through educational research, inspection and professional judgement. Becta will liaise with the educational community to ensure that this is so and that the key research messages are communicated to policy makers and practitioners.

Evidence

Becta will communicate openly and clearly with all stakeholders and relevant target audiences.

Communication

THE THREE YEARS 1999-2002

THE GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

Becta's Corporate Plan for 1999 to 2002 is set against a backdrop of significant change and activity in the education system. Much of this change is driven by the government's agenda to improve standards and institutional effectiveness, to modernise the teaching profession, and to ensure inclusion and develop lifelong learning across sectors. The National Targets set for 2002 require a substantial improvement in the performance of the education system.	Improving standards
The government has set targets of improvement for English and Mathematics in primary schools for 2002. For England, the government has implemented National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies to support schools in their achievement of these targets. Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland have developed other approaches. Where appropriate, ICT can support this agenda. It can do this by adding to the repertoire of teaching methods of the classroom teacher, helping schools with their monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress and target achievement, providing teachers with access to relevant materials and professional dialogue through the NGfL.	Primary schools
The government has also set tough targets for GCSE results in secondary schools. Generally, Ofsted inspections report that schools vary enormously in their effectiveness even when comparing schools in similar localities and with similar pupil intakes.	Secondary schools
Effective schools are increasingly being given the freedom to manage and administer themselves. LEAs are expected to provide pressure and support where schools are less effective with school improvement strategies. The way a school is led is key to its effectiveness. Programmes for school improvement and leadership will be fundamental to the meeting of targets. ICT has an important role in supporting these areas, both for administration and as a flexible information tool for school and LEA management.	Institutional development
Government is raising the profile of study support by encouraging a greater range of activities for young people in addition to their normal classroom teaching. This includes using National Lottery money to fund out of school hours learning activities. The government has set a target of a quarter of primary schools and half of secondary schools to have established high quality programmes in this area. ICT can support this agenda both by schools providing access to ICT resources out of school hours and by allowing learners to access online resources remotely at home and elsewhere.	Out of school hours learning
The recent Green Paper, *Teachers: meeting the challenge of change* (DfEE, December 1998) provides a framework for the modernisation of the teaching profession. ICT is a key element of this modernisation. The Green Paper anticipates that ICT will make possible the effective combinations of staff and technology to raise standards and extend learning opportunities. It is expected that it will add new dimensions to lessons improving both effectiveness and presentation. ICT is also a key part of the Initial Teacher Training curriculum for teachers in the various UK countries.	Teaching
The role of the LEA is undergoing continuous evolution. The impact of Educational Development Planning and the increased pace of LEA Ofsted Inspections will focus LEAs on their priority roles. Fair Funding and the new Code of Practice for LEAs are providing a better definition of these priorities and of the relationship between the LEA and its schools. LEAs are key players in the delivery of the NGfL strategy. Their role is crucial to ensure that all schools make best use of ICT and to help develop local community grids for learning. Many LEAs are experimenting with new models of education. The Education Action Zones are placing significant emphasis on ICT as a tool to achieve their objectives. The closer relationship between education and commercial partners is a developing theme which will bring to the education system a higher expectation of the effective use of ICT.	The LEA
FE Colleges are being required to set themselves stringent targets on improving the quality of	Further education

teaching and the retention of students as well as increasing participation. Lifelong learning policy goals include developing an infrastructure capable of delivering flexible learning opportunities against a background of continual change in economic circumstance. Widening participation has become a policy priority, supported by targeted Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) funding.

and lifelong learning

CONNECTING THE LEARNING SOCIETY

In *Our Information Age*, the government provides an overarching strategy linking education with economic and social factors. It sets out five key areas: transforming education, widening access, promoting competitiveness, fostering quality and modernising government. These are interdependent. "The use of ICT can transform education, which in turn produces the skilled people who develop and apply the technologies" (*Our Information Age*, Central Office of Information, 1998).

The Information Age

In November 1998, the Prime Minister announced an investment of over £700 million expenditure on ICT for UK schools. This will form an integrated programme with £300 million already made available under the National Lottery's New Opportunities Fund (NOF) for teacher and librarian training and the digitisation of content. This investment, announced in *Open for Learning, Open for Business* (DfEE, 1998), is one of the largest committed by any government in the world, and will fund an integrated strategy aimed at developing the NGfL. The government is acting at a number of levels: financing networks and equipment to improve the infrastructure, promoting high quality content, and training teachers and librarians to improve practice.

The National Grid for Learning

The University for Industry (UfI) also has a developing role in this process. Part of its stated aims is to help deliver a learning society and to encourage lifelong learning to raise business competitiveness. As an organisation which is seeking to create a nation-wide distributed open and distance learning network, the UfI will provide a wide range of high quality learning packages which allow learners to learn where, when and how they want. Information and learning technologies (ILT) will play a key role in facilitating this learning, providing the vital infrastructure in online delivery, assessment and tracking.

University for Industry

The Public Library Network (PLN) is another element of the strategy to give the 'information have-nots' access to the benefits of education and training initiatives. The government is planning to use the NOF to back projects which will give the socially disadvantaged equal access to the new UfI and the NGfL and to develop libraries as key access points for all. These developments have three main purposes: improving standards, developing skills and ensuring a more inclusive society.

The Public Library Network

ICT offers new opportunities to improve achievement in schools and colleges and amongst lifelong learners. These range from the ability to diagnose learners' performance using the latest computer software to the ability to promote independent learning and research skills through the use of the NGfL. Also, like other organisations, schools, colleges and libraries will increasingly use ICT to administer and manage their work more effectively, reducing paperwork and bureaucracy thus freeing up teachers' time to support the raising of standards.

ICT and standards

By early in the new century new technology is expected to transform schools' and colleges' administrative systems and revolutionise their links to the outside world. Government is supporting this by ensuring that communications from its departments and agencies are delivered electronically wherever possible. Institutions will therefore need to keep their practices and approaches under review, and to develop them to address the needs of an education system for the 21st Century. Effectively used, ICT provides those who manage educational institutions with the tools to do this.

ICT and institutional development

ICT skills are a key component of most jobs. Although deploying technologies as part of the

Developing

learning process will partially help with skills development, IT as a specific area is accepted as part of learning. IT Capability is a statutory part of all the UK national curricula. It is also a core skill in GNVQ. However, Ofsted has stated in their annual report: "Information technology is the subject taught least well in primary and in secondary schools. About one-third of schools in both sectors show substantial underachievement" (*Ofsted Annual Report*, February 1999). Part of the government's agenda is to create a coherent and strategic approach to the assessment of ICT skills at the age of 16. Beyond this, the role of the UfI and the Further Education (FE) sector will be crucial in establishing ongoing skills development.	capability and skills
ICT can create opportunities for those learners who have missed out in the past. By linking the UfI, the PLN, and the NGfL, it aims to involve many more people in learning and contributing to the development of our society than has been possible before. ICT also provides new opportunities for learners with special educational needs, adding to the repertoire of teaching and learning methods and enabling new methods of communication and interaction.	Ensuring inclusion

