



DIGITAL RCT
OUR DIGITAL STRATEGY FOR SCHOOLS
2020 - 2025



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Purpose and Direction

Digital transformation is happening all around us at an ever-increasing pace. In our daily lives, the way in which we communicate, share ideas, buy our weekly goods, or engage with family and friends and the world around us is ever more reliant upon digital skills, knowledge, and devices.



Education has always evolved to embrace new technologies and to respond to the changes around us to equip our young people with the skills necessary to embrace the change and to live full and productive lives.

To evolve has always meant a response. Now more than ever, education needs to lead the digital change, demonstrating what is possible and providing the skills necessary not just to adapt and adopt but to create an agenda which meets the needs of all pupils and young people.

Our strategy sets out where we are now and our ambitions for the next five years. Five years will see a huge amount of change, some driven from need such as our response to the pandemic of 2020/21, but also driven by the desire to improve access to learning for everyone from those in early years education to those more senior learners, who wish to evolve with the changing world around them.

The purpose of the strategy is to:

- Outline the Council's goals and ambitions for building a reliable, resilient, and scalable digital solution, enabling and inspiring innovation in the use of technology for all learners and educators in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- Meet and develop the growing digital needs and expectations in education and on schools.
- Develop digital skills for all learners to ensure access to skilled jobs in the workplace, now and in the future.
- Develop technological provision for schools in line with the HWB Transformation Programme and provide leadership in digital learning.
- Build on the ambitions identified in the [RCT Digital Strategy 2020](#).
- Support the National Mission for Wales.

Digital Context

The Council's ICT & Digital Service has progressed rapidly over the past 5 years. Building on initial connectivity projects and communication systems, significant investment has seen substantial benefits for schools and learners across the local authority. This includes ensuring access to HWB for all staff and learners, effective electronic communication, access to cloud-based resources and centralised resource base for training and policy documents.

Communication and administration have been substantially digitalised with central cloud-based approaches to data transfer, collection, and retention, improving the security and speed of data and information movement between schools and central service.



The connectivity demands of digital learning continue to increase significantly as new technology becomes increasingly accessible for schools. The Council, through its ICT strategy group, maintains an effective relationship with senior leaders and practitioners to ensure the infrastructure and provision of IT and digital services, supports the delivery of increasing curriculum demands.

Most recently, [the Digital Competency Framework](#) has required schools to include digital champions in their staffing structure and has led to increased investment in technology and training for staff, building positively on current digital methods of delivering learning for all age groups.

As schools create their vision for the [new curriculum](#), digital transformation will enable, respond to, and deliver change in the way we provide learning opportunities, collaborate, and access new and exciting ways of engaging with wider influences on our learning experiences.

The Council recognises the demands on all schools to provide education in a digital age. A key aspect of the strategy is to provide support to school in evolving their provision to take account of new and emerging technologies in a safe and secure environment.

Our 'Digital Strategy for Schools' is developed in a context where significant investment is in place from the Welsh Government. The [HWB transformation project](#) is a multiyear funding programme, aimed at fundamentally challenging and changing the digital landscape in schools, developing a fully sustainable, standardised, and consistent approach with digital being seen as the 'fourth utility.' The long-term strategic aims of this programme are to:

- improve educational standards and outcomes,
- prepare learners for life and careers,
- maximise the opportunities that digital solutions present to reduce the burden on our workforce and
- to support the wider Welsh economy.

Our Digital Vision and Ambition

Our digital transformation ambitions will deliver improvements across the Council, initially in line with the [HWB Educational Digital Standards](#). However, our vision is much wider. We want to achieve real gain for our pupils, their teachers, their communities, and all learners of all ages.

Our vision is for Rhondda Cynon Taf Council to be a leader, an organisation who uses digital to help transform our schools. We believe that we can exploit digital potential to improve the quality of education for all our pupils and all learners within our County through the actions outlined in this strategy.

Our vision is clear. We will deliver:

Equality of access and provision for all learners across the County Borough supporting excellence and high achievement in a creative, exciting, and technologically rich environment, delivering success, valuing diversity, raising self-esteem, and promoting lifelong learning skills and attitudes.

In delivering our digital vision and ambition, the Council will support the national priorities for Wales including the National Mission ([National Mission Update October 2020](#)) and reflect the ambitions of the '[Wellbeing and Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#)'.

Strategic Strands

Our strategy has been developed following a thorough review of best practice and sector leading examples. Our strategy includes 5 core strands underpinned by 1 crucial component which combine to make real change across schools in RCT.

Adoption of National Digital Infrastructure Standards

Sustainability built on Digital Planning & Budgeting

A HWB and Microsoft Cloud First Approach to Digital Learning

A Strategic Approach to Embedding Digital Services

Keeping learners safe and protecting learner entitlement.

Maximise Economies of Scale and Value for Money through Collaborative Procurement

Digital Infrastructure

Adoption of National Digital Infrastructure Standards

“Given the scale and pace of change, it is likely that many children in primary school today will work in jobs that either do not exist today, or at least have constituent tasks that are very different from those of today” The Future of Work in Wales, Mair Bell, Dan Bristow and Steve Martin, Public Policy Institute for Wales (1 November 2017)

RCT as a Council recognises, understands, and supports the increasing part that Information Communication Technology and Digital solutions plays in the lives of all its citizens. The Council's 'Digital Strategy for Schools' acknowledges the increased reliance upon technology that the new curriculum advocates, to support learners in their education and to prepare them for their working lives as Wales plans for and delivers on its transformational reforms.

To drive reform in the provision of services for schools in RCT, the 'Digital Strategy for Schools' identifies five strategic strands and outlined in our Digital Roadmap that form the action plan for the next five years.



All aspects of the 'Digital Strategy for Schools' are focused on improving connectivity and reliability and enabling learners, teachers, school leaders and all education professionals to be active participants in the key areas of Professional Learning, Educational Research, Resourcing of Learning Experiences and Engaging with all Stakeholders in a wide range of formats.

As technology plays an increasingly dominant part in the change process for schools, access to resilient networks is a key driver of connecting learners and schools, providing access to worldwide research, sharing our best practices and in developing and driving increasing effective teams.

What we are doing:

Adoption of [National Education Digital Infrastructure Standards](#)

- The Council has an agreed network infrastructure design for all schools. This agreed design architecture is being implemented as part of the network upgrades at all educational establishments, bringing all school into line with the HWB Digital Standards.
- The Council has an agreed [ICT SLA](#) that clearly identifies that the refresh of the network infrastructure in schools will be led and managed by the Council and its officers.
- The Council has implemented a new mechanism for monitoring network performance to ensure that all school networks provide a reliable infrastructure.

- The Council has implemented a technical solution to all primary schools to reroute their school internet traffic straight to the PSBA. This has produced significant improvements in internet speed and network reliability.
- The council has created a [Technical Blueprint](#) that all school are required to follow for their technical support.

What we will do:

The Council will:

- Provide clear performance delivery measures and response times should the service fall short of these measures.
- Implement a technical solution to all secondary, through and specialist provision schools to reroute their schools internet traffic straight to the PSBA.
- Provide clearer guidance on Corporate Landlord Responsibilities, supporting schools with safeguarding their pupils and adherence to the Welsh Government National Educational Digital Infrastructure Standards.
- Continue to monitor the standards required for school network infrastructures and provide guidance to schools when changes are required. This will include network utilisation supporting the Council in ensuring sufficient bandwidth is available to all schools to enable high quality digital provision.
- Implement a rolling programme of renewal, based on a ten-year refresh timetable, to ensure that all network equipment in schools continues to be current and based on revised national standards.
- Provide a clear programme of information and technology updates for all school leaders and school-based network managers, to ensure consistency and conformity across all schools.
- Support all schools through regular physical and virtual audits to ensure conformity to network standards and security protocols.
- Provide technical, strategic and education support to all schools through its core SLA. This will include a Strategic Adviser working with schools to ensure the Council strategy and vision is implemented consistently in all schools.

Implications for schools, school leaders and governors:

School leaders will recognise the need to maintain and develop their school networks to provide high quality connectivity for the delivery of a broad, balanced, and inclusive curriculum for all learners.

Schools will need to:

- Consider the provision of digital services as the fourth utility, giving it the same priority as water, gas, and electricity.

- Engage with the annual [ICT SLA](#) to ensure their enrolment in the refresh programme for their core network infrastructure.
- Develop a three to five-year digital strategy that is aligned to the RCT Digital Strategies, considers the digital demands of the new Curriculum 2022 and aspires to provide the three core elements of the Welsh Government Digital Strategy, those being standardisation, sustainability and consistency.
- Follow the guidance from the Council regarding support for their school IT networks.

