

**Children in Care and Care Leavers**  
**Use of Technology by Local Authorities and other Organisations**  
**June – Sept 08**

This report is a high level review of the technology used by some local authorities in their service provision for looked after children.

The data was collected over a period of six months, at the end of 2008, by the Digital Inclusion Team.

The local authorities listed were chosen on a random basis and the data does not purport to be comprehensive.

It does, however, highlight a diversity of approaches - some local authorities providing a website for the young people, others a website for carers. There is mention of video production, use of texting and mobile phones and the set up of a virtual school.

No formal evaluation data for the services is available through the DIT.

The report is designed to provide a summary high level view only.



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<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Information</b>	<b>Technology</b>
Leicestershire CC	<p><a href="http://www.thejitty.com">www.thejitty.com</a></p> <p>Note from Leicestershire “The website was developed following consultations with young people, and continues to be “steered” by them. The question of why a website? Again, young people were consulted, and their responses dictated that a website would be their preferred medium. In terms of measuring the success of the Jitty, that’s a tough one. If we are talking cold statistics then we get somewhere in the region of 200,000 views a month across the entire site. If we’re talking about the actual impact in terms of youth work process then we’re talking about people having peer mentored others with a view to stopping self harming, increased in confidence, made new friends, or have had support when dealing with bullying and so on then there’s a wealth of evidence online to hand.</p>	Website available as part of services for all children

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Surrey	<p>Surrey use the Viewpoint interactive computer consultation programme. Viewpoint interactive is an easy accessible, screen talking questionnaire that our Looked After Children and Young People complete prior to their Review meeting.</p> <p>New email address available “myviews” for Looked After Children aged 17–18 years as an alternative to completing the Questionnaire if preferred.</p> <p>Advocacy services are commissioned from NYAS (National Youth Advocacy Service), providing on-line access to advocates and an on-line youth club, <a href="http://slac.nyas.net">slac.nyas.net</a>, which involves young people in the design and editing. Majority of Surrey foster care placements and community homes have computers with internet access. Care leavers in higher / further education are provided with laptops.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.vptorg.co.uk">www.vptorg.co.uk</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.slac.nyas.net">www.slac.nyas.net</a></p>

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Cambridgeshire	<p>Cambridgeshire have provided looked after children with no PC for homework/hobbies with a laptop for own use. – kept at home.</p> <p>Different groups around the community have developed a video of themselves for looked after children – called ‘Just Us’.</p> <p>Cambridgeshire has a virtual school and head, workers also use text/mobile phones to young people and they can also email into the office</p> <p>Pearson Publishing has developed some education and tracking tools on line for children in care and have worked significantly with Cambridgeshire.</p>	Information video
Birmingham CC	<p>Birmingham have a website found via <a href="http://www.birmingham.gov.uk">www.birmingham.gov.uk</a> take the link to children and young people, and families and LAC, which leads to “I need to know” website for children in general</p>	Website “ <a href="#">I need to know</a> ” for all children including children in care.

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Oldham	<p>Note from Oldham “The government White Paper Care Matters: Time for Change has provided funding for 11 LAs (not Oldham) to pilot Virtual Schools and employ school Heads – probably all different models. Oldham have developed a ‘virtual school’ and have created an electronic Management Information System (similar to that used in ‘real’ schools) which is a database of all their looked after children regardless of school or borough location. It contains information from other databases (Tribal; Swift) and integrates data such as personal details, schools attended, SEN/AEN details, SATS results, Teacher Assessments, attendance/exclusion history etc. It enables Oldham to identify attainment issues and respond quickly and intervene early where needed. Looked after pupils from years 6 - 11 have access to laptops and broadband at home.”</p>	MIS Database for professionals – virtual school.
Bristol	<p>Bristol is currently undertaking a pilot in providing computers to children in care in preparation to national roll out of govt initiative home access to computers</p>	

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Norfolk CC	<p>Norfolk are currently seeking funding from DCSF and DWP to develop support services following the profiling report carried out By Citizens Online for Digital Inclusion Team which highlights that LAC often become NEETs, homeless, offenders, teenage parents. Their intention is to identify the children in primary school and provide support for the families that prevent the children going into care and so on. This would be through peer parent support.</p> <p>They already have ‘Norfolk Blurb’ a website for young people featuring ‘Aunty Blurb’ an online agony aunt enabling young people to submit questions anonymously about problems they face. Information and Advice workers provide support and young people can also comment on published responses. ‘Text Pal online’ is a virtual peer support network initially piloted with young carers. The service enables young people to make friends and provide peer support in a safe online environment. These projects are linked to Virtual School and Computers for Pupils.</p> <p>Strategy for providing all school aged looked after children with their own laptop and internet access.</p> <p>Also have the ‘KICT’ (Kids in care together) website providing useful information to children in care. Also developing an interactive web based resource for foster carers – with Redhood IT .</p>	<p>Norfolk is part of the e-mentoring project with Brightside Trust.</p> <p><a href="http://www.norfolkblurb.co.uk/cms.php?homepage=1">http://www.norfolkblurb.co.uk/cms.php?homepage=1</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.kict.norfolk.gov.uk/">http://www.kict.norfolk.gov.uk/</a></p>

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	<p>Redhood provide IT services for foster carers NOT Children <a href="http://www.redhood.co.uk">www.redhood.co.uk</a></p> <p>They provide a closed social networking tool which can be used by carers with an email address. They work with Enfield, S. Lanarkshire, Southampton, LB of Waltham Forest Southampton City Council, Plymouth City Council, LB Hounslow, LB Barnet, Bracknell Forest, Bucks, Renfrewshire and Swindon CC.</p> <p>The service is like a closed bebo or myspace. The cost is around £6000 – low cost and low risk.</p> <p>Some CCs have asked for a similar service to be provided for the children including the use of texting aswell as emails.</p> <p>All parties must be onboard with IT – foster carers, social workers and senior managers- for success.</p>	<p>Social networking and support site for carers. <a href="http://www.fosternets.co.uk">www.fosternets.co.uk</a></p>
Somerset CC	Somerset communicate with children using text and email where it is their preference and is appropriate to do so.	<a href="http://www.lookedaftersomerset.org.uk">www.lookedaftersomerset.org.uk</a>

**Two Charities provided the following:**

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Hi8us charity	Hi8us target hard to reach children by developing links with groups and individuals to create projects which are internet based. Eg e- drama is a medium for role playing and has been used for rural and urban children to exchange and share experiences. <a href="http://www.edrama.co.uk">www.edrama.co.uk</a> - possible use for children in care?	This organisation has experience in working with children to build interactive websites relevant to the particular 'target group'.
Youthnet	Youthnet have £5mill funding from Vodafone to build "Life Choices" – advice and support for all young people. The service will be delivered through engagement teams in parks, on the streets etc, workshops with face to face support and peer advice, helplines through telephone/SMS/online/email, website and a network of young volunteers. It is a 3 year project starting June 2008.	Youthnet current website is <a href="http://www.thesite.org">www.thesite.org</a> They syndicate onto other websites