



# School Supported Distance Learning



department for  
**education and skills**

Creating Opportunity  
Releasing Potential  
Achieving Excellence

# School Supported Distance Learning

A good practice guide based  
on using ICT to support work  
with communities which have  
a travelling tradition

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December 2006

# Foreword

## School supported personalised distance learning

Working towards and achieving good practice in the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils is the responsibility of everyone within the education system – the DfES, local authorities, schools, teachers, governors, Traveller Education Support Services, parents and pupils.

For a range of complex reasons these pupils are amongst the lowest achieving pupils in our schools. One of those reasons can be that their schooling is interrupted. Enrolment in another school whilst travelling should always be encouraged, but it is not always practicable. When it is not, teachers increasingly have the option to provide good quality distance learning support. This offers an important way for pupils to continue their personalised development whilst away from their normal school. New opportunities, using ICT to provide email contact and exchanges of work with school, have opened up a whole new dimension of provision as well as adding a new perspective to the meaning of 'inclusive practice'.

The 'E-Learning and Mobility Projects' (ELAMP) projects, funded by DfES and managed by the National Association of Teachers of Travellers over the last two years, set out to investigate the benefits of interactive software and websites, together with enhanced home-school communication. They also explored the introduction of a signed school / parent and pupil distance learning agreement.

The projects have enabled children to keep in close contact with their peers and teachers, getting their work marked promptly and receiving new



**Jim Knight MP**  
Minister of State  
for Schools



**Lord Andrew Adonis**  
Parliamentary  
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Schools

challenges. Experience to date has shown that pupils engaged in this way of working have been well motivated and undertaken more distance learning work to a higher level than ever before. Participant pupils have also done better academically, re-integrated back into their base schools more easily and resumed their studies with fewer difficulties than in previous years.

***"It has been staggering just how much pupils' confidence has increased. They are much more motivated to write and record ideas generally and have made the transition back to school better than ever" (teacher)***

This guidance seeks to offer lessons from emergent good practice as well as to encourage more schools and local authorities to develop this new type of inclusive provision for mobile travelling children. It is also of relevance for other groups of children whose schooling is interrupted, for whatever reason.

With the increasing use of ICT-based learning environments and new technologies emerging over the next few years, schools have the potential to develop such supported distance learning activity as a potential resource for all their pupils, and we hope that this document will support broader ideas and developments; and, most of all, will help more pupils to achieve their potential, whatever their ethnic and cultural background, whatever their life circumstances and whichever school they attend.

Minister of State  
for Schools

Parliamentary Under  
Secretary of State  
for Schools

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*“I was pleased when I was told by the traveller education lady that I was going to get a brand new laptop to take away with me while we travelled around. It meant that I could keep in touch with school and keep up to date with my school work. It was really good for sending emails to my friends who I missed while I was away. It was nice that we were trusted by the school to look after the computer. I think it was a good idea to help travelling children to learn about computers and have extra help while travelling.”*  
(Gypsy pupil: Northants)

*“The laptop has been more enjoyable to use... something to look forward to... and has improved my standards. It is really good how it has all the programs on as at school so this means I carry on with my schoolwork whenever I want. I know if I’ve done it correctly, and (I know) quickly. If I’m stuck... I don’t need to wait for a teacher to come and help me as I can just email. It helped me a lot with my spellings and stuff like that... I could check it out. My friends and me have been keeping in touch about where we are going next and stuff like that”* (Comments from Fairground pupils)



*“The laptop has helped me and my family in so many ways e.g. it has helped me do my homework and improve my spelling. I am typing faster and using my two hands to type and it’s given me more ICT skills e.g. I am able to help other kids when they ask for help. The laptop made it possible for me to browse the internet freely... I helped my cousin use his laptop to email his work to school and I have sent emails to my teacher and attached my work... I use my laptop all the time and do much more work on it than I did before.”* (Gypsy pupil: Northumberland)

# Introduction

Much of the guidance contained in this document is based on pilot experience stimulated by two e-learning and mobility initiatives, the E-LAMP projects, which took place during the period 2003-06, and which involved ten English Traveller Education Support Services (TESS) in different parts of the country.

The essence of the approach which these TESS explored was to use laptops and internet access to support distance learning for pupils whose families were away from school for significant parts of the year because of parental work patterns. The approach enabled children from traditional travelling communities to stay in touch with their school electronically in order to exchange messages and work, and to have access to the rich learning resources provided by the internet. It was piloted within both the primary and secondary sectors, as well as first, middle and upper schools, and there was also a focus on supporting transition across these sectors. As with any new initiative there were lessons to be learned but it was pleasing to see a significant shift in both motivation and attainment for many pupils who had previously been dependent on paper-based distance learning packs. These positive results have formed the basis for the identification of aspects of good practice which are outlined in this document.

The rationale behind the approach was to use ICT to strengthen links with pupils and families so that schools could improve support for children whose learning would otherwise have been interrupted. This is clearly an important challenge for schools working with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and children from other travelling communities. However, there are also important implications for children whose schooling is interrupted for

other reasons, where one solution is to look to the possibility of temporary school-based distance learning support.

The E-LAMP projects have been coordinated by the National Association for the Teachers of Travellers (NATT) and mainly funded by the DfES, but with support from the Nuffield Foundation, the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain, the NASUWT and the mobile phone provider O<sub>2</sub>. The work of the projects has been evaluated independently by the Department of Educational Studies at the University of Sheffield and the evidence gathered suggests that success depends on careful consideration of three interdependent themes. These relate to an understanding of the needs and contexts of pupils and their families, to effective school-based arrangements to support distance learning, and to the planned mix of materials and messaging options required to help provide effective support. This guide addresses these themes. Clearly the use of particular software and associated digital learning materials is dependent on developments within individual schools, as well as the needs of particular pupils. NATT has, however, also produced an annotated list of learning materials, including CD ROMs and web-based resources, which have been found to be useful for supporting young distance learners. This can be found on the NATT website [www.natt.org.uk](http://www.natt.org.uk)

It is not intended to be comprehensive or definitive, but does provide some valuable ideas for those making a start in this important area of work.

Finally, it should be noted that the guide has been written keeping in mind colleagues who are new to

the use of ICT in this context. It therefore, includes a focus on important factors related to 'e-safety' in the home environment. For those working with children in mobile situations it also includes a final section with some important messages about the practicalities of using datacards to provide internet access.<sup>1</sup>

As with any commentary related to the use of ICT, some of what follows will prove dated, but other aspects of our project experiences resonate with what TESS already know about more traditional forms of distance learning support and will probably stand the test of time. We hope that the guidance will also prove helpful to staff who support other pupils whose schooling is interrupted and will encourage them to draw on emerging TESS expertise in this area. The report itself has been drafted by Ken Marks, from the University of Sheffield, but with active input from some of the original project partners and from colleagues who are members of the NATT ICT working group.

