

ATKINS

Becta: The current technology and inclusion landscape

Final Report
December 2009



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Executive Summary

The results of this study show that there are varying models used for the assessment and provision of assistive technologies in England. The variety in models amounts to an inconsistent approach to the assessment and provision of assistive technologies nationally. Children with special educational needs are experiencing a differentiated approach for identification of their needs through to assessment and provision.

As a result, a child with a specific need may have a better chance of being able to utilise the most appropriate assistive technology, compared to another child with the same need living in a different local authority.

A summary of the key findings from this study:

- **Assessment**
 - The local authorities interviewed have varying models for the assessment of assistive technologies.
 - Not all children are receiving the appropriate assistive technology they require due to varying skills at identifying and matching needs with solutions.
 - Varying timeframes for assessment can prevent a child accessing appropriate assistive technologies, which can impact on the inclusion of that child.
 - Reassessments do not follow a standard process which leads to children not being reassessed often enough and using old technology that may no longer match their needs.
- **Funding**
 - Different models exist for who pays for the assessment and provision of assistive technologies, causing reluctance in schools to undertake assessment and provide appropriate technology.
 - Funding for transition between primary and secondary schools can differ amongst local authorities.
- **Expertise**
 - Expertise within local authorities differs greatly, with some using innovative models of practice and others having no in-house expertise.
 - Assistive technology and its uses are changing at a fast pace, and overall, the schools workforce is struggling to keep up with the advances.
 - Levels of expertise around assistive technologies has largely remained the same over recent years.
 - There is no consistent approach for inclusion training and knowledge sharing for schools, leading to a varied experience for children.
- **Information and guidance**
 - There is no single source for information available to school and local authority staff on assistive technologies, resulting in staff not having access to up to date information.

Recommendations

As a result of this study, Atkins has identified several areas in need of improvement in the assessment and delivery of assistive technologies. We recognise that there are a number of factors that can affect the delivery of assistive technologies to children, and that there is no single answer to improving this. Although there are a number of actions that can be recommended to make steps in improving this provision, some of these fall outside of Becta's remit.

The following recommendations therefore reflect our insights into how Becta can make steps to improving the delivery.

1. Building on Becta's existing work in the inclusion arena and working with partners a knowledge site around assistive technologies should be developed for local authorities and the schools workforce
2. Initiate a framework for knowledge sharing both at schools and local authority level
3. Work with partners to agree and advise DCSF (and other departments) of potential changes to policy to address the gaps and consistency in assessment, funding and expertise

Background

Overview

In support of, and to inform the effective delivery of the Harnessing Technology Strategy, Becta required an up to date picture of the technology and inclusion landscape in English mainstream schools. The study was focussed on the need to understand the extent to which assistive technologies are being exploited by key roles within the children’s workforce so that appropriate interventions and measures can be put in place. It focussed on school aged learners, primarily in mainstream establishments (primary, secondary, or vocational settings for 14-16 year olds).

The study explored two areas:

- A national overview of the expertise in the assessment, use and deployment of assistive technologies within local authorities
- Examples and analysis of the development of institutional practice that embeds the use of ICT to support inclusion of all learners

Atkins was commissioned to undertake research consultancy to provide Becta with this picture and recommendations identifying where opportunities for change may have an impact.

Methodology

A qualitative methodology was used, consisting of desk research and 28 interviews.

Desk Based Research

Desk based research was used to review existing research undertaken by other agencies and organisations and to explore any interesting points raised by interviewees.

Interview Programme

To ensure we obtained an up to date picture of the landscape we undertook 28 telephone interviews with three different groups of people: local authorities, the schools workforce and key stakeholders.

Table 1.1 – Breakdown of interviews by group¹

Group	Total Number
Local Authorities (e.g. SEN team)	11
School workforce (e.g. SENCOs, Teaching assistants, head teachers)	12
Stakeholders (e.g. representative organisations and members of Becta’s expert reference group)	5

Source: Atkins

Topic guides were developed for each of the different groups of interviewees². These topic guides formed the basis for the interviews and explored a number of areas including:

- The assessment process for assistive technologies (both at local authority and school level)

¹ A list of all interviewees can be viewed in appendix B.

² A list of topic guides can be viewed in appendix C.

- Expertise to support and deliver inclusive learning (both at local authority and school level)
- Delivery of assistive technologies in mainstream schools
- Perceived effectiveness of assistive technologies to learners

Sampling

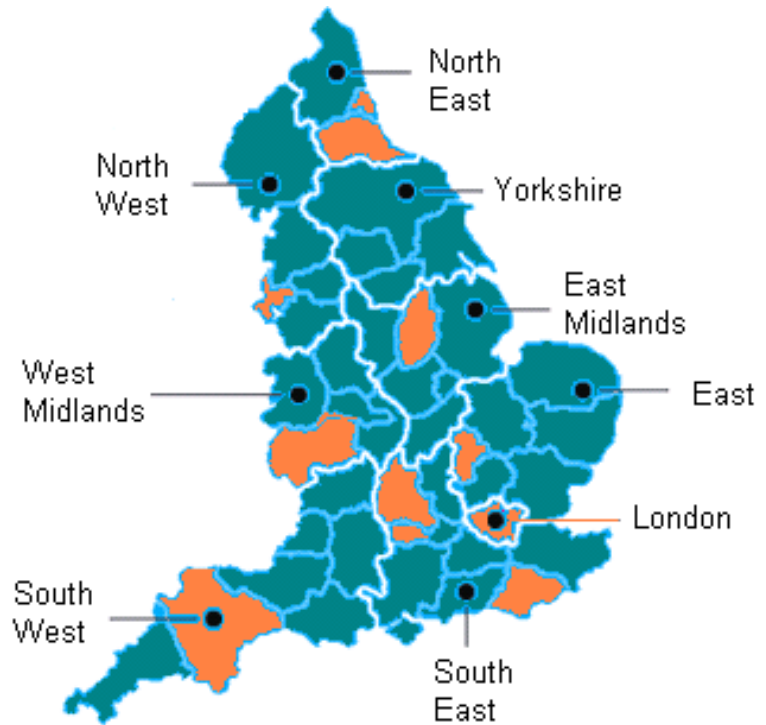
To ensure a representative picture of the national landscape we selected local authorities based on a number of factors including their size and their rurality. Where possible, the institutional level interviews were undertaken within the same areas. The map below shows the areas we covered as part of the study.

