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**Rt Hon Charles Clarke MP**

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Dear David

**British Educational and Communications Technology Agency (Becta)  
Annual Priorities 2003 - 2004**

I wrote to you in June setting out Becta's new remit and am now writing to set out my annual priorities for 2003-04 linked to £4 million of additional funding. The priorities I outline here are for ICT in schools in England. I know that you are putting separate arrangements in place with the Learning and Skills Council to take forward my priorities for ICT for learning beyond age 16 and with the devolved administrations to cover work in the Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

I have set some challenging objectives for ICT in schools and I want to see real progress towards schools in England becoming centres of excellence in the use of ICT for teaching and learning and for whole school improvement. In particular, I have set out my intention to focus on using ICT to support the raising of standards in subject teaching and learning underpinned with strong pedagogy. I expect Becta to play a positive and significant role in supporting the Department's evolving offer to teachers and the ICT embedding agenda. It is important that progress based increasingly on personalised learning, is made across the ability range.



Becta is a key national partner in achieving this transformation in schools for the benefit of all children. Accordingly these are the five priorities for you and your Becta team, which I know reflect Becta's corporate plan and core activities:

**Priority 1:** ensure all students have access to ICT facilities in and out of school that support provision of personalised learning opportunities and contribute to improved attainment irrespective of circumstances;

**Priority 2:** ensure all teachers and others in the school workforce are able to use ICT effectively to improve teaching, learning and whole school management;

**Priority 3:** ensure the effective integration of ICT into whole school improvement policies by head teachers and other school leaders;

**Priority 4:** put in place a reliable and sustainable infrastructure, connectivity and support services that will enable ICT to be used effectively for teaching and learning and school administration;

**Priority 5:** ensure access to high quality digital learning resources and software applications for teachers, learners and others in the school workforce.

Against these priorities for ICT in schools, I should like Becta to address five areas of work - broadband, research, ICT testbeds, procurement, and support services. These support the priorities and complement your core remit work.

The attached annex expands on these work areas. The Grant Financial Memorandum that Becta is agreeing with my officials covers the use of the funding for the priorities (and other grants). I would also like to take this opportunity to let you know that planning for the Spending Review for 2004 is underway and I would look to Becta to support this process to secure the resources we need for schools. I see this as core work for Becta and I know that my officials have already opened discussion with Becta staff about what this might entail.

David Normington wrote to Owen Lynch on 29 October to ask you to work with us to identify ways that we could release resources to the front line through increased efficiency and more effective ways of working. I have asked Helen Williams to work closely with Becta and report back to me by the end of January on your firm proposals for savings for 2004-05 and beyond.

I know that you will continue to work in partnership with a wide range of organisations to achieve the success that our schools deserve; thus supporting my wider aim of seeing all parts of the education system collaborate to bring improvements to teaching and learning and whole school improvement through ICT.

I appreciate what Becta has achieved in these areas but I am sure that you will agree that there is still much to do. We need to realise the full potential for schools of our considerable investment in ICT as quickly as possible. I look to you, your Board and your Becta team to support me in meeting this goal. I look forward hearing about your successes and discussing Becta's pivotal role at our regular review meetings.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charles Clarke'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'C' and a long, sweeping tail.

**Charles Clarke**

## **Broadband**

I would like Becta to support the formulation of policy on broadband connectivity and related networked services that will use this connectivity.

The key objectives of this work include managing a project to ensure that the services schools require over the next five years can be delivered over the National Education Network. This includes identifying the standards that the regional networks will need to have in place in order to deliver these services effectively. These will include, but are not limited to, authentication, security, video conferencing, caching and content delivery.

I would like Becta to liaise with and interpret information from a range of organisations working in these areas including; Regional Broadband Consortia, LEAs, DTI and the newly formed regional and national aggregation bodies, UKERNA, and the Broadband Stakeholders Group.

Becta should develop the specifications to be included in the national contract(s) for the delivery of Network Management and related services. Becta should lead the strategic development of national network management for schools and act as contracting authority in establishing the NMA. This recognises Becta's strategic role in establishing and implementing ICT standards in education. The strategic development of network management is one component of the wider standards framework that Becta will be developing.

I would like Becta to provide expert advice to my Department on a range of broadband, connectivity and networking areas. Becta should publish guidance to schools, LEAs and RBCs in these areas online and, where appropriate, in print.

Becta's evaluation of the impact of broadband should contribute to the 2004 Spending Review to support the £150 million spent on broadband up to 2003 and the £350 million allocated up to 2006; helping promote the benefits of broadband and encourage teacher 'buy in' and finally informing policy formulation.