I hope you will find the document informative and would like to take the opportunity to thank all the families, schools and TESS which have played their part in our projects.

**Marion Rowlands**

Chair NATT ICT working group

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The photographs included within this report have been provided by some of the families, schools and Traveller Education Support Services involved with the projects. We would also like to record our thanks for their permission to use these within the document.

<sup>1</sup> Whilst families are travelling they don't have access to normal telephone (or cable) options. Datacards link users to the internet via mobile telephone networks.

# **Section 1: Strategic considerations**

**What will be the cost?**

**Timescales and development.**

**What ICT support is needed?**

**Does the approach have a clear impact?**



**1.1** The sections of this guide are concerned with different aspects of the potential use of laptops to provide home-based pupils with internet access and linkage with school, as a way of underpinning distance learning activity. There are, however, some strategic questions which schools and services may want to consider before they embark on a more detailed exploration of this type of approach as part of their response to interrupted learning, and here the concept of 'cost-effectiveness' makes a useful starting point.

**1.2** In this context cost has two main dimensions: the direct costs of purchasing and using the ICT equipment if it is to be provided by school, and the investment in staff time. It is relatively easy to pin down the former dimension. A suitable laptop, with insurance and Office Software supplied, plus carry case, is likely to cost about £600. The annual cost of a datacard account for a pupil is about £350 (2006 prices), and terrestrial communication options will be rather less. It is also wise to allow for some additional software, including virus and filtering software, and a small contingency. If the laptop is seen as having a three-year lifespan the annual cost will then average out at about £700 to £750.<sup>2</sup>

**1.3** The cost in terms of staff time is, of course, much more difficult to quantify. There will clearly be a need for coordination roles, with possible cost implications. Targeted staff development

time may also need to be set aside to allow teachers to develop both skills and materials. However, the encouraging longer-term message from E-LAMP experience was that it did prove possible for teachers to phase marking and feedback activity into their normal workloads (see Sections 2 and 3).

**1.4** The experience of the E-LAMP projects also suggests that developmental timescales are very important. Schools are normally busy, and sometimes complex, institutions. The introduction of any new approach is likely to need careful phasing and ICT-based enhancement for distance learning is no exception. In the context of children from travelling communities, experience suggests that it will normally be necessary to plan for a minimum two/three year developmental period where TESS staff can work flexibly with school-based colleagues to gain experience and work through the best way to prepare pupils and families, and to provide distance learning support. Given school commitment, this 'learn and share' approach to development has proved effective in enabling staff to explore approaches and relatively efficient in terms of staff time.

**1.5** In this context it is important to note that schools are currently being encouraged to make use of electronic 'learning environments', with every pupil to have an online learning space by

2007-08.<sup>3</sup> These may well provide the basis for part, or all, of the distance learning framework which needs to be developed. Planning will, however, still involve careful thinking about digital tasks and materials, about how work is to be chunked and exchanged electronically, and about the necessary pattern of supportive electronic messaging between teachers, pupils and families. It will also involve thinking about the role of possible pack, or paper based, distance learning materials and how these can complement on-line learning.

**1.6** Project experience also suggests that curriculum prioritisation is vital. It will normally be better to start with a relatively small, focused distance learning programme rather than trying to cover everything. Such an initial programme might centre on activities to reinforce literacy, it might look to subject areas which are known to interest particular pupils, or it might lean towards building from the ICT strengths of particular specialist staff in school. The message here is 'start small' and allow staff to learn from experience and change/share practice, whilst adding to the curriculum menu and beginning to embed the approach in school thinking over time.

**1.7** Phasing is also important in terms of building up a structure for technical and ICT support. Some schools already have suitable staff, but others, particularly within the primary sector, are more dependent on their LAs or other external agencies. Here it is particularly important to try to plan with ICT support services. Initially it will be important to take technical advice about the potential of local learning platform developments.<sup>4</sup> It will also be important to consider issues like virus protection and the technical aspects of e-safety in the home (See Section 4). In addition, if schools or services are supplying equipment, technical support is needed for the unexpected in terms of purchasing and setting up equipment, and testing it out. For the longer term it is then necessary to set up arrangements to check out and repair equipment. E-LAMP practice has been for each TESS to have a spare laptop available for exchange with families and a small contingency budget to cover the

costs of secure delivery services. There were only a few instances of the need to repair or replace machines and this mechanism worked well. During the product guarantee period responsibility lies with the supplier, but some thought needs to be given to paying for subsequent checks and repairs, and how best to relate this to local replacement policies.

**1.8** So what about the benefits? In terms of experience with travelling children, one interesting and significant impact of electronic links between schools, pupils and parents has been a reinforced sense of belonging within the school community. With children sometimes away for long periods there can be a mind-set which affects both families and schools and which is well summed up in the phrase 'out of sight out of mind'. In this respect the impact of email and messaging proved very significant within the E-LAMP projects. Patterns of regular communication seem to have established new levels of awareness as well as new expectations. Most children proved much more motivated in completing and returning their work, including traditional pack-based work. There were also some interesting spin offs. Many travelling pupils came back into school more regularly when their families made brief visits back to base. Some families even changed travel patterns so that their children could be in school for key events, and most children were much more positive about coming back to school at the end of their travel season.

**1.9** Where the home-school relationship worked well, parents commented on the positive impact of the laptop as an interface for completing school tasks. They reported improvements in motivation and learning engagement, as well as changed attitudes to schoolwork. Feedback from teachers also indicated that E-LAMP pupils had achieved more in terms of learning gains than in previous years. Literacy and presentation skills were to the fore, but with individual pupils often gaining significantly across a number of subject areas. Such subject-specific gains were often clearly related to the use of recommended CD ROMs and

websites, and to the use of web searches to gather information for set topics.

**1.10** Clearly some aspects of this progress relate specifically to the mobile context, but others suggest the value of ICT-enhanced distance learning provision for other children who are out of school for protracted periods. For the longer-term, perhaps most significant within these gains was the way in which many pupils began to take control of aspects of their own schoolwork; designing original ways of presenting completed tasks, pursuing their own topic searches and developing their own creative interests.



<sup>2</sup> This also includes a costing for one spare machine for every ten to be used (see below).

<sup>3</sup> An electronic ('virtual') learning environment can take many forms but its basic functions include providing individual on-line work spaces for learners and teachers. The right kind of environment can enable teachers to set work for individual pupils and review it when completed. It can also provide messaging facilities so that teachers can provide instructions and feedback to pupils, and pupils can seek clarification of tasks.

<sup>4</sup> Some platforms, or materials within platforms, may not, for example, be suitable for the 'narrowband' speeds associated with dial-up connections from the home or supported by datacards. (See also Section 5)



# **Section 2: Supported distance learning – the school perspective**

**What can be realistically achieved?**

**Supported distance learning:  
new coordination roles?**

**School structures, raising awareness  
and involving staff.**

**Planning related to the mobile lifestyle.**



**2.1** As with any new school-based initiative, establishing effective practice in this area means having both a long-term vision of what can be achieved and some form of phased action-review stepping stones. The process will also need to include careful consideration of roles and structures which can help to support this new dimension of ICT-enhanced learning.