Schools should consider:

- How the digital requirements of the next five years are going to impact on their curriculum and provision planning.
- How to identify that digital skills are enhancing and supporting outcomes for pupils and facilitating access to further or higher education, apprenticeships, or employment when learners leave school.
- How their budget decision reflects the requirements and demands of digital learning.
- How the support of their school network is managed and supported and how close oversight is managed by an appointed senior leader. [Implications for school leaders – Technical Support Guidance](#)

‘Digital and financial exclusion are very closely linked. Having the skills and access to digital technology Digital and financial exclusion are very closely linked. Having the skills and access to digital technology can hugely increase financial inclusion. Being able to use the internet to buy essential goods and services can bring significant savings to families who struggle financially.’ [Improving people’s lives through digital technologies](#) December 2020

Planning and Sustainability

Sustainability built on a five-year Digital Plan and Budget Planning.

‘We are fundamentally challenging and changing the digital landscape in schools, developing a fully sustainable, standardised, and consistent approach with digital being seen as the ‘fourth utility’.

The long-term strategic aims of this programme are to:

- improve educational standards and outcomes
- prepare learners for life and careers
- maximise the opportunities digital presents to reduce the burden on our workforce and
- to support the wider Welsh economy.’

[Hwb programme: strategic overview of digital services for maintained schools in Wales](#)

The recent pandemic has demonstrated clearly how essential it is to keep pace with technological advances to connect and support people in an increasingly digital world. Schools have adapted quickly, using digital resources and connections to maintain links with and education for learners across the Council. Never has there been a time that has exemplified how important decisions around the funding of digital equipment has been for schools and the Council.

Through the HWB (Previously LiDW) programme, the Welsh Government, working in collaboration with all local authorities across Wales, has made significant investment in areas including high speed broadband, in-school infrastructure and the HWB Digital Learning Platform. The Welsh Government Schools Digital Transformation Project has the three core elements of: Standardisation, Sustainability and Consistency.

The project will be delivered in a number of ‘Waves’ bringing significant investment and improvements to school IT infrastructure with a clear focus on connectivity and reliability and on the modernisation of the infrastructure to support the access and delivery of 21st century learning opportunities.

What we are doing:

The Council are:

- Through the HWB Transformational Project, providing funding for schools to procure additional digital resources.
- Identifying a device to pupil ratio of 1:2.4 as an initial target with an aspiration of 1 device for 2 pupils by the end of the strategy timeline.
- Supporting school in achieving best value for money procurement options through engagement with the HWB Edtech catalogues.

What we will do:

The Council will:

- Engage with and support schools in making decision that support the three core principles of the HWB Programme, those being sustainable, standardised, and consistency.
- Continue to engage fully with the HWB Transformational programme bringing renewal to the digital infrastructure and resources within the County.
- Build financial models of school funding that support the sustainability agenda for digital funding.
- Provide an asset purchase scheme so that schools can access high quality devices at the most cost-effective price through an all Wales purchasing framework.
- Review the impact of this strategy and adjust it as new and emerging technologies become available that can improve our digital provision.

Implications for schools, school leaders and governors:

School leaders will recognise the need to maintain and develop their school networks to provide high quality connectivity for the delivery of a broad, balanced and inclusive

Schools will need to:

- Consider the provision of digital services as the fourth utility, giving it the same priority as water, gas, and electricity.
- Develop a three to five-year digital strategy that is aligned to the RCT Digital Strategies, considers the digital demands of the new Curriculum 2022 and aspires to provide the three core elements of the Welsh Government Digital Strategy, those being standardisation, sustainability and consistency.
- Consider budget decisions that reflects the requirements and demands of a digital learning.
- Ensure that all technology and devices, including mobile devices are kept relevant to current demands by establishing a technology refresh on a five-year rolling programme.
- Engage fully with the Council asset purchase scheme so they can access high quality devices at the most cost-effective price through an all Wales purchasing framework.

Our appreciation of the relatively new term 'data poverty' has developed since the onset of the pandemic. Prior to March 2020 our understanding of the term centred on the lack of personal resources to access online goods and services; either the financial costs of purchasing the technology and/or getting connected; ongoing costs of broadband or data, or limited connectivity due to poor reception.

[Digital Inclusion Forward Look: towards a digitally confident Wales. December 2020](#)

Learning in the Digital Classroom

A HWB and Microsoft Cloud First Approach to Digital Learning

In *'Successful Futures' 2015*, Professor Donaldson writes that teachers should adopt a blended approach to learning. In a digital context, 'Blended Learning' occurs when a learner learns partly through traditional teacher-based classrooms and partly through digital means. The learner has some control over when, where and how learning takes place. It needs to be planned carefully to meet individual learner needs. Blended learning could also include teacher instruction, group work, tutorials, workshops plus activities such as using distance learning materials, web-sites, interactive materials, podcasts and virtual reality.

Learning in the digital classroom.

To be successful, the digital classroom needs to provide high quality connectivity, resilient and reliable technology, and be focussed on learner outcomes and not on the specific use of technology.

In Rhondda Cynon Taf, our digital classrooms will focus on the development of the learner as a whole, providing opportunity for them to develop the digital and life skills needed to be become healthy, resilient and productive citizens in a world of work we may not recognise in 2020.

In Rhondda Cynon Taf, the digital classroom is defined as any area where a learner accesses formal and informal learning opportunities. This can be in a formal school setting or more remotely in connected classrooms, work areas or at home. Our strategy will focus on classrooms that are connected with wireless technology, providing connectivity within and beyond the immediate classroom, providing opportunities to remain connected while learning outdoors.

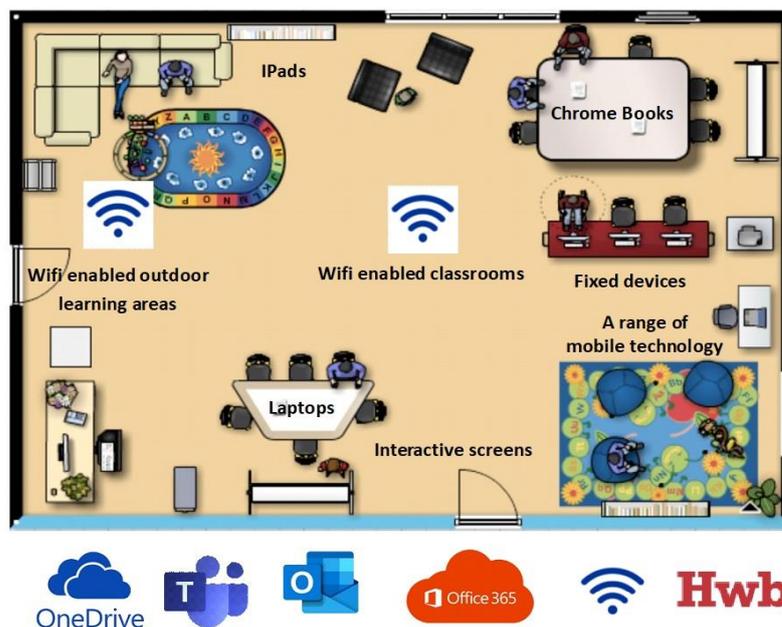
Learners will access the resources and work they need wherever they learn. Connections to school whilst at home or away from the school environment will be facilitated through Cloud technology based on the HWB and Microsoft infrastructure.

Our strategy is predicated on schools providing access to a wide range of technology, including Laptops, Chromebooks, iPads, and other digital devices.



A digital classroom in RCT provides all learners with:

- the experiences needed to develop and learn the skills required to meet the [four core purposes](#) of our national curriculum.
- the experiences needed to promote their physical and mental wellbeing and understand how to make healthy lifestyle choices.
- the skills and experience needed to benefit from distance learning and a blended learning approach.
- the opportunity to develop high levels of literacy, numeracy and digital skills.
- the experiences that help young people to prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of adult life, including education about careers and the world of work.
- A digital classroom in RCT supports the active engagement of parents' / guardians' in their children's learning experiences.



A HWB and Microsoft Cloud First Approach

RCT as a Council uses Microsoft 365 as its core software product. The well-known versions of the Microsoft software are used by most employees and form the basis of documents sent between employees, departments and to schools. Outlook is the main email solution. The Council has moved to cloud-based solutions for data over the past ten years. Microsoft 365, utilising OneDrive is used increasingly by employees and supports effective working whilst ensuring the integrity and security of the data.



The HWB Programme provides access to Microsoft products for all learners. This is available through the HWB platform. Learners may download licensed versions of the Microsoft 365 software to several of their devices, including laptops and a wide range of mobile devices.

There are many cost advantages for the Council and schools with the adoption of Microsoft 365. Uniformity supports effective training and utilisation of the tools to support productivity. Cloud based emails and data storage reduces the need for servers, reducing the overall cost, space required to house servers and the energy required to keep them running efficiently.

These benefits will support the reduction of costs in school and in this time of austerity and challenging budgets, this will benefit learners by releasing funds directly for education.