THE UK CONTEXT

NORTHERN IRELAND

The overall Education Technology (ET) strategy is being co-ordinated by a Strategic Management Group which also has the task of implementing the strategy. It will also ensure that developments in NI are consistent with the UK-wide position including: implementing the NGfL "managed services" and ensuring that the New Opportunities Fund will be the source of finance for a major drive on ICT training for teachers and librarians.	Strategy
The Strategic Management Group is supported in its work by four other groups which focus respectively on: Teacher Education; Curriculum and Assessment; Interboard Educational Technology and the Northern Ireland Network for Education. The Interboard Education Technology Group has been set up to bring together the ELB IT Advisory Service with the leaders of the Boards' CLASS Implementation Teams.	
The Managed Services initiative in Northern Ireland is being taken forward by the CLASSROOM 2000 Project Board, (formerly the CLASS Project Board) whose remit has been extended to cover services for all schools, recognising that CLASS forms a significant part of the proposed 'managed service' provision for schools in NI.	Managed Services
Northern Ireland has developed a comprehensive training programme for its teachers to enable serving teachers to acquire the necessary foundation skills for their further training in the use of ET in the classroom. Foundation training will be funded by DENI and further training by the New Opportunities Fund over the four years from 1999 to 2002. The training is based on a competence model made up of three important aspects: personal competence in the use of specific ET tools; subject competence in the integration and use of educational technology in the teacher's main subject area of teaching; teaching competence in planning, preparing, teaching, assessing and evaluating lessons which make significant use of educational technology.	Teacher Training
NINE is the Northern Ireland "node" of the National Grid for Learning and contains material (and links to other material) that has been identified by NI teachers as specifically relevant to the programmes of study for the subjects within the NI curriculum.	NINE
Curriculum reform is expected to take place during 2000-2001, when the current NI Curriculum is reviewed. An ILT strategy for the FE sector is being finalised.	

SCOTLAND

The Scottish Office launched its strategy paper *Implementing the National Grid for Learning in Scotland* in August 1998. This set the NGfL targets in a Scottish context and explained how the NGfL would be developed in Scotland.	NGfL in Scotland
To support this strategy, the government's 1998 Comprehensive Spending Review made £62 million available to help develop the NGfL in Scottish schools between 1999 and 2002. Also, £29 million was allocated to support ICT developments in the further education sector.	Funding
A National Grid for Learning Scottish Steering Committee has been established by The Scottish Office to ensure co-ordination between the various bodies involved in developing the NGfL.	Steering Committee
Implementing the National Grid for Learning in Scotland proposed target pupil:computer ratios of 15:1 in primary schools and 5:1 in secondary schools, to be achieved by 2002. Following the 1999 Budget, an additional £20 million was provided to allow the target ratio in primary schools to be reduced to less than 8:1 by 2003.	Targets
The Scottish Virtual Teachers' Centre was launched in 1998 with the intention of becoming the preferred point of entry to the Internet and the NGfL for Scottish teachers.	Virtual Teachers' Centre
Scotland will also benefit from the New Opportunities Fund programme to train teachers and librarians in the use of ICT. Over the next three years, up to £23 million will be available in	Training

Scotland from the fund.

WALES

On May 8 1999 Wales will elect its own Assembly whose headquarters will be located in Cardiff. The Assembly will be responsible for education policy for all of Wales and will make best use of modern technology to improve its accessibility.

The Welsh Assembly

The *Building Excellent Schools Together* (BEST) White Paper sets out Wales' comprehensive strategy to raise educational achievement across the board to age 16. It recognises that the NGfL will be vital to greater deployment and more purposeful use of ICT in Wales. In particular, the GEST programme will develop ICT work on the literacy and numeracy targets and look at home learning via the Internet.

BEST White Paper

The *Learning is for Everyone* (LIFE) Green Paper takes the agenda from the end of compulsory education to the whole of a person's life. It describes a broad strategy whereby technology is to be used to make learning more accessible to all, through the NGfL and the UfI. It also describes the role and function of a bilingual Digital College for Wales.

Education strategy for lifelong learning

The Welsh Office expects LEAs to have a development plan for ICT for its schools. Through the *NGfL Innovative Projects (competitive bids) GEST Funding* , it has supported school participation in the National Grid for Learning.

GEST funding

EUROPE AND INTERNATIONAL

Whether as a result of technological, social, economic or political pressures, education in the UK will increasingly be affected by developments globally, eg:

Globalisation

- A growing number of Internet-based national educational networks and international links between schools and colleges
- European directives on copyright and electronic commerce and moves to standardise electronic educational content and promote safe use of the Internet
- Increasing use by UK schools and colleges of educational content and services from overseas and a potential growth in uptake of UK content by overseas users.

Schools in most developed countries will soon have low-cost networked Internet access. Although some countries now have more computers per pupil, the UK is seen by many as a European, if not world, leader in content, public-private partnerships, in ICT provision and use in the curriculum. However, much can be gained by learning from other countries, developing links with them and ensuring UK activities follow, if not set the pace for, best practice. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and other bodies provide a useful means of sharing research and identifying and disseminating emerging best practices. ICT may invigorate links between teachers and learners in distant communities, eg the Commonwealth and the English-speaking world.

In Europe, the European SchoolNet (EUN) is gathering momentum and the UK is well positioned to continue playing an influential role in it and in linked activities, eg Netdays and the European Network of Innovative Schools. ICT is a key element in the Socrates II programme. The NGfL portal links to overseas projects and networks, including the Irish Scoilnet and Linguanet Europa and to and from the EUN.

ICT in Europe and the UK position

TRENDS FOR THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Most areas of educational activity are affected by ICT and most of Becta's work is best carried out as part of a wider educational initiative. Becta's activities for 1999 to 2002 therefore need to be developed against an understanding of the wider educational trends and initiatives over that three year period.	Need for a forward view
The literacy and numeracy strategies continue throughout this period and it is important that ICT initiatives including the NGfL and the NOF Training integrate with them so that schools are not faced with disjointed national activity.	Basic skills remain paramount
All UK countries will review their curriculum and assessment orders over this period in a variety of ways and at different times. It is likely that ICT developments will form a significant part of this review process. There will be a need for advice and support on the ICT elements at times during this process.	Reviewing the curriculum
The Green Paper, *Teachers: meeting the challenge of change* will lead to considerable changes in the expectations on teachers and the way teaching is organised in schools. There will be greater use of ICT in support of teaching; both in the classroom and in the provision of information, in-service training and professional debate between government and teachers. The creation of the General Teaching Council will offer new possibilities and our understanding of ICT practice will need to keep in step with these developments.	Teachers
The relationship between local authorities and their schools is continuing to develop. The recent 'Code of Practice' for LEAs and the increased focus on Education Development Planning, heightens the emphasis on the use of computer networks to support strategic approaches, enabling LEAs to develop quicker and more interactive communication routes with their schools. The Education Action Zones (EAZs), and other public-private sector initiatives will involve considerable ICT developments brought in from the commercial sector.	Evolving nature of LEAs
The creation of Assemblies in Northern Ireland and Wales and the Scottish Parliament will enable the education systems in each UK country to use ICT to meet their own specific needs. Good communications and structures will enable each to learn from the experience of the others. The Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) will be new business-led bodies in each of the regions of England. They will develop and promote a strategy for their region covering a whole range of responsibilities and they also will have an important role in advising government. RDAs will inherit their funding and programmes in April 1999, when they will become fully operational. At regional and local level there will be an increased emphasis on community grids for learning linking these initiatives into local networks.	Increasing devolution and regionalisation
The publication of the reports from Kennedy, Tomlinson and the government's paper, *The Learning Age* signal an increasing emphasis on lifelong learning over the next three years. In FE, the end of this period will see the achievement of funding convergence which will require many colleges to find significant cost savings while meeting increased demand as student numbers rise. A related issue is staffing. Increasing reliance on sessional and agency staff supporting a declining base of permanent staff raises issues of staff development, accommodation, support and equipment. It is likely that there will be further rationalisation of the sector through collaboration and mergers. In particular, as a result of the Secretary of State's announcement of the need to establish a national learning network between all further education colleges and higher education, there will be closer links between the two sectors, although they are likely to keep their distinct interests. Following the Kennedy report, there will be an increasing priority on making learning accessible, affecting both the FE sector and the lifelong learning providers. The University for Industry will be a key factor in this provision.	Further education and lifelong learning
The Special Needs Action Plan published by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) and equivalent initiatives in the rest of the UK lays down future developments in training, planning and parental involvement. It places considerable emphasis on the role of	Special educational needs and