**2.2** Experience from E-LAMP proved an important reminder that each school is unique, likely to have its own potential growth points, as well as its own concerns and priorities. The main purpose of this section is therefore to briefly highlight what can be achieved, and then to draw attention to some broad pointers rather than attempting detailed guidance. These pointers start by looking at the challenge of creating effective coordination roles and move on to the consideration of some broader structural issues. Although based on experience with travelling children most of these pointers have broader relevance to school-supported distance learning. The section then concludes by identifying particular features of the mobile context, and of datacard communication, which are important in terms of work with travelling children.

### **2.3 What can be achieved?**

Some of the benefits evident from E-LAMP experiences were outlined in the previous section. As distance learners, pupils who are away from

the school setting have the potential to use their laptop interface in four basic ways: to help them to organise and present their work, to give them access to interactive courseware which can reinforce their learning, to allow them to draw on internet resources and to enable electronic communication with school. New developments using web-based virtual learning environments, and parallel developments like e-portfolios, are beginning to provide a framework for this activity, but the experience of the E-LAMP projects clearly demonstrates that a straightforward mix of CD ROMs, selected educational websites, email and attachments can already provide a straightforward but effective underpinning for supported pupil learning. These ICT enhancements added a new, and very effective, dimension to traditional pack-based learning where this was already established. Indeed most practitioners involved with E-LAMP continued to see the value of a combined approach, drawing from the strengths of both ICT-based and traditional methods.

### **2.4 Coordination roles**

The most successful practice identified within the E-LAMP projects reflected experience in supporting distance learning work with traditional packs, but saw important changes in the balance of coordination roles.



**2.5** Traditionally coordination has emphasised the importance of having a named member of staff responsible for two tasks: (a) acting as a hub of communication with travelling families throughout the year, including preparatory meetings with pupils and families, and (b) acting as an intermediary focus for efforts to provide and support pack-based distance learning materials for the travel period. In some instances this has involved a member of TESS staff working regularly with school, but in most it has involved members of school teaching or support staff, normally working fairly closely with TESS colleagues. These underpinning roles continued to characterise best practice within the E-LAMP initiatives but there were some important changes in the nature and balance of the two key tasks.

**2.6** In terms of communication, email opened up a completely new and regular pattern of contact throughout the travel period, with exchanges of information and checks on progress. Some partners also introduced back-up plans with their local TESS so that if families weren't responding it was possible to follow up any problems. As noted in the previous section this new pattern of regular background messaging exchange made a very significant difference to the way in which pupils and families viewed school and 'schoolwork', and to pupil progress. Some coordinators went on to reinforce their own links by encouraging 'buddies'

and classmates to be involved in the regular exchange of news and information. Clearly this aspect of the coordination role will be central to future developments for travelling children, and is also likely to be an important success factor for broader school-based attempts to support other children who are temporarily away from school.

**2.7** In terms of the focus on planning and support, traditionally coordination for work with travelling children has meant acting in an intermediary role with other staff. Coordinators have encouraged class teachers to prepare modules of paper and activity based learning material, perhaps helping to make some adaptations, and then in the case of secondary schools taking the extra step of drawing the varied contributions of different specialist teachers together into a pack. The 'coordinator' would then often continue to act as an intermediary in sending out and receiving completed modules of the pack over time. The logic of electronic exchange seems to have led to a shift in thinking about the balance of this role with some class teachers (primary) and subject specialists (secondary) becoming themselves directly and productively involved in electronic exchanges of work and messages with individual pupils. This raised new questions about the coordination of mixed (traditional and ICT-based) programmes. It also raised questions about

aspects of the intermediary role itself; in particular about how to monitor patterns of electronic staff-pupil exchange to ensure that, once agreed and established, such contacts were maintained. These issues are likely to be particularly important within the secondary sector and the importance of the monitoring challenge also reflects a critical feature of early E-LAMP experience. Where individual teachers and pupils did keep up regular contact there was a mutual reinforcement effect with excellent results, and the regularity of contact also allowed teachers to phase marking and feedback activity into their normal workload. On the other hand, where pupils or teachers failed to respond to messages or work sent, frustrations were quickly evident and the experience was often counterproductive in terms of teacher and pupil commitment and morale.

**2.8** The communication and intermediary/monitoring roles clearly need careful thought as new school-based developments emerge. Gaps in communication need to be addressed speedily, and coordination also needs to take account of decisions about the balance of ICT-based and any traditional, pack-based, learning activity to be provided. Again these are important considerations for supporting other children in interrupted learning contexts and not just travelling pupils.

### **2.9 A whole school approach**

Clearly, effective coordination roles are likely to be a prerequisite for success. However the use of ICT to support distance learning will also raise broader questions for individual schools. Some schools are already beginning to use platforms which have the potential to support aspects of e-learning, and are involving staff in a systematic way in the developmental process. Here one challenge may be to encourage approaches, and a focus on materials, which are suitable for the truly distance learning context; i.e. rather than as a supplement to classroom-based learning. Another will be to ensure that careful consideration is given to developing balanced provision for distance learners which may need to include, for example, pack-based off-line activity.

**2.10** The new emphasis on virtual learning platforms may well act as a spur to developments in other schools, but for many the distance learning possibilities opened up by the use of email and messaging exchanges and electronic materials represent a completely new departure and may need positive encouragement. As noted in Section 1, project experience suggests that it can be helpful to adopt a phased approach, initially over two or three years, and to involve individual staff who already have some interest in using ICT to enhance learning. This can enable all concerned to gain and share valuable experience, and give time to consider ways of extending and embedding supported distance learning within school structures. Again, it is important to do this in a systematic way. The approach to staff involvement, and stepping stones chosen, are likely to vary from school to school, but such thinking about distance learning should ideally be incorporated into school review and action processes. This developmental period is also a time when TESS can have an important part to play in supporting schools by sharing their own distance learning expertise and helping to adapt it to the ICT context.

**2.11** For E-LAMP the active focus on planning proved especially important in secondary schools. Here the number of pupils from the travelling communities was often relatively small in terms of the school roll, but the distance learning approach still needed to be embedded within institutional thinking about curriculum, support and delivery structures, as well as within plans for ICT development. Integrated planning to include other pupils in interrupted learning situations proved one way of raising the profile of the challenge. Moving from the efforts of individual teachers towards departmental commitment was also felt to be especially important. These emphases enabled a more systematic approach to raising awareness, to departmental decisions about electronic resources, and to proactive departmental support for staff who needed to begin to explore ICT-based distance learning provision for some of their own pupils.

### **2.12 Planning to take account of the mobile lifestyle**

Apart from the emphasis on TESS links, most of what has been written in this section can be seen to be applicable to supporting any pupil in the distance learning environment. There are, however, particular features of the mobile context which need to be taken into account where schools are working with Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and other travelling families.