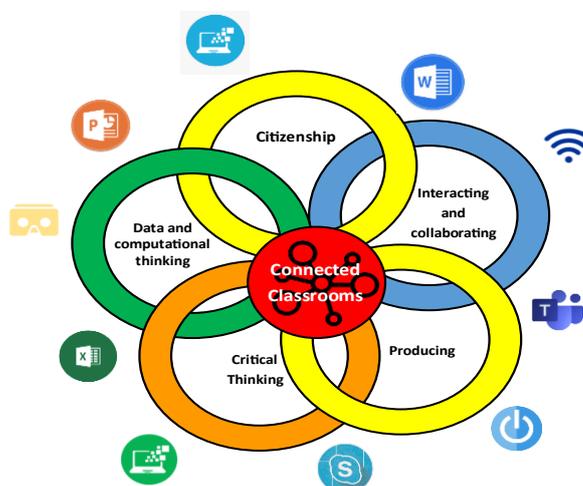


Hwb is the [digital platform for learning and teaching in Wales](#). Hwb provides its users with access to a range of centrally funded, bilingual, digital tools and resources. It is the Welsh Government's strategic digital channel to support the delivery of the curriculum in Wales. In Rhondda Cynon Taf, we encourage all of our schools to actively engage with the HWB digital platform, to provide learning for all of our pupils in a safe and secure environment and to provide a cost-efficient solution for all our schools.

It is not the policy of the Council to direct schools to work in any specific way or use stipulated software for the purpose of teaching and learning. However, as part of its strategic responsibilities across the Council, key principles are required to bring resilience and value for money. This can be achieved through aligning solutions for the purpose of administration and service provision.

What we are doing:

The Council seeks to engage with all schools to enable, empower and promote digital and blended learning as effective tools that schools are encouraged to provide for all learners. The strategy is to utilise HWB resources to develop learning partnerships (Connected Classrooms) between schools and between organisation such as universities, further education establishments and businesses, including those overseas. NASA has a well-publicised distant learning model that encourages engagement from all around the world.



The Council are:

- Building our digital capacity through the implementation of the HWB transformation project, improving school network infrastructures to meet the demands of a 21st century education.
- Developing a digital strategy for schools that promotes the HWB Digital Learning Platform and Microsoft Cloud First Approach.

- Implementing a Microsoft led core software solution building on the national licence agreements, developing consistency across schools and within the Council with cloud-based solutions for digital storage, resource sharing and data security and integrity.

What we will do:

The Council will:

- Support schools in their development of digital learning through the support of a digital ambassador or digital strategic adviser.
- Support all schools in implementing digital strategies that promote and support blended and digital learning.
- Promote the utilisation of the HWB Digital and Virtual Learning Platform to support digital learning for all schools and all learners, enhancing digital skills & capability for all learners
- Ensure that schools are empowered to use technology to support blended and distant learning approaches for all learners across the local authority.
- Promote the support and guidance provided by the Central South Consortium.

Implications for school leaders and governors:

School leaders should:

- Work with their pupils, staff and communities to develop a shared understanding of digital learning within their own organisation and community.
- Have a secure understanding of the requirements of the Digital Competency Framework and the promote the role of School Digital Lead as a key member of their organisation.
- Ensure staff are well trained and secure in their knowledge and skills in providing learning in a digital environment.
- Recognise the benefits that Cloud storage solutions such as OneDrive offer with its access everywhere, reliable backup, resilience, and security of data benefits.
- Ensure that all learners in their school have access to Microsoft 365 and OneDrive through the HWB programme.
- Engage fully with the HWB Digital and Virtual Learning Platform to support digital learning and enhancing digital skills & capability for all learners
- Take effective measures to secure their data and understand the measures required to manage the increasing demands for storing and using data in a secure environment.
- Work with all learners so they are most effectively placed to take part in digital learning or the digital workplace post 16. [A strategic framework for post-16 digital learning in Wales](#)
- Implement effective digital strategies that promote, and support blended and digital learning.

Digital Services

A Strategic Approach to Embedding Digital Services

The term ‘digital service’ is broad. It reflects all aspects of the work of schools and the Council. As we become increasingly digitalised in all aspects of our work, we need to redesign the services we deliver to ensure we maximise their effectiveness, both financially and in terms of productivity.

In schools, this relates to communication, collaboration and sharing, planning, and delivering learning. It also relates to the relationship that schools have with the services within the Council and how these are effective in supporting the delivery of their core services.

Managing public money requires the Council and schools to avoid developing narrow solutions which fulfil only a single task. The services we provide increasingly cross traditional departmental boundaries. To fully achieve the benefits of digital services we need to design these services on broad requirements and delivery models.



We must also ensure when joining-up that we are measuring value and efficiency at the level of the school or Council, not per service or per department but on the cumulative impact we have on the end user, our learners

To serve our learners, their families, and our communities, we need to provide services that efficiently meet their needs, responding to evolving demands and contexts and the opportunities offered by new technology.

Success means progressively working towards more responsive and agile services - digitally-enabled from the front end to its innermost workings, including people, process, and organisational structures.

What we are doing:

- The Council is identifying the services that need to be transformed digitally to provide streamlining of process and efficiency through reduced bureaucracy. These include:
 - Provision of a portal for the secure transfer and collection of information relating to pupils with additional or special educational needs.
 - Provision of support for schools on the General Data Protection Regulations [GDPR](#) through an comprehensive Service Level Agreement (SLA)
 - Using electronic communication (email) to reduce the administrative burden of paper communication and data collection.

- Introducing electric meetings using MS TEAMS so that meetings are more time efficient and require less travel.
- Collect feedback and specific use data utilising digital mechanisms such as Microsoft FORMS.
- Enabling school to report IT support requirements through a designated digital portal.

What we will do:

The Council will:

- Improve the security and efficiency of communication through the implementation of Microsoft 365 for all County to school and school to school communication.
- Identify how schools should be collating, transferring, retaining, and managing educational records.
- Use Microsoft TEAMS to support schools in working digitally and securely for:
 - Communication and document storage relating to all aspects of Governance
- Implement Digital Information Streams for the:
 - Sharing of information relating to key tasks, such as with GDPR or data returns
 - Provision of information such as Service Level Agreements and Policy Statements.
- Design and implement digital methods for accessing a wide range of service that support the function of the school premises, reducing bureaucracy and improving efficiencies and response times.
- Phase out of school-based servers storing curriculum and personal information as schools become more stable in their use of cloud-based systems.
- Investigate the potential for supporting learners and the general function of schools through the strategy of Bring Your Own Device (BOYD). There are many [challenges to this approach](#) which will need to be overcome to ensure a secure environment for our learners.
- Increased use of Webinars to be provide a wide range of training across the Council for school-based staff and learners.

Implications for school leaders and governors:

School leaders and Governors need to consider how they engage with the Council to carry out their statutory provisions. As we embrace the benefits and efficiencies afforded by new digitalised services, schools will need to evaluate how changes to their processes requires new training and guidance for their staff.

The Information Commissioner identifies that as data controllers, schools and the County have obligations relating to the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of all personal data it holds. This means that the school is accountable for any school business conducted involving personal data on any device or through any email account. Schools need to consider that the use of personal and email accounts and devices significantly raises the risk that personal data is processed for different purposes from which it was originally collected.

School leaders should:

- Consider what services would support them in their statutory roles and engage with the Council on the provisioning of digital services in these areas.
- Engage fully with the GDPR Service Level Agreement to ensure best practice in the safeguarding of all learners and their personal data.
- Only use the designated Email services as directed by the Council for any electronic communication that relates to the work of the school or includes any information about their learners.
- Implement Microsoft 365 across the school for all staff and governance, including the use of TEAMS to engage fully with the services provided by the Council.
- Have a secure understanding of all SLAs that operate within their school and what data is shared or stored as part of each SLA.
- Utilise fully any portal or agreed method of data sharing the Council implements, attending training when required.
- Consider carefully, the benefits and risks of school polices, such as BOYD or WI-FI deployment and seek guidance from the Council where necessary.
- Consider how pupil data remain secure through all processes the school engages with throughout the academic year.
- Maintain an up to date knowledge of the advice and guidance from the Welsh Government on [keeping learners safe](#).

Digital inclusion is a social issue. A lack of digital skills and access can have a huge negative impact on a person's life, leading to:

- poorer health outcomes and a lower life expectancy,
- increased loneliness and social isolation,
- less access to jobs and education.

It can mean:

- paying more for essentials,
- financial exclusion
- an increased risk of falling into poverty.

Digitally excluded people also lack a voice and visibility in the modern world, as government services and democracy increasingly move online. What's more, it's those already at a disadvantage - through age, education, income, disability, or unemployment - who are most likely to be missing out, further widening the social inequality gap.

goodthingsfoundation.org

Learner Entitlement and Safeguarding

Keeping Learners Safe and Ensuring Equality of Access and Provision

‘The rights and needs of learners are paramount in all the school does, ensuring every learner benefits from an entitlement to the best possible experience of schooling in Wales.’ [‘Professional-standards-for-teaching-and-leadership / Formal Leadership Standards / Pedagogy](#)

‘Learner Entitlement’ is a far-reaching mandate for the Council and all school leaders. In its simplest term, it ensures that children and young people have access to their entitlement of a suitable education, empowering them to be successful and become active participants within society and the world of work.

[The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

Keeping Learners Safe

Within the scope of the digital world, ‘Learner Entitlement’ requires the Council and schools to consider the many elements that creates and facilitates that entitlement.