Figure 1.1 – Map detailing interview areas

Key:

Local authorities interviewed

- Local authorities interviewed:**
- Brighton and Hove City Council
 - Derbyshire County Council
 - Devon County Council
 - Durham County Council
 - London Borough of Hackney
 - Milton Keynes Council
 - North Tyneside Council
 - Oxfordshire County Council
 - St Helens Council
 - West Berkshire Council
 - Worcestershire County Council



Source: Atkins

Presentation of the report

This report is split into a number of chapters, each comprising of a number of sections. Each section is summarised to present our findings. Where interesting points have been raised or examples of good practice have been identified we have presented these in the report in different colour boxes:

	Navy	Facts found in desk research
	Teal	Quotes from interviewees
	Green	Points made by Atkins
	Lead	Examples of good practice

Chapters 1 to 5 – key findings from research

These chapters outline the key findings from the study:

- Chapter 1 - Assessment for the provision of assistive technology
- Chapter 2 - Funding for assessment and delivery of assistive technologies
- Chapter 3 - Expertise in assistive technologies
- Chapter 4 - Information and guidance on assistive technologies

Chapter 5 – Recommendations

This chapter outlines our recommendations identifying where opportunities for change may have an impact to the technology and inclusion landscape. Our recommendations have been tested by a team of in house experts that work in the sector and have been prioritised to help Becta decide which ones should be actioned.

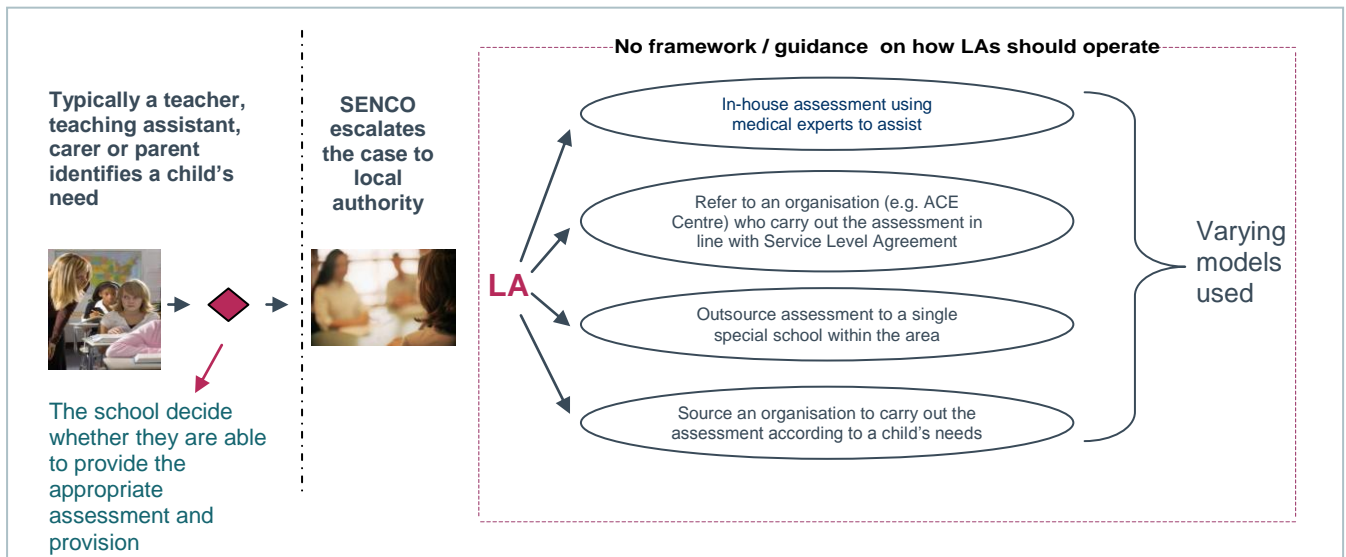
1. Assessment for the provision of assistive technology

Key Findings

- The local authorities interviewed have varying models for the assessment of assistive technologies.
- Not all children are receiving the appropriate assistive technology they require due to varying skills at identifying and matching needs with solutions
- Varying timeframes for assessment can prevent a child accessing appropriate assistive technologies, which can impact on the inclusion of that child
- Reassessments do not follow a standard process which leads to children not being reassessed often enough and using old technology that may no longer match their needs

The local authorities interviewed have varying models for the assessment of assistive technologies.

Figure 1.1 – Current assessment models



Local authorities do not follow a common process for assessing the need for, and provision of, assistive technology. This results in differing procedures amongst local authorities.

Some local authorities interviewed stated that schools do not usually undertake assessments; however during the institutional level interviews, it was found that some schools are required to undertake their own assessments.

Typically, schools will try to assess a child's needs in house; however for complex cases they will refer the child to the local authority.

“Local authorities often phone organisations such as Ability Net to ask them how assessments should be carried out”

Stakeholder

Not all children are receiving the appropriate assistive technology they require due to varying skills at identifying and matching needs with solutions

Identification of a child’s need is largely dependant upon the individual skills and knowledge of members of the schools workforce. Some needs, such as non-physical disabilities (e.g. cognitive dysfunction) can be difficult to pick up. When the teacher or teaching assistant is not aware of particular disabilities (e.g. non-physical), the child is thought to have behavioural problems instead of a special educational need. As a result, the child’s need is not picked up and this usually falls on the parent or carer to identify that need. Hence, there are gaps in the schools workforce in identifying needs. One school SENCO said that “more up-skilling of the schools workforce is required, especially in diagnostic skills”.