**2.13** Transition is an issue because mobile pupils are often away from base in September. Transition therefore normally involves a change of teachers part way through the distance learning period, with new contacts to be established and work set for the first part of the coming school year. The process can be particularly challenging for teachers who are taking over a distance learning support role at the start of the autumn term, with a potential impact on continuity and pupil commitment. For some pupils, transition will also mean a change of schools which will add a new and significant dimension to the challenge. The good news from E-LAMP was that the use of email and the introduction of ICT-based transition projects can both help to bridge these gaps. However, experience also highlighted the need for carefully coordinated planning, both within schools and for TESS.

**2.14** Variability and predictability of family travel patterns also emerged as important issues during the project period. The initial E-LAMP model was to provide the equipment for a preliminary 'training' period, to allocate it for the travelling season, and then to collect it back in when families returned. The later approach was to support 'continuous use' throughout the school year. Each model can have advantages, depending on the school and family context. The first mirrors practice with traditional distance learning packs and makes a clear distinction between time at school and distance learning, which can be important in terms of the expectations of both families and staff. The second approach was introduced as a response to families with more complex or

unpredictable travel and attendance patterns, and continuity of use also proved particularly effective for families with limited experience of traditional distance learning. Here the use of the laptops and applications became part of a holistic schooling experience, with additional implications for staff, but with the advantages of being able to reinforce ICT and independent learning skills during periods of attendance as well as maintaining supportive contact whilst families were away.

**2.15** The trailer home can be a busy environment and schoolwork needs to fit in with the overall pattern of family activity. This raises important questions about realistic amounts of time for focused learning, and experience from both traditional and ICT-enhanced initiatives suggests that ten hours per week makes a good starting point for discussion with pupils and families. This equates to four or five half-day sessions each week. Some pupils will do much more but the baseline ten hours is an important marker for planning, which also takes account of pupil motivation. It is important to appreciate that materials and tasks need to be designed to engage home-based learners, and that where this happens they can often cover much more ground within ten hours of focused study than is achieved within equivalent school-based lessons. Chunking work into discrete and manageable sections, and providing targets for completion, are clearly very important in this context. Setting such work, and judging how long it will take, represent another set of skills which teachers will need to develop from their own experiences and from working with colleagues and individual pupils.

**2.16** Responding to transition, and choosing suitable approaches/programmes for the school and for families, are clearly important planning considerations. However, the limitations of datacard technology also need to be taken into account. These are discussed further in Section 5 but deserve mention at the end of this section as they have important implications for ICT planning within school. In particular datacards make the exchange of media-rich content impracticable,



and it is also important to be aware of the impact of communication blackspots which can affect continuity of contact. At one level these considerations mean that it is important for individual teachers to plan for the exchange of relatively simple learning materials, to allow for the possibility of some gaps in regular contact, and to make good use of CD-ROM, and other, off-line materials to provide media-rich content. At another, the narrowband constraints may mean care with strategic school decisions about the planned development and use of particular ICT-based learning environments, and in the selection of different types of digital learning material for use across the school.

# **Section 3: Supported distance learning – the pupil and family perspective.**

**What are the best ways to prepare pupils?**

**How should parents be involved?**

**Using home-school agreements.**

**3.1** In the previous section it was suggested that school planning for distance learning situations could be informed by the experiences of traditional and more recent work with travelling children. The section then concluded with some particular features of working with travelling communities, and another important feature is that schools will normally know which pupils and families will be away for part of the year. This means that it becomes possible to prepare pupils and parents, not always an option for interrupted learning situations involving, for example, sickness. This section will therefore focus mainly on what has been learned with travelling children and could be applied to other 'predictable' situations (i.e. where school attendance is known to be likely to become problematic), but will conclude with some brief thoughts about what this suggests about more fluid situations.

**3.2** Where it is possible to plan in advance, pupils will clearly need time to learn to use their equipment in the distance learning context, building from any activities they are already pursuing in school. E-LAMP partners designed preparatory programmes for their children and these efforts were complemented by encouraging the children to begin to use the ICT equipment at home wherever possible. The programmes were planned in different ways, depending on the school

setting and the ages of the children, but generally they set out to address:

- The basics of using a laptop, including power supply and battery awareness
- Using CD ROMs or other courseware (as supplied by the school or TESS)
- The basics of connecting to the internet (in this context via a datacard)
- Using the laptop to prepare and present work (for example via Word and Powerpoint)
- Using the laptop as a simple filing system (to store documents related to tasks and completed work)
- Sending and receiving emails
- Sending and receiving/filing attachments, including an awareness of file sizes (see also Section 5)
- Accessing and using websites, including specific sites already chosen by schools and TESS
- Using web search facilities

**3.3** Where schools were already using virtual learning environments some of these threads were, of course, part of trying to ensure that the children practiced using features of the environment. Some partners also provided printers and/or scanners and some provided digital cameras. Here, again, attempts were made to cover the basics of use. Time was also set aside for discussions about the safe use of equipment, about how it should be

used (i.e. only for agreed educational purposes) and on expectations about keeping in email or messaging contact with school and teachers, as well as completing and returning tasks, including any normal, pack-based tasks.

**3.4** In practice, time constraints and technical problems within the E-LAMP initiatives meant that some partners didn't actually complete their preparatory programmes before some of the children left for their travelling season and TESS staff had to supplement preparation by going out to visit families. This experience suggests that training needs to begin as early as possible once it becomes clear that future distance learning support would be beneficial, whatever the context. Clearly an early start maximises time for practice but it is also important in order to allow time for technical hitches which may not emerge until the children begin to use their ICT equipment at home. For travelling children new to ICT-supported distance learning, training should ideally start as early as possible in the school year, particularly as participants may experience difficulties caused by localised datacard communication blackspots which may impact on internet access either whilst practising at school or at home.

**3.5** Parental involvement was also an important target within the E-LAMP project and may be an equally important consideration for other interrupted learning situations. It worked best where the objective was to reinforce a sense of partnership between home, school and, in this instance, TESS staff. Most partners arranged training/awareness sessions for parents and in some instances parents were also invited to parts of the programmes arranged for their children. Such arrangements tended to vary with the age of pupils, as well as with local circumstance. Where parents weren't able to attend key sessions, local TESS staff were often able to cover the ground through home visits. Some schools were also able to involve technical staff, and some invited key school staff to selected sessions in order to reinforce home-school links and to help raise staff awareness of the initiative.

**3.6** Most attempts to raise parental awareness covered:

- Safe and responsible use of equipment
- The basics of using and looking after a laptop
- Using datacards, including a general awareness of the potential for excess costs (see also Section 5)
- What to do and who to contact if equipment didn't seem to work properly
- The importance of both encouraging and monitoring children's learning activity

**3.7** Some partners added to this by offering time for parents to make a start with their own ICT skills; partly so that they could help reinforce work with younger children, and partly because they recognised the importance of parental modelling and wanted to encourage family involvement.