These elements include:

- Safe and secure access to learning materials supporting a broad, balanced, and relevant curriculum.
- The provision of a safe and secure physical and digital environment for electronic communication and accessing digital learning materials.
- Safeguarding learners online within their school and wherever they access their learning.
- Teaching learners to self-moderate, identify risk and take appropriate action to keep themselves safe.
- Protecting and securing their work and outcomes, particularly in relation to personally identifiable materials or exam entry work.
- Developing children’s understanding, awareness, and resilience through the curriculum.



The Council and schools need to consider how these elements are provided and secured and how we are accountable where our actions do not secure the absolute requirement of ‘Learner Entitlement.’

[Keeping Learners Safe](#) (Guidance document no: 265/2020 Date of issue: October 2020. Replaces guidance document no: 158/2015)

Ensuring Equality of Access and Provision

“The coronavirus crisis has made learning from home necessary for most children at the moment. Modern technology allows us to learn remotely, with a wide range of brilliant learning tools available online. However, I recognise that it poses challenges for many families.

“It is my priority that no child or family is left behind during this crisis and all children have the opportunity to continue learning. By repurposing school kit, we will ensure that children and families get the support they need as quickly as possible.”

Wales Education Minister Kirsty Williams

The current Corona Virus crisis has highlighted a group of learners who have not been able to engage with distant learning. They have been defined as ‘digitally excluded.’

A ‘digitally excluded’ learner (DEL) is a student with no access to an appropriate internet-connected device to take part in online learning activities from his or her home during the prevailing lockdown situation. **(Welsh Government March 2020)**



However, the Council recognises that Equality of Access and Provision is also the product of how schools have invested in digital technologies. Also contributing to the digital divide, the priority schools give to digital learning or the choices they make when deciding how to spend their funding, can have a significant impact on the digital workplace learners can access early in their working lives.

The Council will work with schools to highlight the different experiences learners have depending on where they receive their education. The Council will also work with schools to identify how ‘Learner Entitlement’ can be protected in our increasingly digital world.

Our appreciation of the relatively new term ‘data poverty’ has developed since the onset of the pandemic. Prior to March 2020 our understanding of the term centred on the lack of personal resources to access online goods and services; either the financial costs of purchasing the technology and/or getting connected; ongoing costs of broadband or data, or limited connectivity due to poor reception.

[Digital Inclusion Forward Look: towards a digitally confident Wales. December 2020](#)

What we are doing:

The Council is:

- Ensuring all Digitally Excluded Learners get access to a digital device to support their learning away from school.
- Promoting the use of HWB as a safe and secure digital learning platform for all learners and all schools.
- Implementing the HWB Digital Education Standards to ensure connectivity and data and security standards are developed and support high quality education provision in a safe and secure environment.
- Engaging with school to support them in ensuring their learning environment are safe and secure for all learners.

What we are going to do

The Council will:

- Engage more fully with learners to understand their needs and aspirations for learning and work in a digital world.
- Engage with schools to understand the implications of Learner Entitlement in a digital world, exploring the potential and limitations of developing Learner Entitlement through a broader range of experiences and access options, including remote and online learning.
- Further engage with the Welsh Government and other funding sources to maximise economies of scale and value for money through Collaborative Procurement.
- Provide access to a Digital Library created across the County for the use by all learners.
- Further develop and promote Global Links to support educational content and provision more especially within mathematics, engineering and science.

Implications for school leaders and governors.

School leaders and governors should:

- Consider how their curriculum provision can benefit from engagement with digital learning experiences.
- Exploring how links with industry or higher education establishment can engage pupils in exploring the world or work in a digital future.
- Engage with the Council to explore the potentials and limitations of wider access to learning experiences for learners across the Council, including remote and online learning.
- Consider and evaluate how funding decision impact on Learner Entitlement in a digital world.
- Understand how the [HWB Digital Standards support schools](#) in safeguarding pupils and protecting learner entitlement.

Strategic Outcomes and Deliverables

Our Strategy will deliver our Vision of: Equality of access and provision for all learners across the County Borough supporting excellence and high achievement in a creative, exciting, and technologically rich environment, delivering success, valuing diversity, raising self-esteem, and promoting lifelong learning skills and attitudes.

By 2025, to support our vision, we will achieve the following outcomes:

- A full adoption the National Digital Infrastructure Standards.
- Implementation of a fully sustainable plan for the refresh of all school network equipment at least every ten years and working with schools, a plan to refresh end user devices every five years.
- Access for all learners to a HWB and Microsoft Cloud First Approach to Digital Learning.
- A Strategic Approach to providing a wide range of Digital Services, simplifying, and embedding processes that bring efficiencies in time and resources across the Council.
- Protected and developed learner entitlement across a broad, balanced, and relevant curriculum whilst ensuring all learners are kept safe and understand how to keep safe in a digital world.
- Maximised economies of scale and value for money through a well-established collaborative procurement process working in partnership with the Welsh Government and other key partners.



How will we get there?

Our strategy is ambitious and will require collaborative working with all stakeholders, hard work, tough decisions, and new thinking. All Wales partnerships and wider strategies driven by the HWB Transformational Programme will support us in the early years of adoption of key policies and working methodologies.

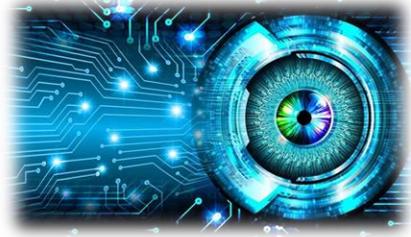
It is crucial that all our stakeholders and partners work together to deliver the strategy targets that benefits our end users, the learners.

We believe that our school communities will benefit from our actions, but we will keep listening and reflecting on the impact of our strategies and make changes where appropriate. Success will require all leaders and digital champions across all schools and the Council to work together, to create a group of people who will drive and deliver the strategy and the associated wide-ranging benefits to all learners.

Leadership

Successful delivery of this strategy will depend on appropriate governance of delivery and strong leadership in schools and across the Council.

All school governors, leaders and staff and Council employees will need to embrace our digital change, with a clear understanding that the impact on learner outcomes and learner entitlement is the driver for all change.



A digital leadership group, engaging Council and school leaders will focus on driving this strategy forward. The group will ensure the delivery of the strategy and ensure that our key performance indicators are met. It will be the responsibility of this group to lead, champion, challenge and push digital transformation across and within all our schools, embracing digital ways to engage with the Council and our external partners.

Digital Champions

School and Council Digital Champions, working with a new Digital Transformation Lead for Schools who will work with school leaders, practitioners, and learners in all schools to deliver the strategy.

Digital Friendly Policies

Council policies will be updated to enable the changes necessary to implement our digital vision. Schools will be supported to embrace the changes through policy and procedural change. Policies that support new ways of working will be devised and shared between all partners removing barriers to change and in line with the strategic vision.



Performance Indicators

Key Indicator	Targets / Outcomes
Digital Infrastructure Standards	
Implement an agreed network infrastructure design as part of the network upgrades at all educational establishments bringing all school into line with the HWB Digital Standards.	All school networks conform to the high set of standards published by the Welsh Government as the HWB Education Digital Standards. New schools have networks designed and installed in line with the current standards.
Implement a technical solution to all primary, secondary, through and specialist provision schools to reroute their school internet traffic straight to the PSBA.	All schools use their WG PSBA internet provision only for all data traffic related to pupils and pupil outcomes, supporting data integrity and network security.
Clearer guidance on Corporate Landlord Responsibilities, supporting schools with safeguarding their pupils empower adherence to the Welsh Government National Educational Digital Infrastructure Standards	All school digital networks are maintained by a clear set of standards, supporting learner entitlement, and safeguarding with clear oversight of all devices by the Council.
Planning and Sustainability	
Build capacity and improve the number of devices available to pupils to support their learning in a digital environment.	Through collaborative procurement process, schools achieve a pupil ratio of 1:2.4 before September 2022 and 1 device for 2 pupils by the end of the strategy timeline.
Digital provision is given equal priority as other utilities such as a gas and water.	All school make appropriate spending decision to support learning in a digital world and support the achievement of a pupil to device ratio of 1:2
Ensure that all technology and devices, including mobile devices are kept relevant to current demands by establishing a technology refresh on a five-year rolling programme.	All schools adopt relevant policies so that their digital devices are refreshed at least every five years, maintaining high quality provision of digital learning experiences and services.
Learning in a Digital Classroom	
To be successful the digital classroom needs to provide high quality connectivity, resilient and reliable technology and be focussed on learner outcomes	All classrooms access high quality, resilient reliable WI-FI provision and network access, enabling them to focus on their learning and not on the technology.