“For every 1 child that uses assistive technologies, there are another 5 children whose needs haven’t been identified”

Local Authority

It is clear from the local authority interviews that some of the schools’ workforce are comparing a child’s needs with similar cases and then replicating solutions. For example, if a teacher has used some special software to help a dyslexic child with reading problems they may use this with another dyslexic child.

Some teachers only know of one or two assistive technologies and therefore replicate these technologies across several cases, often incorrectly prescribing solutions.

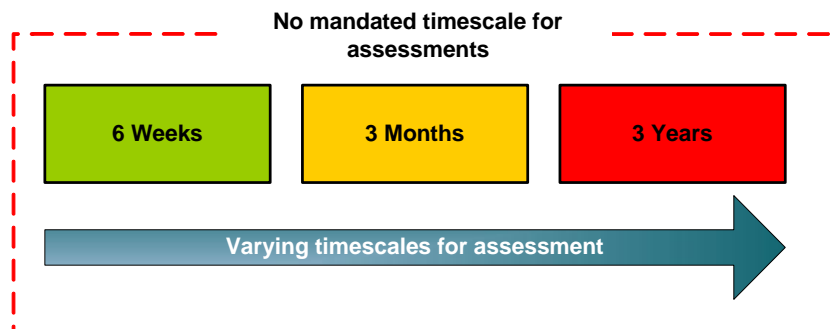
It was found through the interviews that local authorities and the schools workforce don’t always understand what assistive technologies exist that can increase inclusion, and the ICT advisors within local authorities understand assistive technologies but don’t always understand the assessment process.

Alongside this, local authorities and the schools workforce are finding it very difficult to keep up with ever-changing technological advances. Local authorities felt that further guidance could be provided by government agencies, and in turn schools felt further guidance could be provided by local authorities.

Varying timeframes for assessment can prevent a child accessing appropriate assistive technologies, which can impact on the inclusion of that child.

Timescales for assessing learner requirements differ greatly depending on the learner’s need and the school or local authority dealing with the assessment. Timescales cited by interviewees vary from six weeks to three years, although the average was approximately three months.

Figure 1.2 – varying timescales for assessment



Source: Atkins

There are government guidelines available for how quickly and how often assessments should be undertaken, but these are not mandated and relate specifically to SEN assessments. (Source: SEN Code of Practice). The assessment for assistive technology requirements is not always undertaken at the same time as a SEN assessment, and as a result, in some cases a child could be waiting years for an appropriate assessment. One school workforce member cited that they were working with a child who had dyspraxia

and they had put in a requirement for the child to have a laptop. After three years the child got the laptop but then was about to leave for college.

The cause and impact of these varying timescales was explored with interviewees:

- Cause: Local authorities are resource constrained or unable to obtain a suitable expert to carry out the assessment. I.e. the expert could be too busy to carry out the assessment; therefore the assessment is placed in a queue.
- Impact: Lengthy assessments can lead to children falling behind in their education, or developing behavioural problems in class because they feel excluded from their peers.

Reassessments do not follow a standard process which leads to children not being reassessed often enough and using old technology that may no longer match their needs.

A small number of local authorities stated that they undertake reassessments on a regular basis, constantly reviewing the learners' needs, or taking advice from teachers, parents, or carers regarding changes in circumstance. However, it was found from the institutional level interviews that this was not always the case. One school SENCO explained how one child had special software which was out of date. The child was not reassessed for another year and therefore was still using the out of date software which was unsuitable. This impacted the child's learning and inclusion level.

Some local authorities reassess complex cases annually and for less complex needs it could be every three to four years. Interviewees felt that the frequency of reassessments should depend upon the learners' needs. For less complex cases the need for regular assessments may not always be as great, but a learner may still "outgrow" their technology well before a reassessment is undertaken.

Guidance from DCSF advises that reassessments should take place annually or more often for learners with complex needs

Atkins

Similar to the assessment process, the cause and impact of irregular reassessments was explored:

- Cause: Local authorities are resource constrained and are put off by the high costs of assessing a child again.
- Impacts: Irregular reassessments are resulting in some children not being able to utilise the most appropriate assistive technology reducing chances of inclusion.

2. Funding for assessment and delivery of assistive technologies

Key Findings

- Different models exist for who pays for the assessment and provision of assistive technologies, causing reluctance in schools to undertake assessment and provide appropriate technology.
- Funding for transition between primary and secondary schools can differ amongst local authorities

Different models exist for who pays for the assessment and provision of assistive technologies, causing reluctance in schools to undertake assessment and provide appropriate technology.

Funding is not always specifically allocated for the assessment and provision of assistive technologies. Government guidelines advise that local authorities “ring fence” some of their funding specifically for the provision of assistive technology. In practice, this rarely happens and often requirements cannot be met due to a lack of pre-allocated funds.

In a time where assessment needs are growing, the lack of ring-fenced funds means that more and more children are not being able to exploit and utilise assistive technologies.

Usually, local authorities pay for the assessment of children’s needs, but one local authority interviewed stated that the schools were required to pay £75 per hour to the local authority to undertake assessments. In this case the school felt reluctant to refer children for assessments.

Local authorities will typically be responsible for paying for the provision and maintenance of assistive technology equipment; however one school interviewed explained that they are required to partly or fully fund the provision.

When a school has paid for the assistive technology then that technology belongs to the school. If the technology has been funded by the local authority then it belongs to the child for as long as the child remains within that local authority area.