**3.8** Clearly both pupils and parents were being asked to absorb quite a lot of information in preparatory sessions, as well as developing practical skills and awareness. As a response to this some partners produced notes or simple 'handbooks' and at least one partner extended this idea by introducing 'how to do it' sections to cover some of the key processes which children would be using whilst away from school. These initiatives also proved particularly useful for families who left before training programmes were completed.

**3.9** The different aspects of preparatory work were complemented by the introduction of an E-LAMP home-use agreement, and by a Health and Safety document which was initiated in Leicestershire and then used by other partners. Both required parental and pupil signature and both were intended to reinforce key messages from the training/awareness sessions. Some partners also introduced separate home-school learning agreements, but before discussing these developments in more detail it is important to draw attention to e-safety considerations.

**3.10** It would be fair to say that the main focus of the initial E-LAMP projects was to see whether

the laptops and internet access could make a real difference to pupil progress, to test out datacards and to gain experience of the practicalities of ICT-based approaches; both from the family and school perspective. After the completion of the second project, thoughts turned to consolidation and at this stage partners felt that there was a need to put more emphasis on raising the awareness of some of the potential hazards of pupil use of the internet in the home environment. These include access to inappropriate web-based material and the dangers of open communication with 'strangers'. They are discussed in more detail in the next section of this guide. The section also includes some specific advice about vigilance which has additional implications for both preparatory sessions with parents and for awareness raising as part of pupil training.



### 3.11 Contracting with families

As indicated above it proved helpful to introduce a home-use agreement during the training period in order to reinforce messages about agreed and responsible uses of equipment.<sup>5</sup> The agreement was based on an exemplar designed by the E-Learning Foundation and can be found in Appendix 1. It includes issues like taking reasonable care to prevent loss or damage and acceptable use of equipment. Schools and LAs are increasingly issuing guidance about responsible home use of the internet, and this local guidance needs to be incorporated into future agreements. For the travelling context it also proved important to add a warning that families might be charged for any excessive use of datacard communication caused by downloading large, unauthorised files from the internet.<sup>6</sup>



**3.12** Appendix 2 contains a parallel document on Health and Safety; another important theme which is again discussed in more detail in the next section of this guide. It has also proved helpful to list the equipment issued to each family, and to ask parents to sign for it; partly for audit purposes but also to ensure clear, agreed records for regular electrical safety checks.

**3.13** Home-school learning agreements had already become part of best practice in work with travelling families using traditional distance learning packs. As the name implies these contracts have a rather different purpose, and are a response to the challenge of encouraging a systematic learning focus for young isolated learners within the home environment. Such agreements outline targets for work to be completed and returned to school, and for the amount of time to be spent on schoolwork. They also give details of who to contact at school if there are difficulties with the work set, and are sometimes accompanied by a simple log which pupils/parents are asked to maintain. These various threads translate readily into the new, ICT-enhanced, context where they can include targets for electronic communication and exchange, and electronic logs which can be returned periodically to school. Parallel features are also available in some virtual learning environments.

**3.14** Appendix 3 contains an outline of what might be set out in such an agreement. It draws from best traditional practice and some early initiatives within E-LAMP. The outline is couched in general terms as individual learning contracts need to be tailored to particular school settings. The appendix also contains some notes which, again, draw from best practice and stress that the agreements need to be discussed and finalised with pupils and parents before they depart. Such meetings also provide an opportunity to stress the importance of regular communication with teachers, of reporting any gaps in communication with particular staff, and of phoning in if there are problems with datacard connectivity (blackspots). As noted in the previous section, regular exchange of electronic materials, within an agreed pattern, is very important if teachers are to provide cost-effective monitoring and support.

**3.15** Such agreements have also proved useful as the basis for summative joint review when families return. Perhaps even more important, the possibilities of electronic exchange mean that schools can now begin to develop a fairly

robust formative picture of pupil progress during the travel season by looking at patterns of email exchange and the contents of pupil logs, as well as work which has been completed and returned, and comparing these with targets set out within the learning contract.

**3.16** In terms of the timing and development of new school-based initiatives aimed at travelling children, and work with pupils in other predictable interrupted learning contexts, it is relatively straightforward to introduce agreements about appropriate use of equipment and to ensure that both parents and pupils are made aware of Health and Safety issues. The development of learning agreements may take more time, particularly in the secondary sector, as their design and implementation may need to reflect the phased approach recommended in this guide. However, there is much to be said for exploring some basic aspects of an agreement from the outset. These might include targets for frequency of email contact with the school coordinator, reporting any gaps in expected communication from school, targets for returning selected parts of the work set and keeping a simple log.

### **3.17 Less predictable interrupted learning contexts**

Clearly it is only sensible to use ICT for school-supported distance learning where pupils are able to use such provision effectively, and where schools are able to enable safe access to suitable learning materials as well as tutorial (i.e. teaching staff) back up. With the increasing emphasis on e-access for pupils, and the use of virtual learning environments, such developments should, in time, become more realistic as pupil preparation will become less of an issue and teachers, potentially at least, more able to provide immediate support.

**3.18** As such possibilities emerge predictability should become less of an issue and there may well be a convergence of practice in supporting children in a variety of out-of-school settings where absence is likely to be protracted. Some children will continue to require specialist LA

support, but schools will increasingly be in a position to take a more proactive stance with some of their own pupils through distance learning initiatives. In terms of unpredictable absence what then seems important is that schools establish frameworks so that they can respond quickly, and here it is possible to draw together a number of threads which have already been discussed in this document:

- Having a named member of staff able to be in supportive contact with families and to coordinate with other staff to put together suitable distance learning programmes
- Being prepared to present programmes in a structured way: introducing clear and simple learning/schoolwork targets for tasks to be completed and returned, and targets for regular email/messaging contact with school and with the named coordinator
- Providing supplementary guidance and 'how to' notes for pupils if this is felt to be necessary
- Providing a Health and Safety document aimed at home use of ICT equipment, which can be shared with the family
- Providing e-safety guidance for families (see also Section 4)
- Having an acceptable-use document if part of the equipment is provided by the school
- Considering one or more home visits to talk through issues and provide practical assistance
- Inviting parents into school to discuss issues and progress (especially if home visiting is problematic)

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<sup>5</sup> Because of the way the pilot projects were set up and monitored these agreements were established between families and their TESS. The same principles would apply to a school-family use agreement.

