



**National Association of Teachers of Travellers
+Other Professionals**

USING ICT TO SUPPORT DISTANCE LEARNING FOR TRAVELLER CHILDREN

**A report on the progress of Strand 'A' of the E-LAMP
initiative *Phase 6: 2008-09***



**department for
children, schools and families**

October, 2009

Executive summary

This report is the latest focused on the continuing work of 'Strand A' of the E-Learning and Mobility Project (ELAMP). This part of ELAMP has aimed to promote the development of school-supported distance learning for mobile Traveller children whilst they are away from school during the working season. The various phases of the initiative date from 2004 and have explored the use of ICT to bridge the gap between home and school and to enhance the educational opportunities of Gypsy Roma and Traveller (GRT) pupils.¹

ELAMP is funded by the DCSF and coordinated via the National Association of Teachers of Travellers and other professionals (NATT+). Previous reports are available on the NATT+ website.² They present both questionnaire and case-study evidence which suggests that the approach is effective in improving the motivation and attainment of pupils where both schools and families commit themselves to the process. In particular the continuous flow of work and messaging between home and school was found to be a key indicator for success, and the internet was an integral vehicle for this communication. Pupils could also be seen to have benefited from having laptops which allowed them to use interactive courseware, to prepare and present their work and to access resources via the world wide web as part of their educational activity.

The focus of this year's report has therefore shifted away from pupil and school experiences of distance learning work towards more specific themes. The first new focus is on work with less-mobile Traveller families as the terms of reference for Strand A were broadened for 2008-09 in the run up to the government's Home Access programme. This aims to encourage every family with school age children to build on the educational benefits of having a computer and internet access in the home. From the ELAMP perspective it was felt to be important to gain experience of supporting such home use of ICT for less-mobile families; i.e. where the challenge was to reinforce effective use of a general learning tool in the home rather than to support distance learning. The objective here was to share this experience with TESS³ colleagues across the whole country in the run up to the launch of the Home Access venture, and also to inform a new guidance document which is discussed in the final section of this report. In addition the report covers two specific requests from the project steering group. The first was to review experiences with the use of 'Education City' software which was made available to all partners from the autumn of 2008. The second was to establish an overview of approaches which partners have used to address safe-working and internet safety issues with Traveller families.

591 pupils were involved with the project during a survey exercise in January, 2009 as well as 536 school age siblings who were also reported as using the equipment.

Ken Marks (Research Associate)
The Department of Educational Studies
The University of Sheffield

October, 2009

¹ There is a separate report for 'Strand B' which addresses the challenge of disengaged Traveller pupils at Key stage 4.

² www.natt.org.uk

³ The vast majority of Local Authorities have staff whose roles include support for Traveller pupils. These staff are often part of teams with a broader remit, but for the purposes of this report they are referred to as part of Traveller Education Support Services (TESS)

CONTENTS

	Page
Section 1: An introduction to the project and previous findings	4
Section 2: Work with families less affected by mobility	6
2.1 Selection and preparatory work	7
2.2 The ongoing involvement of schools	9
2.3 The ongoing role of TESS	10
2.4 Early learning progress indicators	11
2.5 Key pointers for the future	11
2.6 Special initiatives	13
Section 3: Other evaluation foci	14
3.1 The take up and use of Education City software	14
3.2 Health & Safety and internet safety	15
Section 4: Further developments	17
Appendix 1: Partners in the project	19

Project contact details

The project is managed by Marion Rowlands on behalf of NATT+
Email: rowlandsmarion@yahoo.com Telephone: 07968 086224

Queries about this report should be addressed to Ken Marks
Email: k.marks@sheffield.ac.uk Telephone: 0114 2228179

Section 1: Introducing the project and previous findings

The ELAMP Strand A evaluation report for 2007-08 gives a relatively detailed account of the development of this part of ELAMP and is available on the NATT+ website.⁴ It outlines the history of the work from its research beginnings which were funded by the Nuffield Foundation, through a series of annual phases which were funded by the DCSF. These phases have tested out an approach based on providing laptops and wireless access to the internet for young mobile Traveller learners. The aim of the project was to keep pupils linked to their schools to improve learning continuity during the travelling season. The first pilot was supported by four TESS in different parts of England and involved 20 young learners. Since then the project has followed an action research cycle, using evaluation to guide development, and has now changed its focus to consolidation. During 2008-09 a broad spread of thirty five TESS partners were involved, and the role of the project is seen as helping increasing numbers of TESS and schools to gain experience of ICT-enhanced distance learning activity; exchanging work, feedback and messages electronically with their mobile pupils.

There are a variety of estimates of numbers of Traveller children in England, but one useful way of assessing numbers who may need more active support is to work from the returns which Traveller Education Support Services (TESS) used to provide for the then Department of Education and Science. These estimates included known housed families, those on sites and those without a permanent base, and arguably cover a clearly identifiable core of Traveller families who are perhaps those in most need of support. They suggest a figure of about 30,000 school age children. Evidence from the preliminary research which underpinned ELAMP suggests that this was still a realistic figure in 2004 and that something like 10,000 to 12,000 of these Traveller pupils were mobile for a significant part of the year and in ways which disrupted their schooling.

These mobile learners have been the main focus of the project and for 2008-09 some 260 Traveller pupils and an equal number of their school-age siblings were being supported by over 150 schools as part of the process of spreading experience of distance learning across English TESS. However a new dimension was added to the project from September, 2008. This development was stimulated by the announcement of the government's Home Access programme which is intended to encourage all families to invest in ICT (computers and internet access) to enhance their children's learning, and will provide financial support to those on a low income. The programme was due to be launched during the autumn term of 2009, and it was felt to be important to encourage partners to explore some of the issues they might face in working with local schools to support Traveller families who became ICT users as part of the Home Access venture.