Digital RCT – Our Digital Strategy For Schools

Engage fully with the HWB Digital and Virtual Learning Platform to support digital learning and enhancing digital skills & capability for all learners.	All schools utilise the HWB Digital and Learning Platform fully to engage their learners.
Ensure that all learners in their school have access to Microsoft 365 and OneDrive through the HWB programme.	All learners access Microsoft 365 through their schools and HWB licencing agreement for. All pupils from 7 to 18 utilise HWB and Microsoft 365 Cloud Storage for important documents relating to and supporting their learning experiences.
Digital Services	
Improve the security and efficiency of communication through the implementation of Microsoft 365 for all County to school and school to school communication.	All departments in the Council use HWB email addresses through Microsoft 365 for all communication with administrative staff and senior leaders in all schools. Nearly all school staff utilise HWB emails when communicating.
Introducing electric meetings using MS TEAMS so that meetings are more time efficient and require less travel.	Council departments use digital meeting spaces, utilising Microsoft TEAMS, when working and communicating with schools, to secure effective use of time and secure communication.
Design and implement digital methods for accessing a wide range of service that support the function of the school premises, reducing bureaucracy and improving efficiencies and response times.	Digitalised mechanisms for the collection and sharing of information are used for most administrative tasks. MS TEAMS channels are utilised to host important and relevant information, minimising the need to send large attachments to schools.
Learner Entitlement and Safeguarding	
Ensuring all Digitally Excluded Learners get access to a digital device to support their learning away from school.	The Council has a clear definition for Digitally Excluded Learners. All DELs are able to access their learning through digital devices, either at school or remotely.
Engage more fully with learners to understand more fully their needs and aspirations for learning and work in a digital world.	The Council engages regularly with learners of all ages and has a clear understanding of their digital needs and aspirations. The Council uses the feedback from pupils to establish or revise education services or services for young people.
Provide access to a Digital Library created across the County for the use by all learners.	The Council provides access to reading and reference materials for all learners from age 5 to 16. This information is available digitally and where possible is provide free of charge for short loan periods.

Appendices

Appendix A

ICT CORE SERVICES 2020/21

1. Outline of the Service

ICT Service is an internal support service that is committed to developing a seamless and cost-effective ICT service to the Council and its schools and will continuously strive to improve and develop the quality of the service offered.

ICT Services is part of the Customer Care and ICT directorate under the Corporate Services Group.

This document outlines the core ICT Services that are covered by the costs delegated to you in your school formula under ICT/Broadband for 2019/20 and which will form the basis of the core ICT Services SLA.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council owns the licences for all core ICT Services that are accessed by all schools within Rhondda Cynon Taf (See Appendix 1 for list of modules covered).

✓ New Feature for 2020/21

LA Responsibilities

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, as corporate landlord will own and manage all newly installed HWB EdTech Refresh equipment including Cabinets, Core and Edge Network Switches, Wi-Fi Access Points, Backbone and Drop Point cabling and all Servers provided for Windows and Apple update services. (See Appendix 2 for list of all equipment including in the refresh programme.)

School Client Responsibilities.

School Funded / Responsibility

- Schools will benefit from additional funding for the initial refresh of their end user equipment between 2020 and 2022. Examples of the equipment will include Laptops, Chromebooks and iPads
- Schools will be required to make funding decisions within their budget for the future refresh of equipment.
- To be eligible to receive the additional equipment as part of this SLA, the schools agree to the responsibility to refresh this equipment within 5 to 7 years.

2. Key Features of the Service

The ICT Core Services SLA entitles schools to:

- Use of all the software and services listed in Appendix 1 that will ensure the security and integrity of the school and Council's networks.
- Support and maintenance of the core software and services
- Single point of contact for any escalations in relation to the core ICT services provided
- Provision and upgrade of the SIMS software in line with the SIMS SLA

This SLA does not cover the curriculum support services that are identified in the separate ICT Schools Curriculum SLA

✓ New features for 2020/2021

The ICT Core Services SLA entitles schools to:

- Use all HWB Edtech Refresh Equipment to deliver the curriculum and carry out all administrative functions of the school in line with the RCT email and internet user agreement
- Support, maintenance and replacement of the core network infrastructure within each establishment based on performance, function and lifespan through the sustainability agreement.
- A single point of contact for any escalations in relation to the core ICT infrastructure services provided.
- A change management process for changes to the configuration and performance of the installed HWB Edtech Refresh Equipment.

3. Financial Arrangements

Schools are given an allocation of finance through the LMS Scheme to fund the purchase of this service. The charge for 2016/17 is as follows:

Primary/Special/PRU Schools	Reception to Year 6	£20
Secondary Schools	Years 7 to 11	£30
Through schools	Reception to year 11	As above based on the number of pupils of each age range.

The financial allocation and charges are equal and result in a “cost neutral” effect.

Payment is effected annually by way of journal transfer for non-cheque book schools and by invoice for cheque book schools.

The cost of this service does not include necessary hardware & software upgrades or replacements as outlined in Capita ES technical roadmap or any additional services over and above those detailed in Appendix 1.

4. Contact Point

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 Customer Liaison Officer
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 CF40 1NY
 E-mail: ictservicedesk@rctcbc.gov.uk
 Telephone: (01443) 744064

Appendix 1

Core ICT Services for 2020 / 21

Service	Descriptor
Broadband Connectivity	<p align="center">High-speed fibre connection to the Internet.</p> <p>Secure, centrally managed and support access to internet and school business systems via the Welsh Government's PSBA network. Bandwidth; Primary's <300 pupils 100Mb Primary's >300 300Mb Comprehensives 1GB</p>
<p align="center"><i>Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC reserve the right to withdraw Broadband connectivity for any establishment that does not take suitable action to ensure the safe and appropriate use by staff and pupils of the provided broadband connectivity.</i></p>	

Service	Descriptor
<p>Web/Internet filtering software (Smoothwall via Softcat)</p>	<p>For your safety and the safety of your users - Software to support mitigation of accessing inappropriate material or malicious material via the Internet. The software is proactively centrally managed, supported and updated on Schools behalf to minimise the risk of viruses infecting your school's network and possible corruption of data.</p> <p>It is available for all networked desktop and mobile devices used in your school.</p> <p>The software is not a replacement for the safe and appropriate use of the internet and all schools are responsible for ensuring staff have signed the ‘RCT Email and Acceptable Use Policy and Guidelines’ Schools must ensure all pupils understand about the safe and appropriate use of the internet. Schools may consider it pertinent for older pupils to sign an appropriate use agreement.</p>
<p>Anti-Virus solution (McAfee)</p> <p><i>Available for all supported and networked Windows devices used in your school.</i></p>	<p>For your safety and the safety of your users - Software to support the mitigation of accessing or exposure to malicious malware content such as Viruses, Trojans and Spyware. The solution is proactively centrally managed, supported and updated on Schools behalf to minimise the risk of viruses infecting your school's network and possible corruption of data.</p>
<p>School Email Management</p>	<p>For your safety and the safety of your users - Solution is centrally managed, supported and updated on behalf of Schools providing email security, filtering so that only threat free, legitimate emails are sent and received.</p> <p>Protects Schools emails from advanced email threats and spam and reduces the risk of data loss via email.</p>
<p>School Central Firewall</p>	<p>For your safety and the safety of your users - Provides protection to all Schools networks from external attack by an array of cyber threats.</p>
<p>Centralised SIMS solution and backup service :-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admin Backup • Curriculum back up • ECI Licences 	<p>To ensure schools are legally compliant with CAPITA SIMS licensing and proactively managed and secure including the daily backup of all Schools crucial SIMS data that maybe recovered in the event of an issue.</p>

Service	Descriptor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Citrix Licenses 	<p>This "hosted" system negates the need for schools to individually manage backing up their Schools SIMS databases.</p>
<p>ICT Service Desk</p>	<p>Your single point of contact into ICT to obtain advice, request assistance or escalate operational issue with ICT Core services. Provides proactive communication, updates and monitoring of central schools systems & local school networks.</p>
<p>Remote Access Toolset (Centrastage via Redstore)</p>	<p>Allows ICT and SIMS teams to provide remote support services to your networked devices in schools. The means to keep an inventory of your ICT assets that connect to the Council's network. In addition, it allows us to manage the updating of security patches e.g. Microsoft to your desktop devices and servers to ensure the integrity of the school and Council's networks.</p>
<p>Microsoft Academy *</p>	<p>To allow all schools access to the Microsoft IT Academy programme for online training allowing teachers to become MS Office specialists, free examinations for teachers and pupils.</p>
<p>Front Line Service Support</p>	<p>ELL funding to maintain an appropriate level of service via ICT to provide remote and site support in accordance with specific SLAs. Additional project management support in respect of 21st Century Schools and other specific projects.</p>
<p>Capita Licence costs</p>	<p>To allow data to be transferred between the schools and LA data systems.</p>

✓ **New features for 2020/2021**

Appendix 2

Service	Descriptor																																																																						
<p>ICT Hwb Programme Sustainability fund.</p> <p align="center">RCT funded as part of this SLA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Local Authority will fund through this SLA the improvement, management and sustainability of the network equipment including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core and Edge Network Switches, Cabinets Wi-Fi Access Points, Backbone and Drop Point cabling All Servers provided for Windows and Apple update services 																																																																						
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Appendix B

ICT CORE SERVICES SLA 2021/22

1. Outline of the Service

ICT Service is an internal support service that is committed to developing a seamless and cost-effective ICT service to the Council and its schools and will continuously strive to improve and develop the quality of the service offered.

