

The importance of simplified sign on to education policy outcomes

[*Harnessing Technology: Transforming Learning and Children's Services*](#) (the “e-strategy”) was published by the Government in 2005. It set out a system-wide strategy for technology in education and skills. In 2008, Becta revised and updated the original strategy with the publication of [*Harnessing Technology: Next Generation Learning 2008–14*](#). Becta is the Government's lead partner in the development and delivery of this strategy.

The following extracts from *Harnessing Technology* underline and illustrate the continuing and increasing importance of simplified sign-on. In particular, how it can not only help to achieve the outcomes of the Harnessing Technology strategy, but others as well, including 14-19 reform, Home Access and online reporting for parents:

“Becta will address the need to ensure that high-quality digital resources are available wherever and whenever learning takes place. Making such resources more easily accessible to both learners and practitioners will help to ensure that learners have greater choice and control over their learning programmes, where appropriate enabling learners to adapt the pace and depth of study.”

“A key aspect of proactive support for learners is ensuring that they – and those who represent and support them – have access to the information they need when they need it...For learners and their families, it means having closer links with schools, community learning and learning resources, and using technologies such as learning platforms to enable continuity of learning.”

“Becta will use the Next Generation Learning campaign and work with local authorities and partners to inform all parents and carers concerning what they should expect in terms of online information and guidance in using technology to support and extend learning at home.”

The strategy also highlights the importance of simplified sign-on in supporting ongoing 14-19 reforms:

“As the new Diplomas are introduced, more learners in the 14–19 age range will be studying in multiple settings: at school, in college and in the workplace. Technology is essential in co-ordinating delivery across these settings, providing learners with the continuity they need through remote access to information, resources and support...The 14–19 agenda and the introduction of Specialised Diplomas add urgency to the need for flexible learning solutions to support flexible, multi-mode learning patterns.”

Specifically, the benefits of simplified sign-on for learners and teachers are that they:

- need only enter an institutional username and password, removing the complexity of remembering multiple usernames and passwords;
- can be confident that personal information is not being disclosed unnecessarily to third parties;
- can **access resources from outside their place of learning**, such as at home or in a public library.

Becta is also leading on the [Home Access](#) programme, the Government's initiative to ensure that all pupils aged 5-19, in state maintained education in England, have the opportunity to have access to computers and internet connectivity for education at home. Access to technology at home benefits learners in a range of different ways:

- Improving learning and achievement
- Motivating and engaging children
- Encouraging independence and creativity
- Connecting learning at school and at home
- Helping parents and carers get more involved

Again, the importance of streamlining access to online resources via simplified sign-on is clear: providing easy access to services from home not only supports learners, it also helps to ensure parents and carers can become more engaged and involved in their children's learning.

This collaboration between learner and parent or carer can in turn further enhance engagement and achievement. More information about the benefits of access to technology in the home is available in [Extending Opportunity](#), the final report of the Taskforce on Home Access to Technology, published in July 2008.

Better engagement with parents is a key issue for schools to improve achievement. Local authorities are being encouraged to support schools in meeting the Government expectation to provide online reporting for parents by 2010 for secondary schools, and primary schools by 2012. Becta's [website](#) provides further advice and guidance for schools and local authorities on how to meet these targets, where again, simplified sign-on can play an important underpinning role.