<sup>6</sup> Datasheet communication is charged by volume of traffic, with excess charges if monthly limits are exceeded (see the final section for more detail)

# **Section 4: Safe use of technology in the home environment**

**Health and Safety considerations.**

**Protection against viruses and invasive internet traffic.**

**E-safety: guarding against unsuitable material and communication.**



**This section is concerned with the critical area of safe use of the technology in the home environment, stressing the importance of active parental roles as well as software products which can, to a degree, monitor or filter various forms of internet communication.**

#### **Safe use of the laptop and the internet**

**4.1** For young distance learners working in the home environment, health and safety, 'e-safety' and 'e-security' become very important issues. For travelling children it is also important to be aware that datacards provide connection to the internet through mobile phone companies which don't act as 'Internet Service Providers' in the normal sense. In effect they provide an open form of access which doesn't screen communication.

**4.2** This section will draw on project experience as well as current advice available via the DfES and Becta, which stresses that there are fairly clear steps which can be taken to reduce a variety of risks, but that there are no foolproof solutions so that parental involvement and supervision are critical. One useful starting point for considering these issues is the Becta publication on E-safety.<sup>7</sup> It is written for schools but contains a wealth of useful advice. Others, targeted at children and

home use include the Childnet International website, [www.childnet-int.org](http://www.childnet-int.org), and the 'using computers and the internet' section of the parents' centre site [www.parentscentre.gov.uk](http://www.parentscentre.gov.uk). The Safety Annex of the current 'Computers for Pupils' initiative also contains some valuable pointers and has the advantage of being written for the school/LA perspective.<sup>8</sup>

#### **4.3 Health and safety issues: using the equipment**

The available advice covers the need for parental awareness about amounts of time children spend on the internet and the importance of both setting limits and encouraging regular breaks to avoid muscle and eye strain. It also discusses the level and positioning of the computer screen and user-posture which needs to be reinforced by taking account of seating arrangements. Finally there is advice about the need to beware of stray leads and the importance of avoiding any actions which may be dangerous because they might expose users to electric shock. As noted in the section on pupils and their parents, emerging good project practice within E-LAMP included awareness raising on health and safety issues during training events with families, and the use of a set of notes written with the trailer-home in mind. Parents and pupils were asked to read, sign and take copies of these notes with them (See Appendix 2).

**4.4** Regular PAT electrical testing is also an essential safety consideration, and all electrical equipment issued to families should be included in school/LA test schedules during the non-travel period. Best practice suggests that parents should be asked to sign to confirm that equipment has been tested, by adding endorsements to the original lists of equipment issued to families.

#### **4.5 Addressing safety and security: systems and software**

Access to the internet clearly has enormous benefits for young distance learners, but it is important to make these available in as secure a context as possible, as well as involving parents actively in monitoring roles. Broadly speaking there are two potential hazard areas:

- Internet security is concerned with the prevention of invasive traffic like viruses and attempts to hack into computers,
- Internet safety relates to measures to guard against the possibility of access to inappropriate web-based material, and to an awareness of the dangers of releasing personal information, including activities like 'grooming'.

**4.6** Wherever possible, approaches to supported learning should be set up to link through structures like school and LA networks, as these offer a degree of inbuilt security and safety protection.

The current DfES initiative aimed at establishing learning platforms in every school by 2008 should mean that this option will become increasingly available. Where this approach isn't currently practicable, or where existing learning platforms can't offer adequate support for aspects of the distance learning experience, consideration needs to be given to the installation of appropriate protective software before equipment is issued to families.

**4.7** This is an area where local ICT expertise and support is likely to be very important. In terms of security, current (August, 2006) web-based advice from Childnet International suggests that Windows XP and Mac operating systems offer an adequate level of 'firewall' protection against invasive traffic for normal home users, but that additional virus protection is essential. It also draws attention to anti-spyware measures,<sup>9</sup> and to options to upgrade firewall protection depending on the context of home-use.<sup>10</sup>

**4.8** Clearly whatever the approach developed at a local level, it will be vital that pupils and parents are aware of the measures taken and of any actions they need to take to update protective software. Families/pupils also need to be warned about loading material or programmes from sources like CD-ROMs or downloading from the internet, unless this activity is part of their recommended learning



programme, and here an awareness of copyright issues is also important. Finally, they need to be told never to open, or respond to, unexpected mail or attachments from unknown sources; just to delete them.<sup>11</sup>

**4.9** Internet safety can be partly addressed through software defences which monitor or filter communication. There is a range of software which is suitable for the home environment and which can help to filter access to unacceptable websites as well as to options like instant messaging and chat rooms. The parents' centre website currently (August 2006) contains a list of some of these.<sup>12</sup> It gives a very brief outline of what they do but also a warning that they are not foolproof; such systems are based on regularly updated lists of prohibited/allowed sites and/or the recognition of unacceptable words. There is also software with a similar rationale available to filter email communication. Active monitoring is another software-based approach which can provide warnings about inappropriate use of the laptop, including inappropriate messaging and emails and even off-line use.<sup>13</sup> Again, for similar reasons, it is not foolproof.

**4.10** As with virus protection the balance of what is decided will need to be informed by taking expert technical advice, which needs, where possible, to include advice on ease of use as well as the functionality of the available

software.<sup>14</sup> It should also be noted that for work with younger pupils there are also some relatively straightforward approaches like using a 'walled garden' which can be set up to restrict internet access to selected sites, or recommending the use of internet search environments specifically designed for children: current examples include 'Yahooligans' and 'Ask for Kids'.

#### **4.11 Addressing safety and security: the parental role**

The gaps in systems designed to protect families from harmful communication certainly don't mean that they aren't worth pursuing as they still offer an important degree of protection against hazards like accidental exposure to unsuitable material and grooming in chat rooms. However, the possibility of such gaps does mean that the parental role remains crucial if pupils are to have positive experiences and to become responsible internet users themselves.

**4.12** As might be expected there is a range of useful advice on the parents' centre and Childnet International websites. The main principle behind this advice is that parents need to be aware, and to take a sensitive but active and positive interest in their children's use of the internet for both web access and various forms of messaging. As the E-LAMP approach stresses the importance of the active involvement of parents in supporting the

learning process, the e-safety dimension is perhaps best seen as a natural extension of this emphasis.

**4.13** In terms of incoming material and communication, the main advice is that parents need to be sensitive but watchful, and also to encourage their children to talk about anything they see or read which they feel is inappropriate; especially if it upsets or worries them. Parents also need to be aware of recent developments like on-line bullying.

**4.14** In terms of outgoing communication the main advice is that it is crucial to warn children about the dangers of sharing information, especially any form of personal information, and about their use of options like chat rooms and blogs. There are moderated chat rooms aimed at children of different ages, and some of these are set within educational contexts, but some level of sensitive parental oversight may still be appropriate. It is also important that families know about the dangers of phishing if there is some encouragement of parental use. (Phishing attempts to get users to share personal information about things like bank accounts and passwords by sending communications as if from an official source like their own bank. They may also refer the respondent to a seemingly official website. Any such request needs to be ignored and reported to the bank or institution concerned)

**4.15** Clearly these are all issues which need to be picked up and covered in parental training and awareness sessions, and the good news is that there is currently an excellent on-line presentation which is available via the Childnet International and parents' centre sites. One of the important points made in this presentation is that children will increasingly access the internet via hand-held devices, so not just in the home. The implication here is that schools and parents both need to work at approaches which reinforce self-protection and self-responsibility, another issue worth exploring during training sessions. In addition Childnet International has produced a CD ROM entitled *Know It All For Parents* for the DfES as part of the

'Computers for Pupils' initiative and this provides another useful training and support resource. It is also well worth considering using material from [www.thinkyounow.co.uk](http://www.thinkyounow.co.uk) in training sessions for both parents and children.

