Wireless networks and the BSF programme

1 Introduction

This paper seeks to re-iterate the approach adopted by the BSF programme to wireless ("wi-fi") technologies and networks to be deployed within secondary schools as part of our capital investment programme.

1.1 A blended approach is the standard approach adopted by the programme

While a cabled network remains the premiere mode of networking in terms of performance, security and durability, wireless systems affords a level of flexibility and cost effectiveness unattainable by a pure cabled network.

Consequently, the BSF programme favours the adoption of a combined technology solution that blends both network approaches to achieve Haringey's Bright Futures vision. Two factors are particularly important:

1. Flexible, accessible and inclusive – wireless networks allow access "anywhere, anytime",[1] which means that teaching and learning can be delivered in flexible ways, unconstrained by the physical accommodation.
2. Cost effective – appropriate use of wireless technology can significantly reduce the overall costs of LAN connectivity in schools. Specifically, it will ensure individual schools vision in Haringey can be met within the capital infrastructure budget of £225 per pupil. This view is supported by our external ICT advisors, Cambridge Education[2].

To illustrate further we include a table showing indicative costs of an example school with 1,100 pupils, and 11,500 square metres requiring ICT infrastructure improvement. As wireless-only networks will not provide the basic minimum requirements of an educational system, the costing model compares a cabled only versus a blended (wired and wireless) infrastructure:

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[1] Prioritised factors that enable education transformation through ICT within Haringey BSF schools. These were established via workshops carried out by the Haringey BSF ICT Stream in early 2007.
[2] Haringey BSF's specialist ICT, educational and procurement advisors/designers.

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	Cabled only	Blended infrastructure
Cost of Data Outlets	£300,000	£150,000
Cost of Specialist spaces (Floor Distributors)	£125,000	£100,000
Total	**£425,000**	**£250,000**

1.2   Policy approach adopted by Haringey Council

The Cabinet agreed on 18th September 2007 that:

- The installation or otherwise of Wi-Fi networking facilities in schools is ultimately at the discretion of each school's own governing body and headteacher. Haringey Council's role is to provide advice and support to schools based upon best guidance and good practice.

- The Health Protection Agency (HPA) guidance says: that there is "no reason why schools and others should not use Wi-Fi equipment". The UK Government and the WHO endorse the HPA view, supported by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)

Therefore, the BSF programme will continue to develop and cost the design options for each school based on a blended (wired and wireless) infrastructure.

If your Governing Body has decided it would prefer a cabled-only solution for your school, this decision must be communicated to Gordon Smith, BSF Programme Director by 1st November 2007.