ICT to support lifelong learning and enhance inclusion.

inclusion

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THE NATIONAL GRID FOR LEARNING STRATEGY

The government's NGfL strategy supports the three main elements of infrastructure, content and practice. It is focused on achieving a set of targets as detailed in the diagram to the right. In England, the development of the infrastructure - equipping and connecting schools to the NGfL - is being stimulated by the DfEE through an annual Standards Fund grant (£100 million in 1998-99, £105 million in 1999-2000) to LEAs, who are being invited to bid for these grants. Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland have similar schemes. In the FE Sector, £74M extra investment is also being made available to improve the sector's ILT provision.

Infrastructure

The content of the NGfL is a growing collection of electronic resources for education, which can be accessed via the Internet. It features specific materials for teaching and professional development, general online areas for schools, further education, higher education and other providers of lifelong learning, as well as information on libraries, museums and galleries, and government departments and agencies. The NGfL also gives access to other international education networks. In *Our Information Age* (Central Office of Information, 1998), the government makes clear its commitment to improving the quality of available content "so that teachers and parents can be assured that software achieves educational objectives, is robust and does not include undesirable content." A New Opportunities Fund of £50M is being made available to support these developments and government is encouraging all public bodies to make information available online.

Content

The government is funding an extensive teacher and librarian training programme, supported by £230 million of National Lottery funding, beginning in Spring 1999. It is being administered by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) and the Library and Information Commission (LIC).

Practice

LEAs and Education Library Boards have a major role in supporting their schools in using the NGfL. The NGfL Standards fund is granted on the basis of how LEAs develop and implement their own LEA ICT plans. They must ensure that schools formulate their own plans for their use of ICT across the curriculum (and particularly for literacy and numeracy), for staff development and administration. Many authorities will consider the advantages in providing high-speed infrastructure and large scale data-storage across a range of local authority service areas, including schools, colleges, libraries, museums, and the home. This enables learning opportunities to reach beyond a particular geography and timescale. Many are considering new public/private partnership arrangements. The DfEE is developing an information management strategy with schools and LEAs with the aim of achieving the government targets for administrative electronic communications.

Local Government

The Public Library Network is an interrelated development which will provide infrastructure, training and content, enabling libraries to provide full access to the NGfL for learners for all ages. The proposed New Opportunities Fund for Community Access to Lifelong Learning will enable LEAs and local communities to consider operating joint local support arrangements for the use of the NGfL, opening up facilities in schools, libraries and colleges to a wider community of learners. In March 1999, the government launched an initiative to set up 800 IT learning centres across the UK.
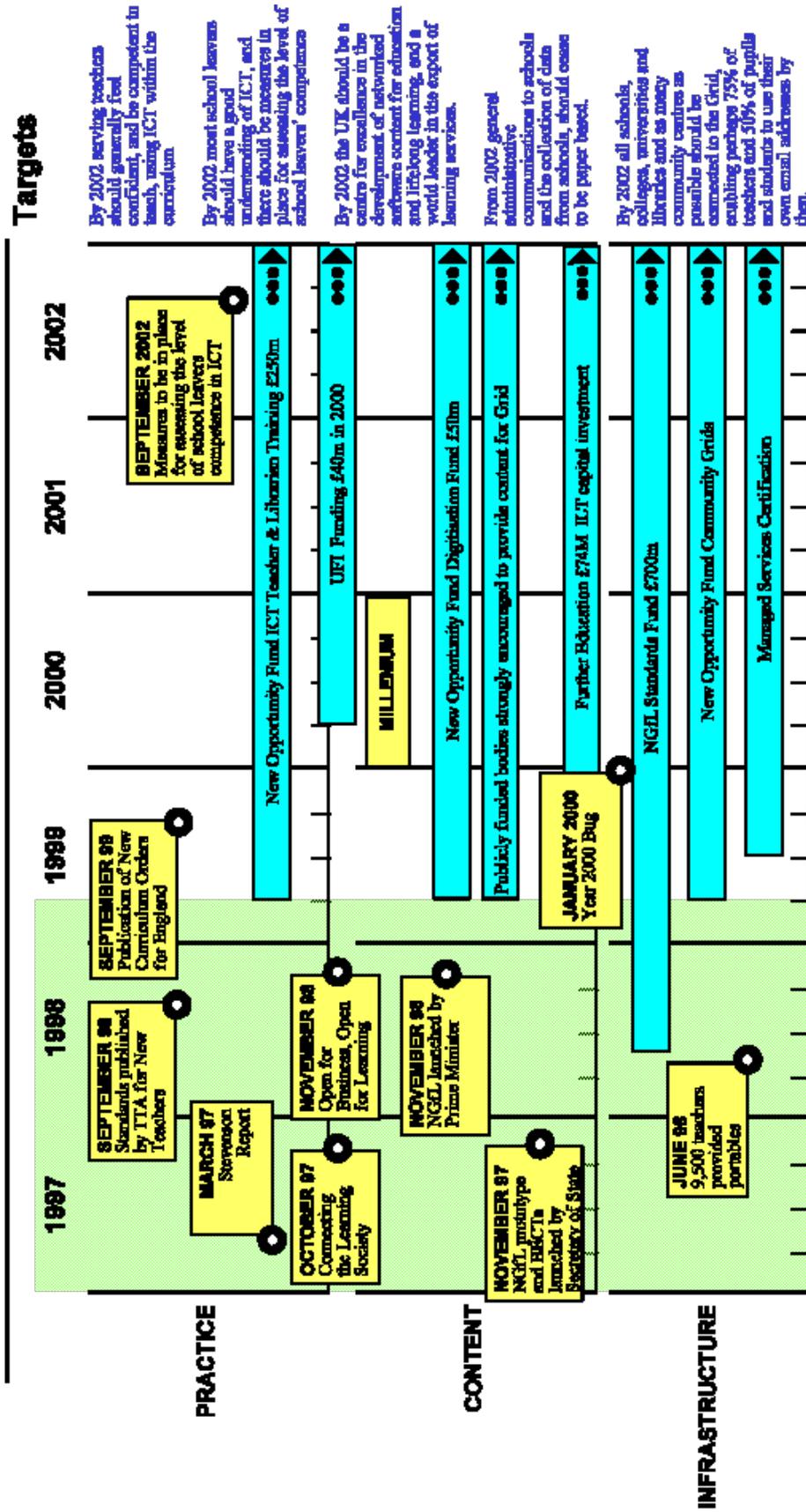
LEAs, Libraries and Community Grids

Provision of £23M to enable 9,500 English teachers to be equipped with a multimedia portable computer was announced in 1998. This was based on a previous Becta evaluation which showed that such provision was highly successful in making teachers confident and competent in their ICT use and more effective in their work. Also in March 1999, the

Widening personal access

government announced the creation of low cost loans for teachers to purchase their own computers and made a further £4M available to equip Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators and Learning Support Centres with multimedia portables.