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<sup>7</sup> The latest version was published in 2005 and can be downloaded free from the Becta website

<sup>8</sup> Annex 2 of the DfES publication 'Computers for Pupils 2006-08: Guidance for LAs and schools.'

<sup>9</sup> Spyware is an invasive form of software which can gather and transmit personal information from your computer. Some spyware can even gather information about your passwords or credit card details (by tracking keyboard inputs during transactions).

<sup>10</sup> It also commends some free downloadable products. 'AVG' is a Gisoft anti-virus product. 'Zone Alarm' is a Zone Labs firewall product. Both are also commended by Computing Which. Microsoft also provides free anti-spyware, 'Windows Defender', and the current version is available for download until December, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Advice which also applies to Spam email where it is even important NOT to respond to the invitation to 'unsubscribe' from future mails as this confirms identification of the user for future targeting.

<sup>12</sup> Currently via the 'links by topic' item on the menu within the computer and internet section.

<sup>13</sup> The latest E-LAMP projects are considering using 'Securus' monitoring software which allows for daily checks on any inappropriate material which appears on the user's screen.

<sup>14</sup> A Which report (August, 2005) tested six PC-based protective software packages and found them all difficult for parents to use, although the Mac product came out well.

<sup>15</sup> Produced by the Child Exploitation and On-line Protection Centre: [contact.education@CEOP.gov.uk](mailto:contact.education@CEOP.gov.uk)



# **Section 5: Practical aspects of using ICT for distance learning in the mobile context**

**What kind of equipment is needed?**

**How do you set up and monitor datacard accounts for learners?**

**What are the characteristics of datacard communication?**



**5.1** Currently the most cost-effective way of linking travelling pupils to their schools electronically is to make use of a laptop together with a datacard device. This section highlights some important points about setting up and using such equipment.

### **5.2 Laptops and other equipment**

Fortunately any new laptop, however basic, should have the functionalities needed to support the types of learning suggested in this guidance document. It should also support the use of datacards. Some E-LAMP partners also provided pupils with printers/scanners or digital cameras in order to enrich the learning experience. Clearly decisions about such extra equipment depend on both available finance and the design of learning activities. They may also depend on space in the busy trailer-home environment. Other ancillary equipment which should be considered includes mice (they don't normally come with the laptop), a USB memory stick to back up pupil work, headphones and a 'power surge' device to protect equipment; the latter being particularly important as a consideration where families are dependent on generators for their electricity supply.

### **5.3 Using datacards**

The major mobile telephone providers all offer datacard services to link laptops to the internet, and the device itself can be inserted into the expansion slot on the laptop. You normally

purchase the card as part of setting up your datacard account, and each mobile provider supplies its own card together with instructions and installation software.

**5.4** The service is currently underpinned by 'GPRS' communication networks which are specially designed to exchange data and most of the UK is now covered by GPRS services. These services are basically 'narrowband' with data transfer speeds which mirror a dial-up (non-broadband) connection via a normal telephone line. This is important as it means that the underpinning technology is NOT suitable for media-heavy visual or audio exchanges. [GPRS will transfer large files, but very slowly]. Major conurbations are now increasingly covered by '3-G' services which offer much faster datacard transfer rates, but most mobile families spend a substantial amount of time outside such areas.<sup>16</sup> So the current advice is to plan supported learning approach in terms of low transfer speeds: i.e. email, learner access to websites and the exchange of relatively small files. File size is also important in terms of cost (see below), and awareness of these issues needs to be part of the design of materials and family preparation sessions. Embedding photos or some types of clip-art can, for example, lead to exponential increases in files produced by teachers or pupils.

**5.5** It is also important to note that our experience from the projects is that there are localised GPRS blackspots, sometimes caused or exacerbated by local topography, just as with a mobile phone. Families need to be warned about this and schools also need to be aware that it may cause some gaps in communication flow with young learners and their families. Experience also suggests that transfer speeds are affected by congestion and can be slower in some high-use geographical areas and/or at certain times of day.

### **5.6 Setting up and monitoring a datacard account**

Probably the best starting point for choosing a provider is the web.<sup>17</sup> You may be able to find useful comparative information; at the time of writing one such source was [www.mobileshop.org](http://www.mobileshop.org). You will also find details of options provided by individual mobile phone companies on their websites together with pricing structures. Basically you should find that you can either set up accounts for individual learners or for a group of learners; the jargon for the latter arrangement is a 'bundled' account. The customer then pays a fixed amount each month, normally for a minimum 12-month period, to transfer amounts of data measured in megabytes (Mb). 'Transfer' means what you send PLUS what you receive and if you exceed the monthly limit you are then charged for the excess, normally on a per Mb basis. Much higher rates are charged if this type of service is used abroad where the service providers have 'roaming agreements' with other networks. If any of your families do travel abroad you may need to ensure that their account is disabled for such international use, and warn the family about this.

**5.7** E-LAMP project partners used bundled accounts as these offered better value for money and meant that overuse by some pupils covered by the group account was normally balanced by under-use from others. The other advantage is that you can purchase a bundle in advance for the whole year, rather than having to arrange for monthly payments.

**5.8** Project experience also suggests the importance of:

- (i) Finding out whether and how you can monitor the amounts of data transfer for each pupil; some companies offer on-line checking. This is important to avoid unanticipated excess charges and was an issue with one or two pupils who didn't stick to the use-agreements set up with families.
- (ii) Taking account of the actual levels of excess charges (something you also need to warn families about).
- (iii) Thinking about comparative coverage. Project partners used three different providers and they all had blackspots, but seemingly with regional variations. So finding out where your families travel and their experience with ordinary mobile phone coverage may give you some clues about the relative merits of a particular provider.<sup>18</sup>
- (iv) Finding out whether the company provides extension aerials which can help if the family is in a weak signal area (blackspot)... and if so is there an extra cost? At least two companies now do this and experience is that the aerials do make a difference.

**5.9** Finally, once accounts are set up it is also very important to monitor actively. Some E-LAMP partners were affected by mistakes made within the accounts department of one company, and families were cut off without warning. Checking accounts and asking families to report such unexpected problems is one aspect of monitoring. The other is to watch out for excessive use by any one pupil/family and to follow this up, both to avoid excess charges and as it may be an indicator of inappropriate use.