In England, the number of pupils with SEN increased between 2005 and 2009 to reach 1,656,000. Although the number of pupils with statements decreased by 0.2%, the numbers without statements, increased by 2.9% (those at School Action and School Action Plus) increased by more.

Children with Special Educational Needs 2009, an Analysis, DCSF

Funding for transition between primary and secondary schools can differ amongst local authorities

Typically, if the equipment has been provided by the local authority, it will move with the child if they move to another school within the local authority area. If the school has paid for the equipment, then the equipment doesn’t usually move with the child unless an agreement is made between the schools SENCOs.

However, if a child moves to a school in another local authority area they have to go through the assessment process again, although in most cases, the case files are sent to the new local authority who may or may not take this into consideration when assessing the child’s needs. This leads to disruption for the child and this could last for some time depending on how long the assessment and provision takes.

3. Expertise in assistive technologies

Key Findings

- Expertise within local authorities differs greatly, with some using innovative models of practice and others having no in-house expertise
- Assistive technology and its uses are changing at a fast pace, and overall, the schools workforce is struggling to keep up with the advances
- Levels of expertise around assistive technologies has largely remained the same over recent years
- There is no consistent approach for inclusion training and knowledge sharing for schools, leading to a varied experience for children

Expertise within local authorities differs greatly, with some using innovative models of practice and others having no in-house expertise

Many local authorities do not have the necessary expertise in-house to undertake assessments. They therefore are required to outsource their assessments to bodies such as ACE Centre or special schools within the local authority area.

- Of the 11 local authorities interviewed, two did not possess any in-house expertise and as a result outsource their assessments
- The majority of local authorities interviewed have low levels of expertise that are mainly tailored towards learners with less complex needs
- Some local authorities only had one assessor, and in one instance this assessor was part-time and served 110 schools
- Some local authorities lack the knowledge to match solutions with needs effectively

"We only have two consultant advisory teachers who are part-time. They cover all disabilities in all areas of the county. If we have a pupil with really complex needs it will put extra pressure on them and can slow everything else down"

Local authority

Assistive technology and its uses are changing at a fast pace, and overall, the schools workforce is struggling to keep up with the advances.

At school level, expertise is extremely patchy. Special schools' expertise and knowledge is not always being leveraged to mainstream schools. However, some schools are innovative and cutting edge in their approach, whereas others' expertise is dependant upon the individual skills of teaching assistants and school SENCOs. These schools have good links to special schools in their area. Mainstream schools often have to rely upon special schools or specialist organisations (e.g. ACE or Ability Net) for expertise in assessments and provision

One SENCO interviewed described how their school had expertise in identifying and assessing needs in-house. The assistive technologies are sourced by the school's Information and Communication Technology Department. The training is provided in-house and then the knowledge is shared amongst the rest of the schools workforce. However, it was found that many schools lack creativity, innovation and focus to keep up with how assistive technologies can increase inclusion.

The level of expertise is determined somewhat by the support and training provided by the local authority as well as by the amount of time, budget and resource that is committed by the school to up-skill their own workforce.

Only a very small minority of schools interviewed actively encourage SENCOs to capture knowledge from educational events, other specialist schools and regional events. Schools that do not actively encourage SENCOs can be ill-equipped to understand the benefits of assistive technologies.

Institutional level interviews uncovered that there is not enough sharing of experience amongst the schools workforce. This is due to the lack of opportunity and systems to facilitate knowledge sharing provided by the school, and lack of focus maintained by Head teachers.

There is a general lack of understanding and knowledge amongst the schools workforce in regards to what assistive technology solutions are available. Many teachers and teaching assistants are not confident in using new technologies and often don't understand their potential for inclusion. In addition, if a member of staff is ill and is the only person that can use a particular technology, the child will not always be supported during their absence.

“Expertise in special schools is base lining, but in mainstream schools it is incremental at best. The approach to inclusion through technology is very limited”

Stakeholder

It was also uncovered that SENCOs are very busy in their roles and often don't have much time to understand what assistive technologies are available. Despite efforts being made to ensure that SENCOs are single roles, interviews found that some SENCOs are still carrying other significant responsibilities such as head teacher. It was also found that some SENCOs carry out their role across several schools, leaving them thinly spread.

Levels of expertise around assistive technologies has largely remained the same over recent years

The general consensus amongst interviewees was that the levels of expertise had largely remained unchanged over recent years. Some local authorities expressed that their level of expertise had increased as a result of the Communication Aids Project (CAP), which meant they could build up a team of experts that has remained post-CAP funding. One interviewee from the institutional level interview expressed that, due to CAP funding, their local authority now shared expertise and resources with a neighbouring authority.

One local authority facilitates up-skilling of the schools workforce whereas another local authority relies on school Head teachers to manage training for their staff

Atkins

The communication aids project (CAP) ran from April 2003 to March 2006. CAP, a Becta funded initiative, aimed to help pupils of school age in England who were faced with significant communication difficulties. It did this in three ways:

1. *by providing a range of technological aids to meet their individual needs, thus supporting their spoken and written communication*
2. *by helping them to access the curriculum and interact with others*
3. *by supporting their transition between schools and through to post-school provision.*

Source: TeacherNet

Some schools explained that expertise has slightly risen in recent years in the area of identifying needs; however expertise had declined in matching needs with appropriate assistive technologies.

Example of good practice

A small number of local authorities have superior levels of expertise in assessment. This typically exists of a mixture of expert contacts, good networks across local authorities and excellent individual expertise from within special schools. These local authorities actively seek ways in which they can grow their networks, collaborate and share best practice knowledge with similar interested parties at educational exhibitions.

There is no consistent approach for inclusion training and knowledge sharing for schools, leading to a varied experience for children

Institutional level interviews revealed that there is lack of support and training for schools from their local authorities.