NATIONAL GRID FOR LEARNING

Targets

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	Targets

PRACTICE

- MARCH 97 Stevenson Report
- OCTOBER 97 Connecting the Learning Society
- SEPTEMBER 98 Standards published by TTA for New Teachers
- NOVEMBER 98 Open for Business, Open for Learning
- SEPTEMBER 99 Publication of New Curriculum Orders for England
- SEPTEMBER 2002 Measures to be in place for assessing the level of school leavers competence in ICT

New Opportunity Fund ICT Teacher & Librarian Training £250m

UFI Funding £40m in 2000

By 2002 serving teachers should generally feel confident, and be competent to teach, using ICT within the curriculum

By 2002 most school leavers should have a good understanding of ICT, and there should be measured in place for assessing the level of school leavers' competence

CONTENT

- NOVEMBER 97 NGfL prototype and BECTa launched by Secretary of State
- NOVEMBER 98 NGfL launched by Prime Minister
- JANUARY 2000 Bug Year 2000 Bug

MILLENIUM

New Opportunity Fund Digitisation Fund £50m

Publicly funded bodies strongly encouraged to provide content for Grid

Further Education £74M ICT capital investment

By 2002 the UK should be a centre for excellence in the development of networked software content for education and lifelong learning, and a world leader in the export of learning services.

From 2002 general administrative communications to schools and the collection of data from schools, should cease to be paper based.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- JUNE 98 9,500 teachers provided portables

NGfL Standards Fund £700m

New Opportunity Fund Community Grids

Managed Services Certification

By 2002 all schools, colleges, universities and libraries and as many community centres as possible should be connected to the Grid, enabling perhaps 75% of teachers and 50% of pupils and students to use their own email addresses by then.

BECTA'S WORK FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS

Becta's work will be embedded in the overall government strategy.

Government's interrelated goals are to :

- Create an ICT infrastructure that allows the widening community to benefit from the NGfL
- Provide all learners, teachers and institutions with access to educationally valuable content and services
- Create a profession which can make effective personal use of the technology and understand the pedagogic issues of its use.

These are illustrated in the diagram below

Infrastructure   Practice

Create an infrastructure that allows the widening community to benefit from the NGfL

GOVERNMENT EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS

Create a profession that can make effective personal use of the technology and understand the pedagogic issues of its use

BECTA

Provide learners, teachers and institutions with access to educationally valuable content and services.
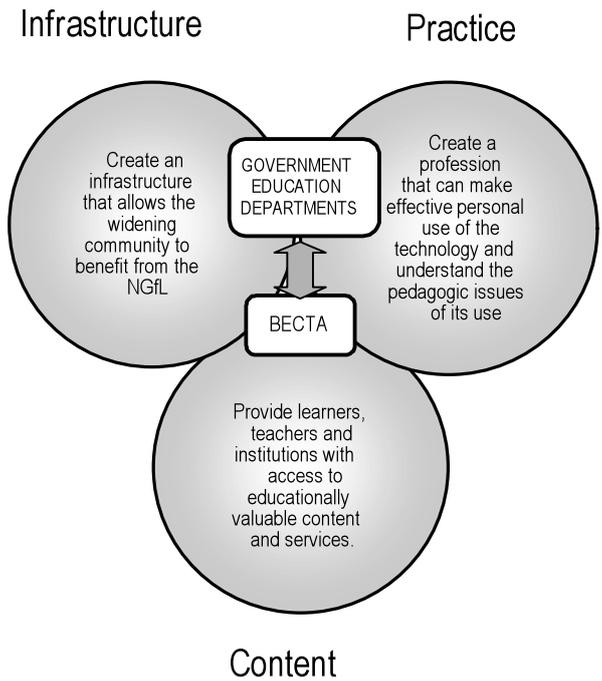
Content

Becta's Aims are to support the goals in each of the three areas of Infrastructure, Content and Practice.

The following sections describe:

- ❑ The overall goal
- ❑ Becta's Aim
- ❑ What needs to happen to meet these targets
- ❑ What others are doing to contribute to them
- ❑ What role Becta will play
- ❑ Its three year strategic objectives
- ❑ Its priorities for the current year

INFRASTRUCTURE

To develop and implement a quality framework for ICT infrastructure and provide advice which helps improve its use and accessibility.

Becta's Aim

The education service, and the NGfL in particular, requires a framework for the provision and maintenance of high quality cost-effective ICT networks and services. This is necessary to ensure that teachers and learners have equipment and networking services for the job they will have to do in the 21st Century.

To achieve this by 2002, the following needs to have happened:
- All schools, colleges, and libraries are connected to the NGfL and equipped with appropriate up-to-date products and supported by reliable services
- All teachers and learners have personal access to equipment and networks at appropriate times
- A competitive market operates, offering affordable, reliable and appropriate ICT products
- Schools and colleges make sound planning and financially sustainable purchasing decisions based on impartial advice
- A programme of replacement and upgrading is in place, based on expert independent evaluation of emerging technologies.

This is explained more fully below.

CONNECTING ALL SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND LIBRARIES

Even though UK schools are among the most well equipped in the world, much of this equipment is unable to handle multimedia and communications - both of which are vital to NGfL. The Prime Minister's targets and the significantly increased level of resources have set the scene for a quantum leap in ICT. One consequence of this is that institutions face an increasingly complex problem of procurement, installation, maintenance, training and technical support.

Present situation

However, a pervasive national network offers the prospect of significant educational added value. If educational institutions have access to the same network, they are able to share resources and expertise, and support a greater level of inclusion. This offers the prospect to government and its LEA and commercial partners of rapid and economic information flows across the nation.

National network

PROVIDING ACCESS TO ALL TEACHERS AND LEARNERS

Personal ownership and convenient access to ICT is a prerequisite of ICT educational use. As prices fall and performance continues to rise, we can expect families to invest in computers and Internet access. Adequate provision for learners and teachers is a priority, recognising that most personal use of ICT by teachers is in the evenings and at weekends at home.
Investment from government is doing much to mitigate against a divide between those who "have" and those who "have not". By continuing to embrace publicly funded and commercial resources, the NGfL is extending access and further work at school and community level and will help minimise the divide.

Personal access

DEVELOPING A COMPETITIVE MARKET

From the suppliers' point of view, the UK ICT in education market is fragmented and routes to it are not clear. The NGfL provides an arena for a competitive market. Schools and colleges need to be advised how to evaluate the educational value of the products they receive from suppliers. Suppliers need to have independent market advice on the extent of the educational value of their products. A strong export market should develop through a

Competitive market

competitive domestic market which favours innovation and responsiveness to customer needs.