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<sup>16</sup> Providers may also offer 'intermediate' communication technologies (i.e. with speeds between GPRS and 3G). However, once again, these do not currently have the geographical coverage of the underpinning GPRS service.

<sup>17</sup> It is also worth checking out any arrangements available via your local 'Regional Broadband Consortium'. In the past the East Midlands Consortium has, for example, supported schools working with travelling children in their area.

<sup>18</sup> This is only a partial indicator but may tell you something about the regional investment priorities of the companies.



# Appendix 1: The ELAMP Home-TESS responsible use agreement

Pupil \_\_\_\_\_

Laptop serial no. \_\_\_\_\_

Printer-scanner identifier \_\_\_\_\_

Datacard number \_\_\_\_\_

Sim Card number \_\_\_\_\_

## Ownership and care

1. Equipment remains the property of

\_\_\_\_\_  
(fill in details), and must be returned at the end of the travelling season, or earlier if requested.

2. All equipment is provided on the understanding that families will take reasonable care to prevent loss or damage.

The laptop is covered by an insurance policy when it is being used (in or out of school) for study purposes. This policy also assumes that you will take reasonable care. N.B. the policy for the laptop specifically excludes situations where the laptop was unattended but visible in a vehicle or in the open air.

Other equipment is not covered by this policy but you are again expected to take reasonable care (families are asked to put it on their own insurance if this is possible)

3. "Taking reasonable care" also includes:

- when the laptop is in (any) school, making sure it is kept in a secure place at all times when not in use;
- when at home, making sure that the laptop and equipment is used in a sensible working area and keeping drinks well clear;
- being careful with equipment (use the power surge device, never force things into slots, be 'gentle' with all equipment);
- taking care when the laptop is transported that it is as secure as possible (e.g. packed away; never left in an unlocked vehicle; not left unattended on a bus);
- making sure the laptop is not subject to careless or malicious damage (e.g. as a result of horseplay);
- reporting any loss or damage (including accidental loss or damage) promptly to school
- reporting any faults in hardware or software promptly to school;
- not decorating or customizing the computer or its case, etc, and not allowing it to be subject to graffiti.

### Acceptable use

4. The laptop must not be used for any illegal and/or anti-social purpose, including access to inappropriate Internet sites and Chat Rooms.

5. Programs or materials other than those provided by the school should not be loaded without prior permission.

6. The ELAMP Project will cover the communication costs of email and exchange of workfiles between home and school. It will also cover the costs of access to websites as recommended by the school.

7. The equipment should not be used to download files from websites, other than those recommended by the school. Such file transfers can be expensive, and will incur additional costs which will have to be recharged to the family as they are not part of the project budget.

8. The laptop should not be used for playing games.

### Datacard and sim card

The sim card supplied by the project must be used with the datacard and must not be used for any other purpose.

As with any device using a sim card for connection to mobile telephone networks, the loss or theft of the sim card must be reported back to school immediately so that the service can be disconnected.

### Pupil's agreement

Signed in the presence of his/her parents  
I agree to abide by these terms in my use of the laptop and equipment.

Signature:

---

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Parent's agreement

I agree to my child having the use of the laptop on these terms.

Signature:

---

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 2: Working safely with the ICT equipment

- Make sure that all electrical equipment is not near any water.
- Make sure that there is no cabling (leads) trailing on the floor.
- Make sure that the laptop is on a table or firm surface. Do not sit with it on your knee – the laptop can get hot.
- When you are sitting doing your work, make sure your elbow is the same height as the table at which you are sitting, if not sit on a cushion.
- You need to check that there is not too much reflected light on the laptop screen – either sit facing a window or pull down the blind or pull across the curtain. You can adjust the brightness on the screen.
- If you sit for an extended time please make sure that the seat supports your back.
- You should take a break from the laptop at least every 20 minutes. Internet sessions should be restricted to an age-appropriate time limit agreed by your family. You should also get up and walk around at least once an hour.
- Refresh your eye muscles regularly by focusing on distant, then close, objects.
- You must not take a drink or food any where near to the laptop or any other electrical equipment.
- Work when other people will not disturb you and when you will not need to keep getting up from your work area.

I \_\_\_\_\_  
(pupil to insert name) have read the above information about 'Working safely with the ICT equipment'<sup>19</sup>

I \_\_\_\_\_  
(pupil to insert name) have read the above information about 'Working safely with the ICT equipment'

As the person with legal responsibility for the above pupil(s),

I \_\_\_\_\_  
(insert name) have read the above information. One signed copy will be logged with

\_\_\_\_\_  
(insert name of Traveller Education Service or school) and another kept with the laptop.

Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

This document has been completed in the presence of

Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

<sup>19</sup> One such line should be completed by each child in the family who will be using the equipment

## Appendix 3: Home-School Distance Learning Agreements

### Possible framework

#### Part 1: Contents

An overview and broad details of work to be covered

- An agreed statement about daily or weekly 'try to do' targets (expressed in terms of time and/or units of work to be completed)
- An agreed statement about how completed work is to be submitted to school or about how modules of work are to be 'exchanged' (This may, for example, relate to a mixture of normal paper-based work and electronic material)
- An agreed statement about the frequency of such 'exchanges', both electronic and paper-based
- Details of who to contact (electronically) if there are problems with work set by individual staff
- An agreed statement about frequency of regular messaging/email contact with a named person at school (the coordinator)
- A commitment to keeping a schoolwork log
- Other notes depending on the school-family context

#### Part 2: Contact details for school including email address(es) to be used.

Consideration should also be given to who to contact during school holidays, e.g. for technical support, if work is to be set for this period

#### Part 3: Signature section (pupil/parent and on behalf of school)

## Appendix 3: Home-School Distance Learning Agreements/contd

### Learning agreements: some extra notes

- i) Following best practice with the traditional use of agreements, the detail of the agreement is intended to be the outcome of a three way discussion and commitment, involving individual pupils, their parents and school staff. This discussion is an important and integral part of the agreement process.
- ii) For the secondary school context it may be helpful to have a short general section, and then short but separate sections for each subject which is to be part of the distance learning programme.
- iii) Again following best practice experience, the modular structure is strongly recommended. Work normally needs to be broken down into realistic chunks which can be returned when completed. This should be reflected in the agreement.
- iv) The purpose of the agreement is to set a framework of agreed expectations. The idea of the log is to reinforce this. The log is meant to be something simple; possibly with columns for date, subjects studied that day and total hours spent.
- v) The log is also an important means of keeping a check on learner progress, and, when set alongside returned work, and the pattern of email contact with school, can help to give a robust picture of the effectiveness of the programme set out for a particular child. There are therefore advantages in asking pupils to keep and update the log electronically so that it can be made available to school on an interim basis.
- vi) Best practice suggests that it is also important to have a review meeting with pupil and parents when they return to school after the travel period. This can be an important opportunity to think about modifications for the following year as well as for celebrating success.

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ISBN: 978-1-84478-833-0

PPOAK/INTRO/1206

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