There is a drive to towards special schools transferring knowledge to mainstream schools. Despite this, interviews found that in practice, local authorities are failing to leverage the expertise from special schools into mainstream schools. Support efforts from local authorities are mainly focussed on special schools. The level of training and support provided to mainstream schools is very sparse and this is due to a lack of central direction. Through Atkins' experience on BSF, it is recognised that efforts are being made to change this.

Commonly, when a piece of assistive technology is provided to a child, the school's SENCO, teaching assistant and the child will be provided with training for that piece of equipment by the local authority. However, other teachers are often unaware of the piece of equipment and how to use it. This is leading to instances where the technology is not been utilised effectively to its full potential. This results in wasted effort and funds in assessment and provision. One SENCO interviewed said "there is support there if we really need it, but there is not enough initial training. This means that if the technology is really complex, it may not get used because it is too difficult".

Approximately 90% of teachers are not aware of free and open source programmes available for special education needs

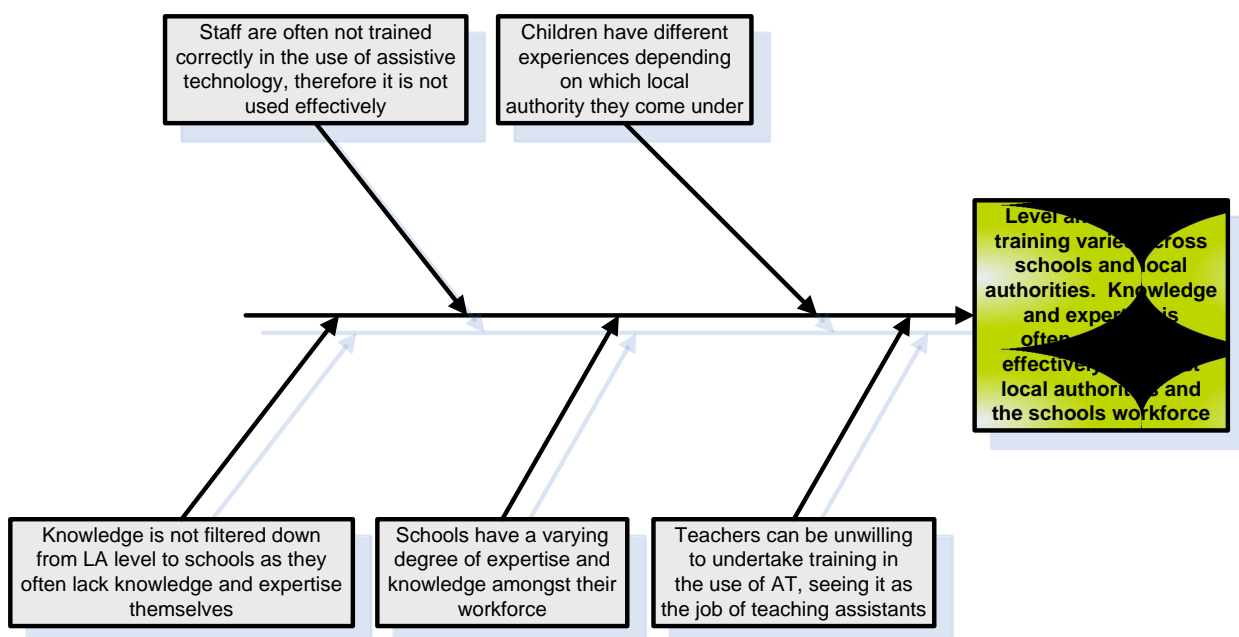
Atkins

One local authority stakeholder explained that the SEN adviser attends technology fairs and exhibitions. They then pass on what they have learnt to the schools workforce within that local authority area.

One stakeholder interviewed from a local authority said that with respect to making sure the child can always use the technology (despite who is supporting them and if someone goes off sick), they try and put the child in charge to make sure that they are independent. However, this isn't always possible as support is usually required.

The technologies available are fast moving and the schools workforce is so often out of touch with what's available and how it's being utilised elsewhere in other schools or local authorities in England. The schools workforce needs to better understand how technologies can increase inclusion of children during education. Figure 3.1 below highlights some of the issues that the schools workforce is experiencing.

Figure 3.1 – Issues in schools workforce training



Source: Atkins

Examples of good practice in training provided by local authorities to schools

- A few local authorities provide support and training to the school through in-house help services or via a third party supplier (e.g. Physical Disability Support Service)
- One local authority shares expertise through having joint training between the school and local authority workforce
- The majority of local authorities provide the schools workforce with training in identifying a child's needs
- The majority of local authorities provided training to the schools workforce and the child around a particular technology (in some instances this is provided by a third party)

4. Information and guidance on assistive technologies

Key Findings

- There is no single source for information available to school and local authority staff on assistive technologies, resulting in staff not having access to up to date information

There is no single source for information available to school and local authority staff on assistive technologies, resulting in staff not having access to up to date information.

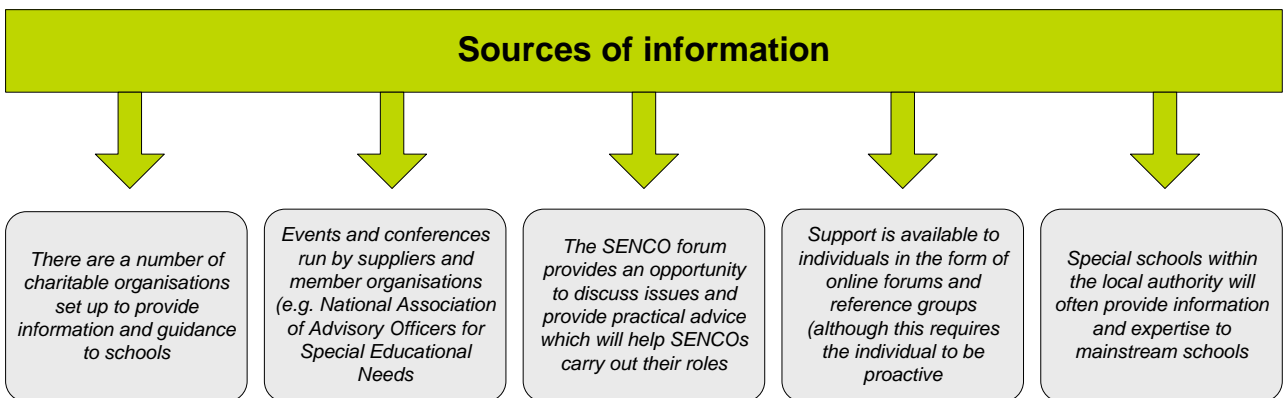
There is information available to schools and local authorities in the form of reference groups, exhibitions, websites and online forums. This requires individuals to know where they can find out the information and be proactive and seek the knowledge and advice they require.