ICT Services is part of the Customer Care and ICT directorate under the Corporate Services Group.

This document outlines the core ICT Services that are covered by the costs delegated to you in your school formula under ICT/Broadband for 2019/20 and which will form the basis of the core ICT Services SLA.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council owns the licences for all core ICT Services that are accessed by all schools within Rhondda Cynon Taf (See Appendix 1 for list of modules covered).

LA Responsibilities

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council as corporate landlord, will own and manage all newly installed HWB EdTech Refresh equipment including Cabinets, Core and Edge Network Switches, Wi-Fi Access Points, Backbone and Drop Point cabling and all Servers provided for Windows and Apple update services. (See Appendix 2 for list of all equipment including in the refresh programme.)

✓ **New Feature for 2021/22**

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council as corporate landlord will manage or monitor all server functions within schools. This is to support senior leaders in monitoring and evaluating all functions of the school network and in ensuring the safety of all end users. Through these functions, the LA will support schools in:

- Ensuring 3rd party support agents complete work in line with LA standards and policies including server management, network addressing and DHCP provision where relevant.
- Patching Server provision for Microsoft and Apple services

School Client Responsibilities.

School Funded / Responsibility

- Schools will benefit from additional funding for the initial refresh of their end user equipment between 2020 and 2022. Examples of the equipment will include Laptops, Chromebooks and iPads,
- Schools will be required to make funding decisions within their budget for the future refresh of equipment.

- To be eligible to receive the additional equipment as part of this SLA, the schools agree to the responsibility to refresh this equipment within 5 to 7 years.

2. Key Features of the Service

The ICT Core Services SLA entitles schools to:

- Use of all the software and services listed in Appendix 1 that will ensure the security and integrity of the school and Council's networks.
- Support and maintenance of the core software and services
- Single point of contact for any escalations in relation to the core ICT services provided
- Provision and upgrade of the SIMS software in line with the SIMS SLA

This SLA does not cover the curriculum support services that are identified in the separate ICT Schools Curriculum SLA

The ICT Core Services SLA entitles schools to:

- Use all HWB Edtech Refresh Equipment to deliver the curriculum and carry out all administrative functions of the school in line with the RCT email and internet user agreement
- Support, maintenance, and replacement of the core network infrastructure within each establishment based on performance, function and lifespan through the sustainability agreement.
- A single point of contact for any escalations in relation to the core ICT infrastructure services provided.
- A change management process for changes to the configuration and performance of the installed HWB Edtech Refresh Equipment.

3. Financial Arrangements

Schools are given an allocation of finance through the LMS Scheme to fund the purchase of this service. The charge for 2020/21 is as follows:

Primary/Special/PRU Schools	Reception to Year 6	£22	Increased price reflects the significant improvements in digital services provided to all schools including digital resilience, data recovery and backup services in line with the HWB technical standards.
Secondary Schools	Years 7 to 11	£36	
Through schools	Reception to year 11	As above based on the number of pupils of each age range.	

The financial allocation and charges are equal and result in a “cost neutral” effect.

Payment is affected annually by way of journal transfer for non-cheque book schools and by invoice for cheque book schools.

The cost of this service does not include necessary hardware & software upgrades or replacements as outlined in Capita ES technical roadmap or any additional services over and above those detailed in Appendix 1.

4. Contact Point

Josie Read
Customer Liaison Officer
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CF40 1NY
E-mail: ictservicedesk@rctcbc.gov.uk
Telephone: (01443) 744064

Appendix 1

Core ICT Services for 2021 / 22

Service	Descriptor
Broadband Connectivity	High-speed fibre connection to the Internet. Secure, centrally managed and support access to internet and school business systems via the Welsh Government's PSBA network. Bandwidth; Primary's <300 pupils 100Mbs Primary's >300 300Mbs Comprehensives 300Mbs to 1GBs
<i>Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC reserve the right to withdraw Broadband connectivity for any establishment that does not take suitable action to ensure the safe and appropriate use by staff and pupils of the provided broadband connectivity.</i>	

Service	Descriptor
<p>Web/Internet filtering software (WebSafe)</p>	<p>For your safety and the safety of your users - Software to support mitigation of accessing inappropriate material or malicious material via the Internet. The software is proactively centrally managed, supported and updated on Schools behalf to minimise the risk of viruses infecting your school's network and possible corruption of data.</p> <p>It is available for all networked desktop and mobile devices used in your school.</p> <p>The software is not a replacement for the safe and appropriate use of the internet and all schools are responsible for ensuring staff have signed the 'RCT Email and Acceptable Use Policy and Guidelines' Schools must ensure all pupils understand about the safe and appropriate use of the internet. Schools may consider it pertinent for older pupils to sign an appropriate use agreement.</p>
<p>Anti-Virus solution (McAfee)</p> <p><i>Available for all supported and networked Windows devices used in your school.</i></p>	<p>For your safety and the safety of your users - Software to support the mitigation of accessing or exposure to malicious malware content such as Viruses, Trojans and Spyware. The solution is proactively centrally managed, supported and updated on Schools behalf to minimise the risk of viruses infecting your school's network and possible corruption of data.</p>
<p>School Email Management</p>	<p>For your safety and the safety of your users - Solution is centrally managed, supported and updated on behalf of Schools providing email security, filtering so that only threat free, legitimate emails are sent and received.</p> <p>Protects Schools emails from advanced email threats and spam and reduces the risk of data loss via email.</p> <p>As an enhancement to the current SLA, all schools will move their core email services for senior leaders and administrators to the HWB email infrastructure.</p>
<p>School Central Firewall / WebSafe</p>	<p>For your safety and the safety of your users - Provides protection to all Schools networks from external attack by an array of cyber threats.</p>
<p>Centralised SIMS solution and backup service :-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admin Backup • Curriculum back up • ECI Licences • Citrix Licenses 	<p>To ensure schools are legally compliant with CAPITA SIMS licensing and proactively managed and secure including the daily backup of all Schools crucial SIMS data that maybe recovered in the event of an issue.</p> <p>This "hosted" system negates the need for schools to individually manage backing up their Schools SIMS databases.</p>

Service	Descriptor
ICT Service Desk	Your single point of contact into ICT to obtain advice, request assistance or escalate operational issue with ICT Core services. Provides proactive communication, updates and monitoring of central schools systems & local school networks.
Remote Access Toolset (Centrastage via Redstore)	Allows ICT and SIMS teams to provide remote support services to your networked devices in schools. The means to keep an inventory of your ICT assets that connect to the Council's network. In addition, it allows us to manage the updating of security patches e.g. Microsoft to your desktop devices and servers to ensure the integrity of the school and Council's networks.
Microsoft Academy *	To allow all schools access to the Microsoft IT Academy programme for online training allowing teachers to become MS Office specialists, free examinations for teachers and pupils.
Front Line Service Support	ELL funding to maintain an appropriate level of service via ICT to provide remote and site support in accordance with specific SLAs. Additional project management support in respect of 21st Century Schools and other specific projects.
Capita Licence costs	To allow data to be transferred between the schools and LA data systems.

Appendix 2

Service	Descriptor
ICT Hwb Programme Sustainability fund. RCT funded as part of this SLA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Local Authority will fund through this SLA the improvement, management and sustainability of the network equipment including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core and Edge Network Switches, Cabinets Wi-Fi Access Points, Backbone and Drop Point cabling All Servers provided for Windows and Apple update services
ICT Hwb Programme Sustainability fund. School Funded / Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools will benefit from additional funding for the initial refresh of their end user equipment between 2020 and 2022. Examples of the equipment will include Laptops, Chromebooks and iPads Schools will be required to make funding decisions within their budget for the future refresh of equipment.

Service	Descriptor
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This will be a core expectation of the delegated budget scheme and aligns with a philosophy where ICT is considered as a core utility in the same way as water, gas and electricity. To be eligible to receive the additional equipment as part of this SLA, the schools agree to the responsibility to refresh this equipment within 5 to 7 years.
Change Management Process	➤ Single point of contact to deliver support for core infrastructure and change of configuration to support administrative and educational requirements.

Examples of Task Requiring Change Management Processes.

Task	Responsibility	SLA Inclusion	Timeframe	Process
Core Switches	LA	Yes		
Edge Switches	LA	Yes		
Backbone Cabling	LA	Yes		
Drop Point Cabling	LA	Yes		
Access Points (movement or service cease)	LA	Yes		Change management process
Access Point Cabling	LA	Yes		
Switch Config Management	LA	Yes		Change management process
Physical Cabinets and locations	LA	Yes		Change management process
Additional Core and Edge Requiements identification	Schools	Yes		Change management process
Environmental Systems (Fire, Access, CCTV, Payments)	Schools			
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Adding additional services that provide network services (portable Access Points, DHCP providers etc)	Schools			Change management process
Additional IP Based Devices (scanner, photocopiers)	Schools			Change management process (3rd party)

✓ **New features for 2021/2022**

Service	Descriptor
Server Management	<p>The Local Authority will fund through this SLA the improvement, management and sustainability of the network equipment including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Server Management (including network addressing and DHCP provision) Patching Server provision for Microsoft and Apple services <p>Where school servers are not currently supported by the LA, access will be provided to the LA by schools to support adherence to the terms of the National Digital Standards.</p> <p>Access will be provided for third party support agents complying to agreed standards for end user support.</p>

Service	Descriptor
Data Back Up	<p>The Local Authority will fund through an enhanced SLA the backup of all school data, curriculum and SIMS through a certified, GDPR compliant resilient backup service.</p> <p>For full compliance with GDPR and to protect learners and school leaders, all school will be required to sue this service from April 2021.</p> <p>Full details of the service will be included in an appendix to the revised SLA for 2021.</p>

Appendix C

Third party support services compliance with LA technical and working agreements.