SOUND PLANNING AND SUSTAINABLE FINANCE

Sustainable investment

The problems facing managers responsible for ICT in educational institutions are becoming increasingly difficult and involve increasing sums of public money. They often need to manage maintenance and support from different places, the hardware vendor, the Internet Service Provider, the LEA, the software publisher. There are also significant levels of equipment which are not well maintained and serviced. The expectation is that the usable life of educational ICT will be long and there is a reluctance to invest in resources which have to be renewed after a few years. Leasing schemes and phased replacement of infrastructure are essential to ensure that the benefits of the NGfL are maintained. As ICT's importance to schools and colleges becomes critical, it is more important than ever that budget-holders have advice on planning from independent sources.

EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES EVALUATION AND PILOT STUDIES

Creating a new future

Tomorrow's technology is soon today's. Without an appreciation of new technologies and how they might work in educational contexts, schools and colleges face the danger of mis-spending and missed opportunities. They need to be able to use timely and authoritative results of bench-testing and pilot studies of, for example, new interfaces, wireless networks and digital television.

WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING

Government, through the Standards Fund, is making substantial sums available for schools and colleges to invest in ICT.

The commercial sector is providing significant support to institutions, with a range of services and new products appearing all the time. Government has provided the industry with a challenge to develop managed services, possibly through forming new strategic alliances. Some LEAs, associations and other bodies provide good advice and support, but this is not uniform.

The development and evaluation of emerging technologies takes place in the commercial sector and research institutions. Leading edge schools are undertaking pilot studies of new electronic technologies, most recently whiteboards, for example. It is important that the results are drawn together, sifted and presented in an appropriate way for education.

BECTA'S ROLE

The ICT infrastructure for the educational system is mainly provided by schools and colleges purchasing from the market place, often with specific capital grants from local and central government or funding councils. However, Becta has a role in ensuring that this spend is made on the best available advice, that there is an appropriate central infrastructure on which local initiatives can build, and that sustainable models of provision are developed. It is important that users know the quality of the available infrastructure and the process of purchasing this must be made as coherent and cost effective as possible. Becta also has a role in anticipating the advances being made in technology and associated services, in order to inform government and other decision-makers.

BECTA'S STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR INFRASTRUCTURE OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS ARE THEREFORE:

1. To develop technical frameworks, in particular for the National Grid for Learning, as valuable environments for teachers and learners to access resources and communicate

with others.

2. To encourage infrastructure providers to supply appropriate products and services to the market so that all users have a range to meet their needs, and where appropriate, to test and certify these products so that schools, colleges and libraries know that they are of good quality.

3. To provide information to decision makers in institutions, LEAs and government on the quality and extent of ICT infrastructure and services so that they can make planning and purchasing decisions accordingly and make access more inclusive.

4. To research and evaluate developing technologies and models of technological usage in order to advise government, providers and users.

5. To manage influential and timely projects on behalf of government to introduce new technologies into education.

BECTA'S PRIORITIES FOR 1999/2000 FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

Over the next year Becta will focus its work on the strategic objectives for Infrastructure through the activities below. Those in plain text have been allocated resources through Becta's base grant. Those activities in italics are projects which have been agreed with the Departments with assured funding additional to base grant. Those in grey still require funding.

(i)   Developing technical frameworks, including:

- *Designing and developing the hardware, system software and communications technology to underpin the delivery and expansion of the NGfL*

(ii)   Encouraging infrastructure providers, including:

- *Managing the tendering process for NGfL Managed Services through the certification of suppliers.*

(iii)   Informing decision makers, including:

- *Apprising educational customers of the features and benefits of NGfL Managed Services*
- Advising the FE Sector on the development of a national learning network
- Providing advice to users, suppliers and purchasers of ICT-related infrastructure on technical matters, including issues of accessibility.

(iv)   Researching and evaluating, including:

- *Monitoring the growing requirements of educational institutions for broad band in the light of the burgeoning educational use of multimedia and the increasing number of users*
- *Evaluating speech recognition systems for SEN*
- Monitoring of near-horizon technologies and the assessment of their future potential in the educational community, with a view to advising government and others
- Gathering intelligence in developments in new technology and the evolution of markets that carry these through to education in such areas digitisation and wireless.

(v)   Managing influential and timely projects:

- *Promoting new, relevant ICT technologies through the management of specific projects as requested by government and disseminating the findings.*

CONTENT

	Becta's Aim

To foster the development and organisation of suitable educational ICT content in order to improve its scope, accessibility and quality for educational users.

The overall goal is to provide learners, teachers and institutions with access to educationally valuable content and services.

To achieve this by 2002 the following needs to have happened:

- There is a sufficient supply of good, accessible, affordable educational software
- The NGfL becomes a useful & well-used source of content offering information about the availability and usage of software.

DEVELOPING A SUFFICIENT SUPPLY OF SOFTWARE

A thriving content (ie software, materials, information and services) market is vital to education in the UK if teachers, lecturers and learners are to have access to relevant material. The market must be large enough to develop and sustain content development, publishing and distribution. UK schools and colleges need to invest appropriately in content. In so doing, they should know where to obtain good quality products and services, how to evaluate them and use them in the curriculum and for management. A large sales potential exists with the overlapping of the school and home markets.

Develop the market

To create high quality content, there needs to be better collaboration between commercial publishers and educators. To ensure that products are marketable and educationally valuable, there should be mechanisms available for developers to access the best thinking of educators. Equally, products should be evaluated against educational criteria and the results made available to the market. Both developers and purchasers need to be well informed.

Commercial publishers and educators

DEVELOPING THE NGFL

The NGfL should grow to contain sufficient relevant content to encourage all educators to use it. Ways need to be found to encourage greater numbers of commercial publishers to contribute to the NGfL and public sector providers need to be encouraged to improve the educational value of free-to-user materials. Becta is aware of the urgent need for the development of business models to increase the involvement of commercial providers.

Growing content

The NGfL should be related to users' needs and be easy-to-use. Its content should undergo a quality control process and be regularly updated. To ensure the highest standards, a representative sample of those who use the NGfL should be part of the process of evaluation.

Easy-to-use

Different educational communities should be encouraged to set up online conferences and discussion groups. There should also be resources for formal and informal professional development. Specifically, subject associations, SEN organisations, researchers and other professional development agencies should be encouraged to contribute to the NGfL and to develop online communities.

Interactive online communities

A key use of the NGfL is to help schools and colleges communicate between themselves, and help researchers and LEAs to develop evidence-based practice. Research findings should be made available on the NGfL, but more profoundly, it should be used to support the interaction between schools and colleges and researchers, and enable better, and more effective use of research methods at institutional level. Communities involved in ICT and institutional effectiveness research need to be encouraged to use the NGfL.

Evidence based

WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING.

Increasingly government departments are using the NGfL to disseminate information. This provision is not always easily found by schools and colleges. Co-ordination and advice is needed so that content is sensibly placed, easily reached, and appropriately formulated.

Government

Museums, galleries, libraries and broadcasters are contributing excellent resources to the

Public Bodies

NGfL. However, there are smaller bodies who may also wish to do this, but find it difficult to initiate developments and sustain them once begun.

Researchers, professional associations and other agencies have begun experimental work on interactive conferences. The next step is to increase participation in these beyond the 'early adopters'.