### **Outcome:**

- a clear definition of the networked services that need to be procured on a national basis by April 2004;
- the specification to be included in the national contract(s) for the delivery of Network Management and related services by April 2004;
- advice and guidance available for schools in extending the use of broadband networks to pupils and teachers at home and to the wider community by April 2004.
- an interim report on Broadband Evaluation by December 2003 and a final report by February 2004; and
- an appraisal of the additional requirements and strategy for an extended wide reaching evaluation of the impact of broadband.

The budget for this area of work is £609,288 for 2003/4.

## Research

I would like Becta to ensure there is an up-to-date and robust research base to support effective policy development and implementation. This is an essential part of Becta's core work but in addition I would like Becta to undertake a number of research based activities as priorities for 2003/04

**Action Research: Pedagogy, practice & ICT** - Manage a programme of policy-focussed evidence gathering, providing classroom-level information on effective practice in using ICT in schools. This should inform future policy decisions in my Department and be suitable for dissemination to practitioners. **Outcome:** Completed reports for publication available quarterly from November 2003.

**ICT Research Bursaries** - Becta should continue the existing programme to build greater capacity in the field of ICT in schools research, and to promote networking between Becta, DfES and the research community. I do not see this programme continuing as a Departmental priority beyond the current year. **Outcome:** completed research reports of publishable quality by summer 2004.

**Preliminary work on ICT and Attainment** - Manage preliminary follow up studies to ImpaCT2 scoping out directions for future work investigating the 'how' and 'why' ICT does raise standards. **Outcome:** Reports completed June 2003

**European Schoolnet (EUN) European liaison / European Virtual School-** Actively participate in the European Schoolnet organisation (EUN). **Outcome:** Set up a "Virtual Design and Technology Department" as England's contribution to the EUN Virtual School by October 2003.

**Evaluation of Kidsmart Scheme** : manage the evaluation of the Kidsmart Internet Awareness Resource. **Outcome:** a final report analysing the results, including the observation of online role-play activities and suitable recommendations by 30 October 2003.

**Seeveaz (South East England Virtual Education Action Zone)** – evaluate the repository. The evaluation should consider how effectively and easily resources and tools can be adapted and integrated into teaching and learning strategies. It should also consider issues relating to tagging and meta-data in relation to educational objectives. **Outcome:** a final report by November 2003.

The budget for this area of work is £515,500 for 2003/4.

## **ICT Test Beds**

The aim of the ICT Test Bed project is to demonstrate that effective deployment of ICT in clusters of educational institutions, coupled with appropriate support, can raise standards by providing a significant improvement in: teaching and learning; institutional leadership and management; teacher workforce issues; inter-school/college collaboration; the relationship between schools and colleges and their students' home and community. The project will develop a body of best practice and advice and guidance in each of these areas for wider dissemination. An evaluation contract has been awarded to a consortium led by Manchester Metropolitan University, and consists of two distinct strands. It will evaluate the overall Test Bed project, and use an action research approach to conduct an internal evaluation towards good practice.

The project will run from September 2002 to December 2006. Test Bed institutions will receive funding over the course of four financial years. My Department will be responsible for transferring this funding directly to Test Bed institutions. In 2003/2004 this funding will total £6,025,000. Funding for future years will be specified in future priority letters.

I would like Becta to manage the implementation and evaluation of the project, to ensure that the project aims are achieved.

### **Outcomes:**

The outcomes I expect of this work are:

- Identification of how the use of ICT can raise standards in schools and colleges
- The successful management of transformational change in all Test Bed institutions and clusters
- The gathering of evidence from Test Bed institutions that ICT impacts upon all project aims
- The integration of other government initiatives and the involvement of all stakeholders
- The successful promotion of established project findings
- Annual Test Bed evaluation report in January 2004

The budget for this work is £975,000 for 2003-2004.

## **Procurement**

My remit for Becta includes responsibility for developing centralised procurement strategies. I would like Becta to manage two particular procurement exercises to get the best value and quality for the end user.

### **Laptops for Teachers**

This initiative is a key way we can support teachers in embedding ICT in their teaching practice. I would like Becta to set a defined minimum specification for the Laptops for Teachers Initiative and manage an OJEC procurement exercise and award framework contracts to suppliers to provide laptops against this standard or higher. Becta should also provide a procurement service for those LEAs who do not wish to undertake the procurement elements themselves. As part of this work, Becta should publicise the initiative and provide guidance for schools and LEAs. The procurement approach taken for Laptops for Teachers is one that may have application in other areas of more centralised procurement. I would like Becta to review the operation of the scheme and make recommendations on the way forward on procurement in other areas.

#### **Outcomes:**

- By April 2004, the number of contracted suppliers that meet the standards required for the initiative have the capacity between them to configure and deliver laptops to the value of £60 million pounds.
- That an on-line catalogue of suppliers for 2003/4 is live by mid June 2003 and that the laptops available are accessible to LEAs, schools and others authorised to purchase through the initiative.
- On an ongoing basis, Becta will have monitored and evaluated the performance of the contracted suppliers.
- By the end of mid- October 2003 those LEAs who have contracted Becta to procure for them have laptops purchased and delivered to schools,
- By mid October 2003 an online facility is available for teachers to register receipt of laptops and to have access to useful reference sites and teaching communities.
- All guidance issued to LEAs should be consistent with my Department's Standards Fund guidance and policy regulations.