Interviews found that both local authorities and schools experience difficulty in finding quality checked information about either assessments or assistive technologies. One local authority interviewed said *“you might only need to search for suitable assistive technologies when a child has a specific identified need, however we have difficulty finding out information quickly because there is no central directory where we can look to obtain advice”*.

“SENCOs sometimes don’t know where to go because all the information is fragmented across agencies, schools and other organisations”

Local Authority

Figure 4.1 - Sources of information



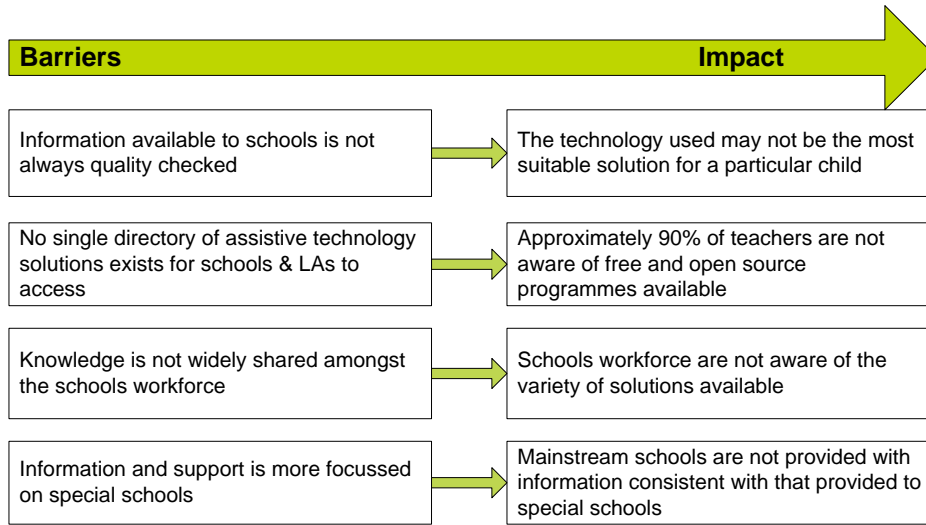
Source: Atkins

Examples of good practice

- One local authority has a communication centre for expertise, allowing teachers, teaching assistants and staff to email or ring the centre for advice
- One local authority sends out a SEN newsletter and e-update to schools within the area, to ensure they are kept up to date with any changes.

It is clear that there is a considerable amount of information available to schools and local authorities regarding assistive technology, however, it is not always easily accessible and interviewees suggested there were various barriers, these are illustrated in figure 4.2 below.

Figure 4.2 - Information barriers for local authorities and schools



Source: Atkins

5. Recommendations

Recommendations

Atkins recognises that there are a number of factors that can affect the delivery of assistive technologies to children, and that there is no single answer to improving this. Although there are a number of actions that can be recommended to make steps in improving this provision, some of these fall outside of Becta's remit. The following recommendations therefore reflect our insights into how Becta can make steps to improving the delivery.

- Building on Becta's existing work in the inclusion arena and working with partners a knowledge site around assistive technologies should be developed for local authorities and the schools workforce
- Initiate a framework for knowledge sharing both at schools and local authority level
- Work with partners to agree and advise DCSF (and other departments) of potential changes to policy to address the gaps and consistency in assessment, funding and expertise

1. Building on Becta's existing work in the inclusion arena and working with partners a knowledge site around assistive technologies should be developed for local authorities and the schools workforce

Like all technology, assistive technology and its uses are constantly being developed and improved. As this moves at an ever evolving rate it is important that the practitioners recommending and using assistive technologies understand what is available. In order for practitioners to make effective recommendations, they need to have up to date knowledge on how assistive technologies can support learning and inclusion. Although there are a number of sources of information available to an individual, they often have time restraints preventing them having truly up to date knowledge.

Becta have already made steps to addressing these issues through advice on the Becta website³ and setting up the SENCO forum.

We believe Becta now have the opportunity to build on the existing provision and advice they provide to schools and local authorities. We therefore recommend that two actions are taken:

i) The inclusion part of the Becta website is further developed to provide specific guidance to schools and local authorities on the types of assistive technologies available. The aim of this site is to provide a one-stop shop for individuals within the schools sector to find out about what specific technologies can be used to support specific educational needs. This could include:

- Details of the different types of assistive technologies available for different special education needs (as defined by DCSF)
- Case studies demonstrating how assistive technologies are currently being used effectively within school
- Have links to key partner organisations and Becta approved suppliers

ii) **A marketing campaign is run to raise awareness of the updated knowledge site.** Once work has been completed on the knowledge site it is important that a marketing campaign is undertaken to inform the end user that this resource is available. A good and inexpensive way to raise awareness is through existing delivery mechanisms (e.g. regional delivery teams) and tools (e.g. Self Review Framework).

