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Phil Hope MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Skills

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Chair
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Dear Andrew

**British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (Becta)
Annual Priorities 2006 – 2007**

The launch of the e-Strategy – Harnessing Technology for Children and Learners outlined my Government's strategy for delivering system-wide education reform enabled, accelerated and supported by technology. A key aim of the e-Strategy is to ensure that each individual can maximise their potential through personalisation of their learning and development.

Following the recent changes to the Department's approach to information management and information technology, Becta will take a leading role in driving the implementation of the e-Strategy and in positioning technology at the heart of learning and teaching. Key outcomes of these changes are:

- the creation of the Chief Information Officer Group with responsibilities for building the Department's internal IT capability and ensuring that services enabled by technology are designed around the needs of children and learners and provided through modern and co-ordinated delivery channels.
- a new and wider delivery remit for Becta with stronger accountability and wider autonomy to implement the Department's priorities in education through harnessing the potential of technology for children and learners.

These outcomes will mean significant changes in Becta's role and responsibilities and its delivery remit. However, to ensure continuity of business during this period of transition and to enable Becta to operate I am issuing this letter in its current version whilst the new priorities and remit for Becta are determined.

department for

education and skills

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As my Department's lead delivery partner for the e-Strategy, Becta will ensure that my strategic priorities for 2006-07, as outlined in this letter and in accordance with its remit letter, are delivered successfully and effectively. The Becta corporate plan will outline how my priorities are delivered

To deliver on my priorities, Becta will receive a total of **£32,625,000** as follows:

- **£11,100,000** to fund its core activities, which includes efficiency savings of £500,000.
- **£21,525,000** to deliver on my priorities as outlined in my letter. This includes **£2,900,000** from the LSC to deliver on my e-strategy priorities in the post 16 sector.

Becta will ensure that it has an efficient and effective strategy for spending its grant allocations that is based on best value for money and return on investment and that takes account of its efficiency savings commitments. Where it has not been ring-fenced, I will expect Becta to allocate the funding as it sees appropriate and in agreement with the Department to ensure the successful delivery of my priorities. Becta will report regularly on progress/ expenditure to date to the Department through the relevant governance arrangements. A separate MOU will outline these arrangements.

I am grateful for Becta's valuable advice and contribution in delivering the e-Strategy and I expect Becta to play a leading role in this whilst also ensuring that technology is strongly positioned at the heart of learning and teaching. I will clarify how I expect Becta's role and responsibilities to change in a new remit letter and a variation of my priorities letter that will reflect Becta's additional activities. In allocating its funding Becta will build flexibility within its overall resources to deliver on urgent pieces of work that may need to be commissioned outside the priorities letter. My Department will seek to keep these to a minimum. All new activities will be channelled through the sponsorship team in my Department and approved through the portfolio and programme governance arrangements outlined in a separate MOU.

My strategic priorities for 2006-07

My strategic priorities for this year are clustered into three strands and four themes designed to enable a sharper, integrated and focused implementation of the e-Strategy. These strands and priorities reflect Becta's remit as the lead delivery partner responsible for ensuring the successful delivery of the e-Strategy system-wide.

Strand 1: Co-ordinating and delivering the e-Strategy

I consider it vital that the benefits of the e-Strategy for children, learners, parents and practitioners are accelerated and intensified across the education sector. Becta should support the effective use of technology in all its forms for all learners and practitioners, including the safe use of the Internet, whenever and wherever it is most appropriate for the learner.

Becta's work should be fully inclusive and appropriate to the needs of all groups in society and aimed at creating educational opportunities and removing barriers to learning. A relatively new area for Becta to develop expertise and provide support is home access to and use of technology for all learners but especially for those most disadvantaged learners who may require additional support.

Key to the successful implementation of the e-Strategy is the delivery of system wide efficiency savings as articulated in the e-Learning targets. Becta will ensure that these targets are embedded across the four transformational themes and successfully delivered, where necessary, through key partner organisations.

I expect Becta, in close collaboration with key agencies, to lead an effective national partnership that will develop and deliver the e-Strategy as quickly and effectively as possible. Becta is accountable for gaining the commitment of all relevant partner organisations and for co-ordinating and concentrating their combined efforts. Where necessary the Department will provide appropriate brokerage to support Becta in this role.