Commercial providers of content and services are contributing to the NGfL. However, ways need to be found to encourage more content-providers to contribute. Take up has been slow since few can see any return on investment. Although the lack of Internet business models is not specific to the NGfL or even the UK, some models do exist. These often involve new partnerships and alliances between, for example, hardware and Internet service suppliers. Some companies are acting as hosts for collections of content, either free or on subscription.

Commercial sector

BECTA'S ROLE

Developing content is a collaborative venture but Becta has a central co-ordinating responsibility. Its aim is to foster the development and organisation of suitable educational content, delivered via ICT in order to improve its scope, accessibility and quality for educational users. In particular, it is responsible for mapping the content on the NGfL and advise government on its progress, any barriers to success and advise on how to fill gaps as appropriate.

Becta's aims

The NGfL should be safe to use, and easy to navigate. Through GridWatch, extensions to the code of conduct and liaison with other bodies in this area, Becta will ensure easy and safe usage of NGfL. In doing this, Becta will take account of the latest developments of Web technology in search mechanisms, the tagging of content and safe use of the Internet. Becta will also refine the structure and content in the light of user feedback.

Keeping the NGfL safe and easy-to-use

Becta should encourage the use of the NGfL to provide teachers with: access to evaluations of NGfL content and CD-ROMs, classroom materials to support their effective use, and opportunities to contribute to evaluations.

Access to evaluations

The Virtual Teacher Centre (VTC) and FE Hub are key sources of expert advice on educational matters for the general classroom teacher and FE tutor. Becta will co-ordinate its development so that it is useful to all subject and class teachers who have access to the NGfL. Becta's own Web site is a source of the latest information on ICT in education for a range of users. It will continue to be developed as both Becta's corporate Web site and as an exemplar of innovative practice.

Exemplar online resources

The National Grid for Learning is an ideal vehicle for informing schools, colleges and libraries on the quality, usage and accessibility of online content and other software; and for developing a world-class healthy and competitive UK market.

NGfL to inform about content

BECTA'S STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR CONTENT OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS FOR CONTENT ARE THEREFORE:

1. To map content provision, including the content of the NGfL, and advise government on progress and how it can encourage the development of a more comprehensive supply to meet the needs of all users, including those with special needs.
2. To register and certify NGfL content and make it attractive and accessible so that users can locate it and know it is of appropriate quality.
3. To develop and make accessible a wide range of innovative online resources and conferences to demonstrate how they can best meet user needs and support the improvement of standards.
4. To provide information to schools, colleges, libraries and learning support services on the extent and quality of NGfL and other content so that they can make planning and purchasing decisions accordingly.
5. To research and understand developing software techniques and business models in order to advise government, providers and users.

BECTA'S PRIORITIES FOR THE COMING YEAR

Over the next year Becta will focus its work on the strategic objectives for Content through the activities below. Those in plain text have been allocated resources through Becta's base grant. Those activities in italics are projects which have been agreed with the Departments with assured funding additional to base grant. Those in grey still require funding.

(i)   Mapping content and advising government, including:

- Reviewing and promoting the development of accessible content for all users, including those with special needs, on the NGfL
- Encouraging the development and addition of quality content, mapping content for gaps, advising government and others on appropriate models (inc. business models)
- Monitoring the usage of the NGfL and producing statistics
- *Continuing work with the teachers and SENCOs involved with the multimedia portables projects to develop work on the VTC and SEN Schools site.*

(ii)   Registering and certifying NGfL content, including

- Continuing the work of Gridwatch and the development of the code of conduct to ensure that the NGfL is a safe resource for education.
- Helping users find what they need by developing the architecture and evolving search mechanisms on the NGfL

(iii)   Supporting the development of innovative online resources, including:

- Structuring and developing content on the VTC through the work of Becta's Curriculum Consultancy Groups.
- Continuing the growth and development of the FE Hub and other lifelong learning components of NGfL
- *Continuing to develop the FE Resources for Learning pilot project*
- *Developing content and structure of the Virtual Teacher Centre for Wales*
- Developing content on the VTC and elsewhere mediating educational research for practitioners.

(iv)   Informing users on content

- Publishing an extensive educational software database on VTC
- Providing advice and guidance on developing and evaluating electronic materials for education.

(v)   Researching

- Monitoring research in developments in new software techniques and business models including digital broadcasting, intelligent agents, searching and data labelling techniques.

PRACTICE

To identify, develop and promote effective practice in the curriculum and management use of ICT.	Becta's Aim

The overall goal is to create a teaching profession whose members can personally use the technology effectively while understanding the pedagogic issues surrounding its use.

To achieve this by 2002 the following needs to have happened:

- A clear consensus needs to be established on the most effective uses of ICT
- Teachers and lecturers should be equipped with the basic skills of using ICT and an understanding of how ICT can be applied
- Education professionals need access to an appropriate level of support to maintain their skills and develop their practice
- Those with management responsibilities in schools and colleges need to use ICT to manage and develop their institution and to manage learning.

A CLEAR CONSENSUS NEEDS TO BE ESTABLISHED ON THE MOST EFFECTIVE USES OF ICT

The increasing use of ICT calls for new skills and approaches, and shifts in emphasis within the curriculum. A curriculum which recognises both the contribution that ICT can make to teaching, and the increasing role that new technologies are taking in shaping the nature of subjects and disciplines is an essential prerequisite of a national strategy for ICT.	ICT in the curriculum
At present there is no clear consensus over how ICT should be used, or the circumstances under which its use is most effective. Teachers are unsure how to match ICT use to teaching objectives and managers find it difficult to make strategic decisions. Those providing guidance cannot match their recommendations to specific circumstances and those who support and inspect the system lack clear benchmarks for making judgements. There is a need for a robust evidential base of effective uses of ICT in teaching, learning, management and administration. Research into practice must be clearly focused on raising standards, improving institutional effectiveness, and supporting inclusion.	Research and evaluate practice
The wide range of findings from research, evaluations, monitoring and consultation needs to be brought together to form coherent practical guidance and advice. At present, many ICT innovations are evaluated in isolation. This makes it difficult for teachers, managers, advisers and others to identify the most effective uses of ICT in their particular circumstances, or to match ICT uses to their objectives. A coherent overview of effective practice would support a more strategic approach to ICT use.	Synthesis of findings
Schools and colleges take their lead on curriculum planning from a number of sources. These include the statutory curriculum and its associated guidance, key national strategies, feedback from inspections, the examination boards and awarding bodies, local policy makers, employers and the commercial world. As a result of the lack of a clear consensus over the most effective uses of ICT, schools receive what they perceive as conflicting messages. Schools and colleges will only plan effectively if the guidance and advice they receive is consistent.	Dissemination of findings amongst key players

TEACHERS AND LECTURERS SHOULD BE EQUIPPED WITH THE BASIC SKILLS OF USING ICT AND AN UNDERSTANDING OF HOW ICT CAN BE APPLIED

Teachers and lecturers will only use ICT in their teaching if they are confident in their own basic skills with the technology and are aware of the pedagogical issues surrounding its use. They will need access to resources to practice and consolidate their skills, and awareness of a variety of approaches to using ICT including developing IT Capability in learners. By providing teachers with different models of ICT use, teachers will be able, in the initial stages, to choose approaches that match their current teaching methods and draw on a limited range of technical skills. They will then be able to develop and extend their range of teaching	Personal confidence and competence

methods as their confidence and competence increases. To date, much of the guidance has consisted of illustrations of how ICT could be applied to meet particular teaching objectives. There is a need for more strategic guidance which supports whole curriculum planning, so that resources may be targeted effectively. This should also address how ICT can help the management of teaching and assessment.	Curriculum guidance

EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS NEED ACCESS TO AN APPROPRIATE LEVEL OF SUPPORT TO MAINTAIN THEIR SKILLS AND DEVELOP THEIR PRACTICE

Teachers, lecturers, schools and colleges will continue to need support to plan and implement ICT and to extend their confidence and competence if the gains achieved through the NOF funded training are to be integrated fully into future practice. The Green Paper also makes clear the need for teachers to continually keep their skills updated and under review. Equally, there is pressure on FE lecturers to be accredited.	Continuing support
The NGfL is the ideal means for providing educational professionals with up-to-date, authoritative advice and guidance, either through specifically developed resources on the VTC of FE hub, or by the access it provides to other sources. The NGfL also provides a means for professionals to share and refine effective practice.	Direct support
For many, the first line of support and guidance will continue to be at a local level. At present, however, there are gaps in provision. The guidance and advice provided locally is not always able to draw on national developments. There is a need to develop joint approaches with those who provide ICT educational support, set up appropriate networks, and monitor provision in order to identify gaps in the provision of this support and stimulate developments.	Supporting the supporters

THOSE WITH MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES NEED TO USE ICT TO MANAGE AND DEVELOP THEIR INSTITUTION AND TO MANAGE LEARNING

ICT has much to offer in making institutions more effective by improving the management of information and reducing bureaucracy. It also improves the effectiveness of teaching by helping teachers and managers to manage learning, assessment, record keeping and individual target setting. Managers need straightforward guidance on the use of management software and how this should inform school and college policies. Teachers need guidance on using ICT to manage the learning process.	Institutional change

WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING

The Literacy and Numeracy Strategies in primary schools are providing a clear lead to teachers on the need to use the most effective teaching methods. The NOF funded training for teachers and librarians will raise the level of understanding of how ICT can be applied in teaching. The QUILT programme continues to support FE staff development. The requirements for initial teacher training will similarly ensure that newly qualified teachers are able to apply ICT in their teaching. The Green Paper stresses the need for teachers to maintain their skills and develop their practice. Government, through the Standards Fund, is increasing the level of resource in schools.	Government and its agencies
The research community will continue to research and evaluate practice. The ESRC is conducting a long term research initiative into teaching and learning which is expected to focus significantly on the impact of ICT on teaching.	The research community
LEAs and independent consultants will continue to provide many institutions with the first port of call for advice and guidance. In addition, a mechanism is needed to ensure that such advice draws on the widest range of lessons learned and that it is available to all schools and colleges.	LEAs and others

BECTA'S ROLE

Becta will maintain itself as a recognised source of expertise on the effective use of ICT in teaching, learning and institutional management. Working collaboratively with key players, such as the research and subject communities, and LEAs, Becta will evaluate and monitor	Good practice

innovative practice, as well as co-ordinate and stimulate research into how ICT can raise standards and make institutions more effective. Becta will consult widely and translate the outcomes into independent practical guidance and advice on using ICT to address the needs of all learners to raise standards. Becta will work with key partners to build a consensus.

Becta will provide guidance on the effective use of ICT teaching, learning, and assessment, and to support institutional development and management. This guidance will address issues at the teacher/lecturer, departmental and institutional levels. It will illustrate a variety of approaches and equip users to plan and implement an ICT strategy for their institutions.

Providing guidance

Becta will support the training and professional development of teachers, tutors and librarians through joint approaches with those who provide ICT educational support. This will include making materials available through the VTC and FE Hub, setting up appropriate networks, and monitoring provision in order to identify gaps in the provision of this support and stimulate developments.

Local support

Becta will work to develop the NGfL as a means for educational professionals to exchange, share, develop and refine effective practice.

Sharing effective practice

Becta will advise and work with decision makers in schools, further and higher education, museums and galleries, libraries and local and central government to meet government's policy objectives for community grids and lifelong learning.

Community grids and lifelong learning

BECTA'S STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR PRACTICE OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS ARE THEREFORE:

1. Stimulate, evaluate, promote and support effective teaching and learning using ICT and ILT to address the needs of all learners to raise standards.

2. To evaluate, promote and support the use of ICT and ILT to support the management and development of institutions, in particular its role in reducing bureaucracy and strategic curriculum planning.

3. To support the training and professional development of teachers, tutors and librarians through joint approaches with those who provide ICT and ILT educational support - including identifying gaps in the provision of this support in order to stimulate developments.

4. To develop the NGfL as a means for educational professionals to exchange and develop effective practice.

5. To advise and work with decision makers in schools, further and higher education, museums and galleries, libraries and local and central government to meet government's policy objectives for community grids and lifelong learning.

BECTA'S PRIORITIES FOR THE COMING YEAR

Over the next year Becta will focus its work on the strategic objectives for Practice through the activities below. Those in plain text have been allocated resources through Becta's base grant. Those in italics are activities which have been agreed with the Departments with assured funding additional to base grant. Those in grey still require funding.

(i)   Stimulating innovation and monitoring, researching and evaluating practice:

- Evaluating the pedagogical use of ICT, in particular on the effective uses of ICT in whole class teaching
- Working with the curriculum bodies and national strategies to provide advice and guidance to schools and others in the use of ICT to raise standards
- *Producing guidance to help schools use ICT in implementing the new National Curricula*
- Stimulating the development of effective, inclusive practice which strengthens school/community links through supporting and monitoring innovative school-based approaches
- *Working with sector organisations and programmes including the QUILT programme to embed use of ILT as an integral part of mainstream learning activity in FE*
- *Developing a database which captures progress towards national targets for ICT, firstly by analysing LEA development plans in order to spot trends*
- *Evaluating the pathfinder LEAs and communicate lessons to others*
- Working with Ofsted to support and improve the inspection of ICT.

(ii)   Supporting institutional management and development:

- Producing a definitive guide to Management Information Systems policy and practice within the FE sector
- Developing guidance on the use of MIS for effective management including monitoring performance, target setting and assessment at school and LEA levels.

(iii)   Training and support:

- Developing and maintaining a network providing local support
- Working with the UfI and others to identify, catalogue and enhance existing regional networks including lifelong learning partnerships.

(iv)   Sharing effective practice through the NGfL:

- Establishing, as part of the VTC, a searchable, online database where teachers and school managers can exchange, share, develop and refine effective examples of practice
- Supporting and managing the SENCO Forum in order to allow SENCOs to develop and share effective practice
- Working with partners in government and appropriate sector organisations to develop the practice of the FE community.

(v)   Lifelong learning:

- Carrying out exploratory work with a view to advising decision makers in schools, further and higher education, museums and galleries, libraries and local and central government on meeting government's policy objectives for community grids and lifelong learning.

ORGANISATION

To be an effective and communicative organisation, evaluating its own performance, anticipating developments and being responsive to the changing needs of the education system.

Becta will strive to maintain its reputation as a recognised source of expertise on the effective use of ICT through developing its own staff and linking in to others. This will assist Becta to provide "leading edge" advice on ICT issues. Becta is committed to professional personnel practices which include a comprehensive staff training programme, proper induction, recruitment and appraisal processes. Becta is also committed to ensuring best practice in Equal Opportunities.

