

EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING COMMITTEE

EDUCATION ICT INITIATIVES

Issue

1. Update on progress with Assembly initiatives to improve ICT provision for schools. This paper covers:

- implementation of ELL committee recommendations;
- broadband strategy for Wales;
- ICT for Learning; and
- the National Grid for Learning.

ELL Committee Recommendations:

2. Progress is now well in hand with the implementation of the key recommendations in the ELL Committee's report on ICT in schools.

We have received nominations for the **Advisory panel on ICT** from a wide range of organisations. The first Panel meeting is scheduled to take place on 22 November.

3. OJEC notices were issued in September inviting companies and organisations to submit expressions of interest in the ICT Task Force and NGfL Cymru contracts. We will be issuing invitations to tenders to 5 shortlisted organisations for each contract on 26 November. We will also be asking shortlisted applicants to make presentations to the Advisory Panel during the tender process.

4. We have set up a small working group with LEAs, Estyn and WLGA representatives in order to develop detailed proposals for the ICT audit.

The working group is also examining monitoring and evaluation arrangements for the ICT for Learning initiative. Proposals will be submitted for consideration by the Advisory Panel.

Broadband

5. The First Minister announced details on 24 October of an £18.4m funding package to initiate the development of a broadband network across Wales this year. The package includes:

- A. broadband links into LEAs;
- B. credit approvals and some subsidy for links within LEAs;
- C. multimedia equipment for schools;
- D. on-going support and training;

6. One of the principal aims of the broadband strategy is to improve the ICT infrastructure for lifelong learning and it will be an early priority to provide broadband connections for schools, libraries and colleges - building on the SuperJanet network. In line with this aim, the broadband funding announced last month includes £9.9 million to provide a set of interactive whiteboards, data projectors and multimedia computers for every school in Wales by March 2002. Every primary school and special school will receive one set, secondary schools will receive at least three. This will enable all schools to develop the use of ICT for whole class teaching and to make use of the Digital Curriculum materials being developed by BBC Wales and others.

7. Funding will be distributed via local education authorities and we are presently in discussion with the authorities' ICT advisors about implementation arrangements. Authorities will have a measure of flexibility to ensure that they can meet specific needs within their area - for instance to support larger special needs units in secondary schools.

ICT for Learning

8. The ICT for Learning Prospectus was published at the beginning of the year inviting proposals for the deployment of £16 million to improve ICT facilities in schools and the community. ICT for Learning has four key aims:

- raising standards in schools;
- supporting lifelong learning;
- improving ICT skills; and
- tackling social disadvantage by providing equal access to ICT facilities.

9. In April, I announced approval of spending plans from local education authorities which will

provide ICT learning centres in over 240 school and 160 community venues; 16 mobile "centres" using portable computers; and a range of support worth £0.5 million for pupils with special educational needs. LEAs are now in the process of implementing these plans across Wales. Funding was distributed between LEAs on a formula basis which included measures for social deprivation and sparsity.

10. The ICT for Learning initiative is a key component of the Assembly's programme for tackling social disadvantage. In addition to ensuring that support for learning centres is focused on the most deprived areas within each authority, £0.5 million was set aside from the ICT for Learning budget to support projects to extend access to ICT in Communities First Areas. I have recently approved the use of this funding to support nine projects:

- **Afro-Celtic Education Culture and Arts Association** - 10 computers with Internet access and printers to be used in training for pupils/adults from ethnic minority communities in Cardiff;
- **Cynnal** recycled computer loan scheme for Y10 and Y11 school pupils and parents;
- **Denbighshire E-Learning Foundation** project in Rhyl/Rhyl West (Wales most disadvantaged ward);
- **Merthyr Tydfil E-Learning Foundation** project involving a cluster of secondary school and its primary school "feeders";
- **Mount Community Association/Gateway to ICT Learning** - laptop lending scheme for families and children on Mount and Hubberston estates, Pembrokeshire;
- **Pembrokeshire Family Lego Clubs in ICT Learning Centres.** After school, weekend and holiday clubs to encourage parents and pupils to develop ICT skills through use of Lego design software;
- **Pembrokeshire LEA/Monkton Priory Learning Centre** - 15 laptops and 2 mobile printers for home/study centre use by children from gypsy families;
- **Rhondda Cynon Taff Community Arts** - Laptop computers to be used to number of digital art projects in the community, focussed on people less able to

visit project centres;

- **Rhondda Cynon Taff Family Learning Centres** - ICT Learning Centres based in primary schools plus pools of laptops for loans to pupils/families for home use

12. ICT for Learning has also provided funding to support a national numeracy project including the supply of portable computers to 330 primary school teachers; laptop computers for every secondary head; and ICT infrastructure improvements for the national library and museums to enable them to contribute digital learning resources. The initiative complements related developments including:

- the lottery funded Community Access to Lifelong Learning programme (£13 million in Wales including £6.5m for the development of the People's Network in public libraries);
- the development of the University for Industry in Wales;
- £50 million funding available UK wide for the digitisation of learning .

National Grid for Learning (GEST funded)

13. We have been providing funding since 1998-9 to support school's participation in the National Grid for Learning. Some £30 million has been made available through GEST grants to local education authorities in this period. GEST funding has supported:

- school connections to the Internet to ensure that every school in Wales is connected by 2002. Data from LEAs confirms that this target is being achieved.
- the purchase of ICT equipment;
- ICT training for teachers and other school staff; and
- support for **local projects** to develop good practice in the use of ICT for raising standards. *LEAs will be making a presentation to the ELL Committee on some of these at the 14 November meeting.*

14. A further £8.4 million GEST funding will be available for ICT developments in 2002-3. For future years the precise levels of funding will depend on a number of factors including the strategy developed by the ICT Task Force, the recommendations from the Advisory Panel on ICT and the outcome of the ICT audit.

NOF ICT training

15. Teachers and school librarians across Wales are also benefiting from the lottery-funded ICT training which is being managed by the New Opportunities Fund. Take-up figures provided by NOF for the end of the 2001 Summer Term indicate that 73% of schools have signed up for training with close to 100% having been signed up the end of March 2002 when enrolments close. Training will continue to the end of March 2003, with the possibility of an extension of training for some training providers until December 2003. All training providers operating in Wales have been subject to quality assurance checks. Estyn has also carried out a review of the training programme in Wales

and we are following up the key messages from this with both NOF and local education authorities.

Compliance

16. ICT funding is paid to LEAs under section 484 of the Education Act 1996 and associated regulations. These powers have been transferred to the Assembly and delegated to the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning. The proposals in this paper raise no issues of regularity of propriety. In line with established practice, a copy of this paper has been forwarded for information to the ACO mailbox.

Financial Implications

17. The initiatives outline in this paper are to be supported within agreed resources for Education and Lifelong Learning (including provision in the GEST and Education ICT budget expenditure lines) and from funding for the broadband strategy announced by the Finance Minister in the draft budget statement. This paper raises no additional financial implications. In line with established practice, a copy of this paper has been forwarded for information to the FP and LGF revenue mailboxes.

Action

16. The Committee is invited to note progress with the initiatives described in this paper.