- Headteachers and Governing Bodies are accountable and responsible for the services they procure from third party providers for end user device support, technical and digital services within their schools.
- Where a school employs a third-party provider for end user support services, they are reminded that all network equipment is owned and managed by the Council as the corporate landlord. No network equipment may be added or changed without the prior written consent of the Council through the published change management process.

Minimum Technical and Working Requirements

- It is a minimum requirement that all schools ensure they meet all of the National Education Digital Infrastructure Standards.
- School leaders are reminded that to be compliant with National Education Digital Infrastructure Standards, they must:

Use the Public Sector Broadband Aggregation (PSBA) Network for all internet connectivity within their school.

PSBA is the most cost-effective solution for schools to best meet their digital needs. It is accepted that schools operate with limited resources and that head-teachers and governors face challenges in justifying why PSBA is the best solution in the face of attractively priced offerings from some providers. However, there are many value-added benefits delivered as part of the PSBA service that are lacking from commercial provider offerings.

With the growing reliance on digital and technology for education and everyday life, it is becoming increasingly important to ensure that every aspect of online information and data is secure. As the internet grows and computer networks become bigger and more integrated, network and data security is one of the most important aspects for any organisation to consider, including schools.

Network security will help protect you from cyber-attacks. It also ensures that your data is kept secure. A stable and efficient network security infrastructure can provide several levels of protection for your school, helping to protect your systems and reduce the risk of you falling victim to data theft, sabotage, and attacks.

These Standards follow the advice and guidance provided by the National Cyber Security Council (NCSC), which is part of GCHQ – the UK's lead intelligence, cyber and security agency.

Other Standards and Policies that School must adhere to in relation to network security include:

- Compliance with all aspects of the GDPR policy within Rhondda Cynon Taf.
 - Compliance with Enhanced DBS requirements.
 - Provision of resilient back up of all school-based documents, teaching and learning materials and learner's examination and assessment work utilising a system that meet the minimum requirements for secure data storage in line with the Council Redstor Cloud Data Management standards.
 - Attend termly Council technical and policy briefings
 - Engage fully with the Council change manage process before working on any aspect of the network infrastructure.
- Schools should ensure that they have a current 'Digital Resilience' policy and improvement plan.

The Council understands that schools may wish to maintain their contracts with their current third-party end user support service provider. Schools can procure third party support for their end user devices, subject to the understanding and adoption of the standards listed below.

- Where services are provided by businesses or sole traders, including the placement of engineers employed by those businesses into schools to provide end user and network support, schools will need to ensure that they meet all the technical and employment criterion required by the Council.
- Third party support service providers that work on devices connected to school networks within Rhondda Cynon Taf, will be required to provide details of the services they provide to the Council to ensure they meet the minimum technical and operational requirements. Annual compliance audits will be implemented to ensure schools meet these standards.

The Council require that these standards are in place to support school leaders and governors in ensuring:

- The safeguarding of all learners,
 - The safeguarding and digital protection of school staff,
 - Protection of learner entitlement through data resilience and security.
- Schools are reminded that whilst they may choose to employ a third party to manage their end user devices, the Governing Body and Headteacher remain accountable to the Council for the way in which those service function and how they secure the safety of their learners and staff.

To support Headteachers and Governing Bodies in ensuring the safeguarding of all their learners, the Council requires access to:

- All network servers and backup solutions containing school staff or pupil documents
- All end user devices to ensure they conform to the minimum required technical standards and security requirements.

Guidance is available from the Council through this policy and as part of the wider Broadband SLA.

Appendix D

Implications for school leaders – Technical Support

There are 9 key areas within the National Education Digital Infrastructure Standards. The areas include Connectivity Standards and Data and Network security.

Connectivity Standards

There are seven standards to be delivered within the Connectivity Standards section. The main standard is that Schools must use the Public Sector Broadband Aggregation (PSBA) Network as their default broadband provider. This is to ensure the integrity and security of data which could be considered as sensitive or protected. For example, this could include general browsing, the sending and receiving of emails or other electronic communications, CCTV images, progress and exam data, any information and data produced and shared utilising the School Information Management Systems. The list is not intended to be definitive but to guide senior school leaders and technical support providers in ensuring that school data is secure and only utilises PSBA connectivity.

Data and Network Security

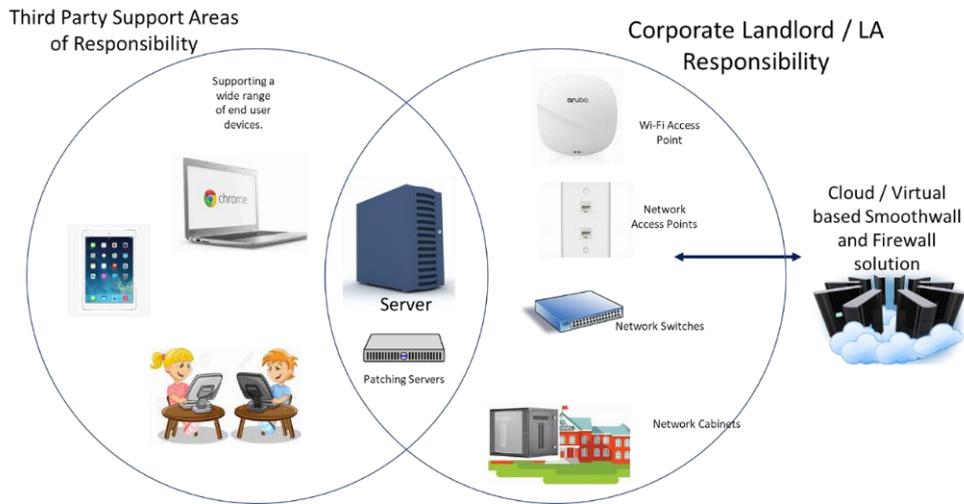
There are ten standards within the Data and Network Security Standards section. The standards focus on the collaborative working of schools and local authorities to ensure that there is a clear and shared understanding of:

- The strategy for managing network and data security
- Network security measures to defend against external and internal threats to their network
- Established cyber defences across their school hardware, including on school owned user devices
- Network monitoring arrangements to detect attacks on their network, and manage/monitor access to the internet
- A clear incident response and management strategy
- The maintenance of secure configuration for all devices and apply security patches and updates when they are made available
- A policy for mobile working and managing mobile devices
- Have effective processes in place to control and manage user access and privileges to their network
- A policy for managing and using removable media storage, such as USB drives
- Clear aware of their cyber security roles and responsibilities

Clearer Corporate Landlord Responsibilities supporting schools with safeguarding their pupils and adherence to the Welsh Government National Educational Digital Infrastructure Standards

To support senior leaders in ensuring their schools are adhering to the Digital Standards, the role of the Local Authority as the corporate landlord will become more structured.

The corporate landlord will be responsible for the network infrastructure and schools will be required to request changes before implementing any additionality to the installed network. Port security will be adopted to ensure the integrity of the network and to support schools in safeguarding pupils.



All school servers will be managed by the Local Authority. However, agreements will be in place to ensure that the day to day management of network servers and patching servers can be provided by third party network support partners implementing end user device support for their schools to agreed standards.

Information on all the National Digital Standards can be found at [National Education Digital Infrastructure Standards](#)

Appendix E

Exploiting a HWB and Microsoft Cloud First Approach

Our core aim is to build a Microsoft led core software solution building on the national licence agreements, developing consistency across schools and within the Council with cloud-based solutions for digital storage, resource sharing and data security and integrity.

Access, resilience, integrity, reliability, and security are key words associated with the use and storage of data. The Local Authority and schools' access, create, utilise, and share increasing quantities of data in a wide range of formats.

Cloud storage solutions such as OneDrive offer access everywhere, reliable backup, resilience and security of data and supports the Local Authority and increasingly schools to comply with increasing demands for data in a secure environment.

With Office 365 and OneDrive being available to every teacher and pupil across Wales through the HWB programme, schools can take cost effective measures to secure their data with the added benefit of access everywhere to support off site working. One key feature that cloud based storage facilitates is joint working on documents, a feature that promotes and achieves many of the objectives set out in the National Mission, Digital Competency Framework and A Curriculum for Wales.

For these reasons, the Council will adopt the key principle that Cloud Based storage primarily utilising OneDrive will be used across schools in RCT.