2. Initiate a framework for knowledge sharing both at schools and local authority level

We recognise that knowledge sharing in some areas already exists, both at local authority and school level. There is also guidance that has come out where special schools share information on assistive technologies

³ The Becta website currently has a number of areas which have information for schools and local authorities (http://schools.becta.org.uk/index.php?section=tl&catcode=ss_tl_inc_02)

and inclusion. Although this is already happening in a number of areas, it isn't happening consistently nationally.

To help facilitate and encourage knowledge sharing between schools and local authorities we recommend that two opportunities exist:

i) Update tools and accreditation schemes to include criteria around knowledge sharing on inclusion.

Becta currently have a number of tools and schemes (e.g. ICT Mark and Self Review Framework) that are used regularly by schools. By updating the criteria within these demonstrates to schools that knowledge sharing is important.

ii) Educate the regional delivery and engagement teams on technologies to support inclusion.

The Becta regional delivery and engagement teams offer strategic and operational support on the effective and innovative use of ICT and delivery of the Harnessing Technology agenda. By providing the team with regular updates on the use and availability of assistive technologies, they will be able to go into local authorities and transfer knowledge.

3. Work with partners to agree and advise DCSF (and other departments) of potential changes to policy to address the gaps and consistency in assessment, funding and expertise.

Currently, a lack of consistency around the assessment process and expertise used to undertake those assessments mean that children are not always getting the appropriate technology to support their needs. We recognise that there is no single simple solution to address these problems and Becta by themselves will not be able to achieve this alone.

We therefore recommend that Becta work with their expert reference group and key delivery partners (e.g. Partnerships for Schools, Teacher Development Agency, National College for School Leaders) to discuss and agree ways forward for each of the three areas. This work can be used to advise DCSF (and other departments) on required changes in policy which could help to address these problems.

Through our research we have come up with a number of ideas/topics which could be discussed:

- Assessment – could a framework be developed to ensure consistency between local authorities?
- Funding - how can funding be delivered to ensure that there is consistency from borough to borough?
- Expertise – can mandated guidelines be enforced to ensure that schools allocate time for SENCOs to share knowledge amongst their school workforce and with other schools in the area?

Appendix A - Glossary

Table 5.1 - Glossary of terms

Acronym	Meaning
AT	Assistive Technology
BSF	Building Schools for the Future
LA	Local Authority
SEN	Special Education Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
TA	Teaching Assistant

Appendix B – Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following organisations and individuals for participating in this study:

B.1.1 Local Authorities

- Brighton and Hove City Council
- Derbyshire County Council
- Devon County Council
- Durham County Council
- London Borough of Hackney
- Milton Keynes Council
- North Tyneside Council
- Oxfordshire County Council
- St Helens Council
- West Berkshire Council
- Worcestershire County Council

B.1.2 Schools Workforce

SENCOs

- Etherley Lane primary School – Bishop Auckland
- Priestnall School - Stockport
- Staindrop Comprehensive School - Darlington
- Wildground Junior School - Southampton

Other Workforce

- Independent speech and language therapist – various schools across West Sussex
- Kennett School – Feltham
- Lord Williams Lower School - Oxon
- Newick House School – Burgess Hill
- New Rushall School – Redbridge
- Physical disabilities support service – Derbyshire
- SEN Advisor – Staffordshire
- Staindrop Comprehensive School - Darlington

B.1.3 Key Stakeholders

- Ability Net⁴
- Inclusive Technology Ltd
- SNIP Newsletter/ Staffordshire County Council
- Supanet

⁴ Two stakeholders interviewed from Ability Net

Appendix C - Topic Guides

C.1 Topic guide for Local Authorities

Introduction:

Becta have commissioned Atkins to undertake research to get an up to date picture of the technology and inclusion landscape in mainstream establishments in England. The research will obtain the view from two perspectives, at:

- local authority level
- institutional level

To obtain this picture Atkins will undertake a series of interviews with key individuals from Local Authorities, Schools and other key organisations.

Interviews with Local Authorities will explore three areas:

- **Assessment process for assistive technologies**
- **Expertise to support inclusive learning within LAs**
- **Delivery of assistive technologies in mainstream schools**

Interviews will be anonymous to allow an open and honest discussion.

The results of the study will inform Becta on future work required to guide and inform the effective delivery of their strategy.

Note: *Interviews will be semi-structured, allowing key topics to be explored with flexibility. This topic guide represents an outline of the kinds of areas that will be probed – we will adapt questions to take account of the role of the interviewee. We will seek to identify evidence to support the comments made – seeking examples and probing why interviewees hold certain views. Qualitative insights will be recorded and themes identified for inclusion in the final report.*

1. Assessment process for assistive technologies:

- Can you talk me through your assessment process?
- Is this a shared/common process or are processes unique to individual LAs?
- How often do you re-assess a pupils needs?
- Can you talk me through your approach to transition between primary and secondary schools?
- Can you talk me through how statemented children who have moved to your LA from another authority are assessed?

2. Expertise to support inclusive learning within LAs

- Can you tell me about the expertise available for the assessment of AT requirements for pupils?
- Where do these people sit within the local authorities structure?
- Have you seen any changes in the variety and number of experts over recent years both within and outside your local authority? (*For example, has expertise declined?*)
- What areas do you think could benefit from greater expertise?
- Do you share expertise with other LAs? (*If so, which LAs?*)
- Does your team support SENCOs in understanding what is available in terms of assistive technologies?
- Are there any particular areas in which you feel that you have exceptional expertise in the provision and assessment of AT for pupils?
- Can you tell me whether there are any areas where you feel further expertise would benefit your authority?
- Can you tell me about any constraints you have identified in the process?
- Do you feel that your local authority uses any innovative models of support that have emerged in recent years?