Becta aims to provide appropriate and secure facilities to enable staff to operate effectively. A modern, attractive, safe environment is provided for staff, encouraging motivation and assisting operational performance.

A new ICT infrastructure based on a standard operating platform will be put in place in 1999. This will provide staff with an efficient operating platform with which to do business.

To ensure that Becta's staff and target external audiences are kept informed of key developments, a comprehensive information service will be provided. Becta recognises the value of a modern information resource to inform its work.

Becta aims to have systems that are compliant with all auditable rules and best operating practice. A programme of regular, independent audit checks informs the development of quality operating systems.

Becta is in the process of developing a detailed communications strategy identifying stakeholders and external target audiences and how to reach them. This strategy is closely aligned with the Corporate Plan objectives. Internal systems will be developed, and refined, to ensure a uniform flow of information throughout the organisation.

A structured planning process has been used to develop Becta's plans, involving internal and external consultation. It is anticipated that this process will be gradually improved in the future so that a more inclusive Corporate Plan is developed.

Regular monthly monitoring of performance against plan is to be undertaken, led by Directors and Managers to ensure staff are accountable for performance.

Becta will also evaluate the effectiveness of its programmes, devising measures of performance, reporting on actual outcome and adjusting future activity in line with feedback information..

Becta will strive to ensure that maximum use is made of the funds invested in its activities. Strong financial controls, including detailed purchasing and tendering procedures will ensure that this occurs.

	Becta's aim
	Source of expertise
	Effective people
	Facilities
	ICT infrastructures
	Information resources
	Systems
	Communications
	Planning
	Monitoring
	Evaluation
	Value for money

HOW WE WILL WORK AND COMMUNICATE WITH OTHERS

Becta will establish a formal framework for liaising with the commercial sector, national government, the government departments in other UK countries, government agencies and professional associations.

One of Becta's top priorities will be to liaise with the commercial world. The purpose of this is to enable commercial developers to draw on Becta's educational expertise to develop products which meet the needs of the education market. Our role will be to establish a formal framework in which commercial organisations can present new developments to government ministers and civil servants to ensure that these key decision makers are informed of the latest commercial issues.

Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales are each facing new ways of working as a result of devolution. Becta will establish formal frameworks to work with the government departments and agencies in each of these countries to continue to meet their needs.

	Liaison
	Commercial sector
	Government and LEAs

Becta will establish a formal approach to working with those involved in the government's national initiatives such as the national literacy and numeracy strategies. We will also create formal structures for working with those responsible for the National Curriculum, teaching and inspection of schools.

We will also focus on the professional associations, working with those involved in ICT and in curriculum subject and SEN areas as well as building relationships with teaching unions where appropriate.

Professional associations

HOW WE WILL MEASURE OUR WORK

Becta takes the measurement of its work seriously. It is important that we measure our impact on the education system and we have a set of detailed measures set out in our business plan. This is obtainable from us if you write to us at the address at the back of this plan. These measures consider each of the 4 Aims as outlined in this Corporate Plan in relation to three areas:

The importance of measurement.

• We will measure the impact on the users of ICT of our work - the teachers, the learners, schools and the colleges by carrying out user surveys and focus groups to inform our work.

The user

• We will measure our impact on the educational services and the industry, ie those responsible for schools and colleges and who support them - LEAs, support services, professional associations, and the commercial sector.

• We will also measure how well we are performing and carrying out government policy by asking government directly on our performance.

We will carry out these measurements yearly and seek a year on year improvement. In particular, we will measure the use of our electronic resources on the National Grid for Learning, analyse them and report this analysis on these sites monthly.

Year on year improvement

BECTA'S STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR THE ORGANISATION OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS ARE THEREFORE:

1. To maintain Becta as the recognised source of expertise on the effective use of ICT, through working with key players, carrying out evaluations, monitoring, research and consultation, and translating the outcomes into independent practical guidance and advice.

2. To develop and implement internal strategies which support the most effective delivery of Corporate Plan objectives, through effective people, facilities, IT infrastructure, information resources and systems, and become an exemplar organisation in its own use.

3. To develop effective internal and external communication systems in order to provide a clear understanding of Becta's role, and wider aspects of the use of ICT including the NGfL.

4. To develop an effective planning, monitoring and evaluation process, which reports on progress towards the achievement of objectives, and provides management information which allows Becta to realign its activities to maximise return on investment.

5. To develop an effective intelligence-gathering and evaluation process for Becta's Corporate Plan and to report on progress towards NGfL targets and international developments in ICT in education affecting UK interests, enabling Becta to ensure its strategy, activities and advice to government provide maximum value for money.

BECTA'S PRIORITIES FOR THE COMING YEAR

Over the next year Becta will focus its work on the strategic objectives for the Organisation through the activities below: Those in plain text have been allocated resources through Becta's base grant. Those activities in italics are projects which have been agreed with the Departments with assured funding additional to base grant. Those in grey still require funding.

1. Developing and implementing a formal liaison plan involving strategic and forward looking meetings with:
   - The UK Education Departments
   - The Commercial sector
   - Government Agencies
   - Professional Associations

2. Becta will continue to develop itself as an organisation including:
   - The implementation of a staff recruitment and development strategy for all levels of the organisation, that ensures that Becta is appropriately staffed
   - The renewal and development of the IS/ICT infrastructure throughout the organisation
   - The maintenance and strategic development of the Becta Web site
   - The creation of a communications strategy The implementation of an internal monitoring and evaluation process
   - Build an appropriate flexibility into its staff and also resource to anticipate possible future changes.

3. Becta will continue to proactively communicate corporate and operational messages relating to Corporate Plan outputs and ICT in Education including:
   - Promoting the NGfL and other aspects of BECTA's work at BETT and the Education Show
   - Developing the Press and Public Relations service
   - Managing Awards for ICT in education.

4. Becta will evaluate its own progress by:
- Setting clear targets and monitoring their progress
- Monitoring possible future changes in the educational and technological environment and where appropriate, amend its work accordingly.

5. Continuing to monitor and evaluate developments, including:
   - Supporting the government in international intelligence gathering and networking
   - *Carrying out a major research project to evaluate the impact of ICT on learning.*

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BECTA'S BOARD AND SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

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Dominic Savage OBE, Chief Executive, British Educational Suppliers Association (BESA)	
Professor Alison Wolf, International Centre for Research on Assessment, Institute of Education	
Owen Lynch, Chief Executive, Becta	
John Anderson HMI, Department for Education Northern Ireland	Assessors
Gabriel Goldstein HMI, Office for Standards in Education	
John Howells, Schools Performance Division, Welsh Office Education Department	
Stuart Y MacDonald, Head of Teachers, Curriculum & Community Education Division, The Scottish Office, Education and Industry Department	
Robin Ritzema, Department for Education & Employment	
Nicola Kirkup, DTI	Observers
Nigel Paine, Chief Executive, Scottish Council for Educational Technology (SCET)	
Owen Lynch, Chief Executive	Senior Management Team
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John Brown, Director, Lifelong Learning	
Fred Daly, Director, National Grid for Learning	
Niel Mclean, Director, Schools	
Jerry Wedge, Director, Corporate Services	

(Board and Senior Management Team as of March 1999)