RCT as a Council uses Office 365 as its core software product. The well know versions of the software are used by most employees and form the basis of documents sent between employees, departments and to schools. Outlook is the main email solution. The Council has moved to cloud-based solutions for data over the past ten years. Office 365 utilising OneDrive is used increasingly by employees and supports effective working whilst ensuring the integrity and security of the data.

The HWB Programme provides access to Microsoft products for all learners. This is available through the HWB platform. Learners may download licensed versions of the Office 365 software to several of their devices, including laptops and a wide range of mobile devices.

There are many cost advantages for the Council and schools with the adoption of Office 365. Uniformity supports effective training and utilisations of the tools to support productivity. Cloud based emails and data storage reduces the need for servers, reducing the overall cost, space required to house servers and the energy required to keep them running efficiently.

These benefits will support the reduction of costs in school and in this time of austerity and challenging budgets, this will benefit learners by releasing funds directly for education.

It is not the policy of the Council to direct schools to work in any specific way or use stipulated software for the purpose of teaching and learning. However, as part of its strategic responsibilities across the Council, key principles are required to bring resilience and value for money. This can be achieved through aligning solutions for all Council buildings for the purpose of administration and service provision.

Cloud Based Solutions and Resilience

- Increasingly schools will move to use Cloud Based storage solutions for data and resource storage management. In RCT this will predominantly be **Office 365 OneDrive**.
- On replacement, servers will deliver basic network functionality services and device management solutions only. Data storage capacity will not be the core purpose of new server solutions.
- Schools should consider utilising **Office 365 OneDrive** for their file sharing and storage solutions.

Microsoft - the 'preferred' software solution for schools.

- Core email solutions will move from an RCT hosted solution to be a HWB email solution for Headteacher and admin communications being delivered through the Local Authority.
- **From September 2021**, the Council will only send emails to HWB email accounts and all schools are encouraged to adopt HWB email accounts for all staff.
- Schools are encouraged to engage with Office 365 training through the Central South Consortium to enable all staff to utilise their email accounts through HWB.
- The use of non HWB accounts for work-based communication and sharing is considered to be a risk under GDPR policy as not all email systems are compliant.
- The Council will continue its support for the Microsoft Educator Programme.

Appendix F

Distant Learning and Blended Learning

In ‘Successful Futures’ 2015, Professor Donaldson writes that teachers should adopt a blended approach to learning. In a digital context, ‘Blended Learning’ occurs when a learner learns partly through traditional teacher-based classrooms and partly through digital means. The learner has some control over when, where and how learning takes place. It needs to be planned carefully to meet individual learner needs. Blended learning could also include teacher instruction, group work, tutorials, workshops plus activities such as using distance learning materials, web-sites, interactive materials, podcasts and virtual reality.

The Council's ‘**Digital Strategy for Schools**’ clearly identifies the need for digitally enabled and connected classrooms to promote and support a range of teaching and learning styles and processes included blended learning techniques. Two key areas that we consider have the greatest impact on the capability of digital classrooms are:

As our society becomes more digitally connected and the skills of our learners become more developed, opportunities to learn can be accessed effectively across a range of platforms and in venues not previously considered as places for learning.

As schools develop norms and expectations for digital usage in the classroom, it is also important to develop safe, responsible, and healthy habits as students engage with educational technology tools at home via online distance learning. By developing norms and expectations for digital usage, students will be more engaged, productive, and safe as they interact with their teacher, classmates, and online content from home. (betterlessons.com)

For schools in RCT, blended or distant learning has become an increasing strategy enabling learners to learn and work collaboratively outside the confines of the classroom and even beyond school.

The Council seeks to engage with all school to enable, empower and promote distant and blended learning as effective tools that school are encouraged to provide for all learners. The strategy is to utilise HWB resources to develop learning partnerships between schools and between organisation such as universities, further education establishments and businesses, including those overseas. NASA has a well-publicised distant learning model that encouraged engagement from all around the world.

More recently, the Welsh government in partnership with regional consortia have worked to create a Distant Learning and Blended Learning Model to support the Stay Home Stay Safe initiative as part of the Covide-19 response.

The Council fully supports the models developed by the Welsh Government and has taken steps to ensure that schools can work with all learners through the two initiatives. Examples would be supporting the HWB licencing programme for Office, directing and support schools to engage with the Office 365 Licencing Scheme. Although not part of its core initiative, the Council supports all schools technically where they wish to engage with the Google Classroom programme on HWB.

[WG Distant Learning](#)

[CSC Blended Learning](#)

Appendix G – Keeping Learners Safe – National Education Digital Standards.

Keeping Learners Safe

There are 9 key areas within the National Education Digital Infrastructure Standards. Each area has an impact on the work of the school in relation to keeping learners safe and protecting learner's entitlement.

Connectivity Standards

There are seven standards to be delivered within the Connectivity Standards section. The main standard is that Schools must use the Public Sector Broadband Aggregation (PSBA) Network as their default broadband provider. This is to ensure the integrity and security of data which could be considered as sensitive or protected. For example, this could include general browsing, the sending and receiving of emails or other electronic communications, CCTV images, progress and exam data, any information and data produced and shared utilising the School Information Management Systems. The list is not intended to be definitive but to guide senior school leaders and technical support providers in ensuring that school data is secure and only utilises PSBA connectivity.

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- The maintenance of secure configuration for all devices and apply security patches and updates when they are made available
- A policy for mobile working and managing mobile devices
- Have effective processes in place to control and manage user access and privileges to their network
- A policy for managing and using removable media storage, such as USB drives
- Clear awareness of their cyber security roles and responsibilities

[Bring your own device](#)

Appendix H – Central South Consortium IT Programmes / Professional Learning

Examples 2020

Programme	Blurb
<p>Primary Digital Leadership L1 Darran Park Primary School</p>	<p>Whole school approaches to digital learning for practitioners who are just beginning the journey in leading digital learning.</p>
<p>Primary Digital Leadership L2 Cadoxton Primary School</p>	<p>This programme will support the effective leadership of digital learning through developing a network for the sharing of good practice and supporting Leaders of Digital Learning to develop innovative practices.</p>
<p>DCF Citizenship Darran Park Primary School</p>	<p>Sharing and exploring a progressive approach to whole school development of the DCF Citizenship strand.</p>
<p>DCF Producing Rich Tasks Ysgol Pencae</p>	<p>Develop a range of strategies and resources for the development of learning and teaching experiences in support of the Producing strand of the Digital Competence Framework.</p>
<p>DCF Collaborating Cwmclydach Primary School</p>	<p>To raise awareness of opportunities for online collaboration. To gain confidence in using collaboration tools through HWB. Developing online collaboration across the curriculum within a variety of contexts. Planning for collaboration.</p>
<p>DCF Data and Computational Thinking Cadoxton Primary School</p>	<p>Understand how to use data progressively across the phases. Develop confidence with different types of data, forms, databases, spreadsheets. Develop ideas and tasks for using data across the curriculum. Develop ideas for using computational thinking tasks across the curriculum.</p>
<p>Digital Learning: DCF across the curriculum Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Eder</p>	<p>Each of the published one day sessions focuses on the development of digital learning in different curriculum areas. Maths & Numeracy (EM) / Expressive Arts (EM)</p>
<p>DCF coordinator networks Cardiff High School Treorchy Comprehensive School St Cyres School</p>	<p>Commenced autumn 2019. To join contact matthew.j.humphreys@cscjes.org.uk Interacting and collaborating / Data and Computational thinking focus Leadership of DCF in the Secondary setting Developing DCF across each Key Stage</p>
<p>Cross-Phase Digital Learning: Lead Coding Schools Barry Island Primary School Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School Cwmclydach Primary School Gwaunfarren Primary School Penybont Primary School</p>	<p>Sharing best practice, resources and developing a coding project. Aimed at improving the coding skills of ICT teachers and non-specialists (KS3). Exploiting opportunities for coding across the curriculum. Developing coding from FP to KS2</p>

Digital RCT – Our Digital Strategy For Schools

Ysgol Gymraeg Melin Gruffydd	Exploring coding resources and links to Science and Technology Welsh medium coding programme
ICT(GCSE) Regional Network Porthcawl Comprehensive School Plasmawr	Commenced autumn. To join contact matthew.j.humphreys@cscjes.org.uk To share good practice and develop a range of strategies and resources for teaching GCSE ICT.
ICT (A-Level) Regional Network Cowbridge Comprehensive School Tonyrefail	Commenced autumn. To join contact matthew.j.humphreys@cscjes.org.uk To share good practice and develop a range of strategies and resources for teaching A-Level ICT.
SWGFL Online Safety Updates Bridgend/Vale – Pencoed Comprehensive	These meetings provide important information for schools to ensure they keep up to date with the development of aspects of Online Safety. The meetings will support primary and secondary colleagues in a range of aspect of online safety including the use of social media, protecting staff and engaging with parents.
CSC DIGITAL NETWORK MEETINGS Valleys Innovation Centre, Abercynon	Spring 2020 / Summer 2020 Primary / Secondary
Regional Digital Learning Event	All Nations Centre, Cardiff March 11th 2020

For more information on all CSC led ICT and Digital Learning – contact businessdesk@cscjes.org.uk