3. Delivery of assistive technologies in mainstream schools:

- Can you tell me about the support and training available for the schools workforce in the assessment of AT?
- Do you feel that there is enough sharing of experience within the schools workforce?
- What, if anything do you feel can be improved with relation to delivery of assistive technologies in mainstream schools

Explore with interviewees whether they can identify any SENCOs, teaching assistants etc for the institution level interviews

Thank you for your time

C.2 Topic guide for schools workforce

Introduction:

Becta have commissioned Atkins to undertake research to get an up to date picture of the technology and inclusion landscape in mainstream establishments in England. The research will obtain the view from two perspectives, at:

- local authority level
- institutional level

To obtain this picture Atkins will undertake a series of interviews with key individuals from Local Authorities, Schools and other key organisations.

Three areas we would like to explore with you are:

- **Assessment process within schools for assistive technologies**
- **Expertise to support and deliver inclusive learning at an individual school level**
- **Effectiveness of assistive technologies to learners**

Interviews will be anonymous to allow an open and honest discussion.

The results of the study will inform Becta on future work required to guide and inform the effective delivery of their strategy.

Note: *Interviews will be semi-structured, allowing key topics to be explored with flexibility. This topic guide represents an outline of the kinds of areas that will be probed – we will adapt questions to take account of the role of the interviewee. We will seek to identify evidence to support the comments made – seeking examples and probing why interviewees hold certain views. Qualitative insights will be recorded and themes identified for inclusion in the final report.*

1. Assessment process within schools for assistive technologies

- Can you tell me about your schools assessment process, including any areas of expertise you have?
- When do you undertake an AT requirement assessment? (*explore if they don't undertake*)
- How often do you reassess pupils?
- Are there any areas in which you feel that you have exceptional expertise/measures in place for SEN pupils?
- Can you tell me about the key difficulties schools are facing in regards to assessment?

2. Expertise to support and deliver inclusive learning at an individual school level

- Have you seen any change in the number of experts over recent years both at a school level or at a local authority? (*e.g. a decline*)

- How do staff involved in the assessment process keep up to date with the latest developments of assistive technologies? (e.g. visiting special schools, conferences)
- Are there any barriers preventing staff to keep up to date? How could this be overcome?
- Do you have access to information, advice and support? Is this valuable to your school?
- For those staff supporting children with special needs, what support is available to them to make sure that they understand the possibilities with respect to assistive technologies?
- If you provide a piece of assistive technology for a pupil, what training is provided to staff supporting that child?
- If the LA provides a piece of assistive technology what initial and ongoing training is provided to the school?
- If there is a problem with the technology what happens?
- What interventions, if any, do you feel could be put in place to support the school workforce on the identifying or using of assistive technologies?
- Have you seen any new and innovative models of support emerging as part of the creation of Children's Services, Children's Trusts, integrated services and extended schools services?

3. Effectiveness of assistive technologies to learners

- Do you feel there are any areas that prevent assistive technologies being accessed?
- How do you feel that assistive technologies are benefiting learners?
- What are parents perceptions of these assistive technologies?
- Are you aware of any groups of learners who are not being effectively supported?

Thank you for your time

C.3 Topic guide for stakeholders

Introduction:

Becta have commissioned Atkins to undertake research to get an up to date picture of the technology and inclusion landscape in mainstream establishments in England. The research will obtain the view from two perspectives, at:

- local authority level
- institutional level

To obtain this picture Atkins will undertake a series of interviews with key individuals from Local Authorities, Schools and other key organisations.

Three areas we would like to explore with you are:

- **Assessment process for assistive technologies**
- **Expertise to support inclusive learning both at a local authority and institutional level**
- **Delivery of assistive technologies in mainstream schools**

Interviews will be anonymous to allow an open and honest discussion.

The results of the study will inform Becta on future work required to guide and inform the effective delivery of their strategy.

Note: Interviews will be semi-structured, allowing key topics to be explored with flexibility. This topic guide represents an outline of the kinds of areas that will be probed – we will adapt questions to take account of the role of the interviewee. We will seek to identify evidence to support the comments made – seeking examples and probing why interviewees hold certain views. Qualitative insights will be recorded and themes identified for inclusion in the final report.

1. Assessment process for assistive technologies:

- From your experience can you tell me about your views of the assessment process for assistive technologies?
- What constraints and barriers do you feel there is around schools/learners accessing suitable assistive technologies?
- How do you think these barriers can be overcome?

2. Expertise to support inclusive learning both at a local authority and institutional level

- From your experience what expertise is available to support inclusive learning at a local authority and institutional level?
- Do you feel there have been any changes in the levels in expertise?
- Have you seen any good models of how expertise are shared across a LA or a district?
- Are there any particular examples where you have seen or heard of exceptional expertise in the provision and assessment of AT for pupils?
- Can you tell me whether there are any areas where you feel further expertise is required (in general)?

3. Delivery of assistive technologies in mainstream schools:

- From your knowledge, can you tell me about the support and training available for the schools workforce in the assessment of AT?
- Do you feel that it is widely accessed?
- Do you feel that there is enough sharing of experience within the schools workforce?
- Do you feel that the way assistive technologies are used within schools is effective for the learners? If no, why not?
- Can you tell me about any constraints or barriers which prevent assistive technologies being used effectively?
- What, if anything do you feel can be improved with relation to delivery of assistive technologies in mainstream schools?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Explore with interviewees whether they can identify any SENCOs, teaching assistants etc for the institution level interviews

Thank you for your time

Atkins is one of the world's leading providers of professional, technology based consultancy and support services. In recent years, it has expanded from its historical base in traditional engineering, management consultancy and property services into related technological consultancy and the management of outsourced facilities. With over 17,000 staff worldwide, Atkins has enormous expertise, providing both breadth and depth of knowledge in an extremely diverse range of disciplines.

Our clients are varied and include governments, local and regional authorities, funding agencies and commercial and industrial enterprises. We help our clients to realise their objectives by developing and delivering practical solutions, adding value to their businesses through the application of our experience, innovative thinking and state-of-the-art technology.



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