### **Interactive Whiteboards**

Interactive Whiteboard technology has the potential to make a significant positive contribution to embedding ICT in the classroom, raising standards through improved teaching and learning. I would like Becta to set a defined minimum

specification for the interactive whiteboards and manage an OJEU procurement exercise and award framework contracts to suppliers to provide interactive whiteboards against this standard or higher.

**Outcomes:**

- By end of January 2004, a framework contract should be in place to provide interactive whiteboards to schools and LEAs and that the number of contracted suppliers that meet the standards required for the initiative have the capacity between them to provide interactive whiteboards to the value of £25m by August 2004.
- The framework contract should also be available to all schools and LEAs who wish to purchase interactive whiteboards and be flexible enough to allow for further expansion in the current and 2004-06 financial years should the DfES wish to deliver a wider project of installing an interactive whiteboard in every classroom
- A fully functional, tested on-line catalogue, incorporating all the contracted suppliers of Becta approved products, different search facilities, technical specifications, various forms of price comparisons and links to existing initiative and advisory guidance/ websites. The catalogue of suppliers for 2003-2004 should be live by end January 2004. The interactive whiteboards available should be accessible by LEAs and schools funded through the £25 initiative and by others that may wish to purchase this equipment. This on-line catalogue needs to be flexible enough to allow for further expansion of the current project as per the overall framework contract.
- Becta will continuously monitor and evaluate the performance of the contracted suppliers.
- Continuous maintenance of the on-line product catalogue – potentially every two weeks for the term of the contract
- Becta will provide a monthly summary management information to aid the DfES to monitor and assist in progress
- Continuous supplier contract compliance and resolution of issues for the term of the contract period
- Becta will review requests from LEAs to use local non-catalogue suppliers and provide a decision on whether LEAs can proceed with the local supplier option
- Proposals for DfES offering a support service for smaller LEAs that do not have the capacity to undertake such procurements by March 2004.



- In addition, Becta should consider what flexibilities are available within the framework contract to supply other interactive display technologies should DfES policy change in this direction and, if necessary, advise on what changes would be needed to enable the contract to do this.

The budget for this area of work for 2003/4 is £595,152.

## **Support Services**

I have highlighted the importance of encouraging services and initiatives that seek to embed the use of ICT into pedagogy, into institutional development, and into national and local support structures in Becta's new remit. The work outlined here compliments that remit.

**Independent Procurement Advisory Service – LEA Support** - I would like Becta to provide local support and consultancy for seven LEAs: Derby City, Derbyshire, Manchester, Nottingham City, Stockport, Warrington and Wirral; work with them to improve services; and develop cost recovery and business models. **Outcome:** Evaluation with models completed by 31 March 2004.

**Enhancing Subject Teaching Using ICT – Further Subjects and National Rollout** - Becta should continue to work closely with my Department on the project to embed the use of ICT in subject teaching (Continuing Professional Development). I would like Becta to: manage and chair the project Board; manage the technical acceptance of the delivery platforms; manage the user acceptance tests of the platforms; and, let contracts for and manage the evaluation of the project. **Outcome:** Materials, platforms and models should be available by January 2004.

**Teaching and Learning with Digital Video** –I would like Becta to manage the pilot project, to investigate the potential of broadband connectivity, to facilitate and promote the integration of digital video assets into subject teaching and learning. **Outcome:** Networks should be established and resources available by March 2004.

**Technical Support – Improving Quality through Skills and Training** - The work aimed to improve the quality of ICT technical support for schools, by examining the competences and available training for supporting its delivery, and by improving knowledge about training opportunities. **Outcome:** there should be a matrix of roles and competences for ICT technical support by November 2003

**Total Cost of Ownership – Technical Support** Examine the cost and effectiveness of different approaches to the provision of technical support in schools using a total cost of ownership approach. **Outcome:** Reports for each of the schools taking part in the research and a final report designed and published by 31 October 2003.

**ICT Sustainability** – Develop the total cost of ownership (TCO) tool for schools use and provide appropriate advice and support **Outcome:** Effective support for use of the tool is in place and reports on trials of consultancy and seminars are completed by 31 March 2004.

**Workforce Pathfinders** - Produce a short video and other material to spread best practice emerging from the 32 schools designated as "Pathfinder Schools"

which shows ways that ICT is being used to assist the workforce remodelling agenda. **Outcome:** A video and digital content on best practice should be available to schools by the end of November 2003.

The budget for this area of work is £1,318,900 for 2003/4.