I also expect Becta to develop a robust communications strategy and plan that clearly articulates how it will work with key partner organisations to manage and involve the industry and other stakeholders, and describes how the messages will be delivered to ensure that my priorities are achieved.

Co-ordinating and delivering the e-Strategy is a pivotal strategic role that must be underpinned by a clear critical path against which progress can be monitored, reviewed, measured and evaluated systematically by Ministers, the Department's senior officials and other stakeholders. Becta is accountable for putting in place the necessary systems and processes to do this and for ensuring the successful delivery of my priorities.

Delivering the four transformational themes

I expect Becta to align the e-Strategy work streams with the four transformational themes. In so doing Becta will have to adopt flexible roles for each of the four themes depending on their stage of development. Working within the framework of the Department's governance mechanisms, Becta will ensure that the e-Strategy priorities are effectively co-ordinated and delivered.

Priority 1: Strategic Technologies

Aims and objectives

To enable every learner to access the digital learning resources that support and enhance their learning (including in the home) whenever and wherever it is appropriate both now and in the future – by establishing coherent, reliable, affordable and sustainable models of provision and support across the children and learner system.

To create and establish all the component parts of the national digital infrastructure as quickly as is practicable, and lead the implementation of Strategic Technologies at national, regional and local levels.

Outcomes

- Significant early adoption of Strategic Technologies approaches in London and other localities based on effective consultation and partnership working – by end 2006.
- 60% of schools are committed to and making measurable progress towards conformance with the national digital infrastructure – by 2007.
- Recyclable efficiency savings of £25 million through best value purchase arrangements – by 2007.
- 65% of total expenditure on school educational technology transacted through best value (national framework) agreements – by 2007.
- All secondary schools are on track to achieve the government's target to undertake the Key Stage 3 onscreen test – by 2008.
- Support the implementation of the computers for pupil project in secondary schools, in particular:
 - o assist with the development of the Department's guidance and support materials for schools and Local Authorities to implement home access locally
 - o manage the procurement and support Local Authorities and schools including running mini-competitions
 - o commission and manage an evaluation of the project.

Priority 2: Personalised Content

Aims and objectives

To provide strategic advice, co-ordination, insight and delivery where appropriate, which can support:

- the creation of a body of evidence and insight that supports understanding of effective teaching and learning in a personalised context
- personalised digital content, its application and coverage.

To work towards achieving a vibrant and effective market that provides content and design tools which support a personalised education agenda and allow for creativity and innovation for all learners.

Outcomes

- Contribute to the national review on personalisation and on the development and articulation of a vision and programme for personalised education with digital content, tools and services.
- Contribute to the personalised content landscape analysis with a view to developing final outcomes and business requirements.
- Co-ordinate and manage underpinning activity in the personalised content strand such as the vocabulary management strategy, intellectual property rights, Content Advisory Board and BBC Digital Curriculum amenability monitoring.
- Complete the review of Curriculum Online and maintain and develop the Curriculum Online service in the broader context of resource discovery services for learning materials in the schools arena.

Priority 3: e-Maturity

Aims and objectives

To create models of maturity in the use and adoption of technology so that all those involved in services for children and learners understand the way in which technology can contribute to the effective delivery of their business outcomes and to apply the principles to support improvement.

Outcomes

- Design of overall system based maturity model agreed with key stakeholders, together with implementation plan to achieve baseline measures for the system – by September 2006.
- Over 50% of schools and colleges will be using the tools and progressing through the self review framework – by 2007.
- Develop definitions indicating the maturity models for learners, practitioners, leaders, institutions, support services and the national system including measures for judging progress – by 2007. Focus initial delivery priorities on the self-review approaches in the schools sector and FE Colleges.
- Develop plans and models for e-Maturity in Children's Services and Higher Education – by 2007.

Priority 4: Knowledge Architecture

Aims and objectives

To develop the knowledge architecture across the education system and Children's Services so that it can meet customer needs more efficiently and effectively. In particular, to facilitate personalisation in support of the individual user by ensuring greater continuity and integration between different providers and sectors.

To ensure a learner centred approach to knowledge architecture that will enable:

- children and learners to progress smoothly by providing continuity and portability of support
- practitioners, parents and employers to have a seamless and joined up view of their development and achievement.

Outcomes

- Strategic advice in support of development of a knowledge architecture for the education, skills and Children's Services system – in particular, to provide:
 - o strategic advice in relation to development of the architecture itself
 - o support for development of strategic directions on e-portfolios and e-assessment.
- Support in the development and early delivery of a routemap for implementing an identity management system for education, skills and Children's Services.
- Support for the Information Standards Board, working closely with the Department's Data Services Group.

Strand 2: Evidence and evaluation of impact

Becta's key strategic and pivotal role is to maintain a credible and persuasive evidence base to underpin a business case for the use of and the continued investment in educational technology. This must provide a clear understanding of how, when and why learning, teaching and institutional management improve with the effective use of technology. It must also provide objective assessments of the benefits of technology investment for learners, parents and other stakeholders. The analysis and interpretation of data must be presented strongly and clearly.

This involves a rolling programme of targeted and professionally directed research and evaluation, including international comparisons and exemplars.

Becta will share with the Department the results of research, evaluation and new evidence to inform national policy formulation and delivery.

I expect Becta's research, evidence and advice to support the use of technology in education and in particular:

- to support the evidence requirements of the Department's Comprehensive Spending Review
- to measure and monitor the e-learning efficiency targets.

I also expect Becta to pay particular attention to:

- monitoring progress in meeting harnessing technology priorities
- links between technology, personalisation and learner outcomes
- how technology can address key educational reform priorities and support the objectives of the e-Strategy
- innovation and leading edge practice in the use of technology in education.

Strand 3: Specific operational activities

Post 16 and learning skills sector – £2,900,000

I will expect Becta to deliver projects and services as agreed with the Learning and Skills Council to ensure the successful delivery of the Post-16 e-learning outcomes of my e-strategy.

Outcomes

- Ensure post 16 and learning skills priorities are embedded within the four transformational themes – in particular:
 - o develop appropriate models and standards of e-maturity in the sector
 - o co-ordinate post-16 elements of personalised content.
- Provide an online service for e-learning for practitioners in the post 16 learning and skills sector – in particular, the delivery of Learning and Skills web.
- Provide strategic advice, research and analysis on the implementation of the e-strategy in the post 16 learning and skills sector.
- Provide strategic assurance including the measurement of the achievement of the Post-16 outcomes of the e-Strategy.

Advisory service to the Academies Programme – £625,000

Becta will provide an advisory support service for individual Academy projects as well as strategic advice to the Department's Academies Group to ensure the effective application and use of technology so that each individual learner can maximise their potential through personalisation of their learning and development.

Outcomes

- To provide advice on technology visioning, development planning and procurement to individual Academy projects.
- To provide advice on procurement routes including the appointment of ICT consultants, monitor and approve the procurement of technology infrastructure including having oversight of the implementation.
- To provide advice, as required, to the Academies Programme on using technology to improve learning, teaching, management and administration.

Work with the Subject Associations - £750,000

Becta will work with the Subject Associations to support the professional development of teachers in using ICT in teaching and learning. Becta will agree a programme with the subject associations of core and foundation subjects to improve and embed the use of ICT in subject teaching and learning. Becta will agree and monitor the development of the programme to ensure the work supports the delivery of the e-strategy priorities.

Communications Aid Project (CAP)

I would like to express my gratitude to Becta for its valuable and central contribution to this very worthwhile initiative. Whilst this project came to a formal end in March 2006, I expect SEN policy officials in my Department to liaise closely with their Becta counterparts to ensure a smooth exit strategy from what I recognise has been an important and high profile initiative. In particular, I would want my Department to work with Becta to ensure that the momentum generated by CAP is not lost.

We are aware that the available funding could not stretch to meeting the equipment needs of all the children assessed under CAP. Here I will want officials to work with Becta to see if the needs of these could nevertheless be met via the specialist CAP centres. This possibility is currently being explored and would probably entail offering some support direct to the CAP centres expressly for this purpose, rather than routing grant via Becta.

PHIL HOPE