Partners were therefore encouraged to involve 'non-mobile' families from September, 2008, as well as continuing to recruit and support those who would need distance learning support. Over 300 extra 'non-mobile' children became involved with, again, a roughly equal number of school-age siblings using the equipment

⁴ www.natt.org.uk

Overall figures are given in Table 1 and Table 2 gives a breakdown for 'mobile' pupils.




	Fairground and Circus 	'Gypsy' 	New Traveller. 
ELAMP pupils 2008-09	220	346	25

Table 1: A breakdown of all pupils involved with ELAMP during the 2009 travel season

591 pupils, 236 primary and 355 secondary, were listed as being supported by ELAMP partners in January, 2009; although this figure had fallen to 556 when checks were made in the summer term. This 6% drop was mainly related to non-mobile pupils.⁵ 330 schools were involved, reflecting the small numbers of Traveller pupils in any one school; a characteristic challenge for much of the work undertaken with Traveller families. Information was also collated about sibling and parental use of the ICT facilities provided. 536 school-age siblings were using equipment as were 197 other siblings. There were 289 families where at least one parent was recorded as using the equipment.

The information for mobile pupils is set out below, and a comparison of the tables with the January 2008 figures which are shown in last year's report confirms that the significant increase in ELAMP participation for the 2008-09 school year was mainly due to the involvement of far more 'non-mobile' Gypsy families⁶.




	Fairground and Circus 	'Gypsy' 	New Traveller. 
Primary	74	42	6
Secondary	114	21	5
Total	188	63	11

Table 2: A breakdown of mobile pupils involved with ELAMP distance learning

⁵ Two TESS had had particular (localized) problems during 2008-09. Once the figures are corrected to take account of this the average reduction across remaining TESS partners was 3%.

⁶ For the purposes of this report 'Gypsy' is used as an inclusive term to include Travellers of Irish Heritage, Scottish Travellers and other smaller traditional communities.

during the 2009 travel season. ('Mobile' here means travelling away from school for at least 30 days during term time)

Travel families may, of course, be mobile for a variety of purposes, but such mobility is normally for work and economic reasons, or to attend family and community events. The ELAMP distance learning project originally set out to address the needs of those who were significantly affected in terms of school attendance, and this year it was decided to introduce a six-week marker in order to differentiate between those families who travelled extensively away from their winter base, and those who were characterized by occasional or shorter-term travel. It is important to note that this is a relatively crude division and should not be seen as an absolute standard in terms of the need to provide distance learning support to Traveller families. On the other hand it does help to distinguish the extremes; families who are away for short periods, including celebratory events, and those whose livelihood is centred on extensive travel patterns and where schooling continuity becomes a major issue. In the tables set out above, and throughout the rest of this report, the term 'mobile' is therefore used to denote pupils who miss at least 30 days of schooling due to travel during the academic year. Pupils who don't travel or only miss up to 30 days of schooling are referred to as 'non-mobile' and are the main focus of Section 2.

Section 3 of the report covers an assessment of the use of 'Education City' within the project. This is a learning environment which contains a set of web-based materials aimed at reinforcing work with school-age children and currently centres on the primary sector. These are interactive materials, including games, and with integral feedback. The software also allows teachers to set work and track progress. Based on recommendations from partners, the project invested in a license to cover the period 2008-2011, and the project steering committee felt it to be important to evaluate experience during the first year of this license.

Another steering group priority was to check how partners were addressing safe-use and internet safety issues, and a questionnaire exercise was conducted to see if the materials being supplied by the project were being used, as well as asking about how the necessary awareness-raising challenge was being addressed.

The final section of the report looks to the future, both in terms of ongoing issues and potential developments. It includes reference to a new guidance document to be issued to LAs and schools, and to the potential to the opportunities and challenges presented by the Home Access initiative.

Appendix 1 lists the TESS partners who have been involved in this aspect of the work of ELAMP during 2008-09, and gives a good indication of the extensive geographical spread of the project across English local authorities.

Section 2: Work with families less affected by mobility

As noted in the introduction to this report, 2008-09 saw a new departure for the project, with a broadening of terms of reference to offer support to less mobile

Traveller pupils, including families which didn't travel at all and those with limited periods away from base. Work with these 'non-mobile' families was seen as a preparation for the government's 'Home Access' programme, and it was felt to be important to collate and assess experiences related to this new dimension of ELAMP activity. These children were provided with laptops and wireless internet access, but the focus here was on the potential impact of ICT to enhance their normal schoolwork. Families would still need to be prepared and supported but the TESS role with schools no longer centred on the clear challenge of providing a distance learning framework. Rather the focus was on raising awareness that these particular pupils had ICT facilities, and encouraging support; something which schools might or might not be doing with other pupils and which would depend on the degree of integration of ICT within their overall teaching and learning approaches.

The evaluation exercise started with case-studies in Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire. Questionnaires were then sent to the 23 other partners who had joined the project prior to 2008 and already had some experience (i.e. of working with schools to provide distance learning support). In the event four of these TESS partners had decided to keep their focus entirely on mobile children. The information used in this section is therefore based on the two case studies and questionnaire responses from 19 partners. In total these partners were supporting 231 non-mobile young learners within the new remit, with a roughly even split across the primary and secondary sectors.

The questionnaire was designed after the two case study visits and these had suggested a framework based on three themes:

- How pupils were selected and subsequent preparation for pupils and families
- How schools were encouraged/supported and involved
- What was the role of the TESS

The questionnaire exercise was conducted in June, 2009, and, although it was too early for an assessment of the impact on learner progress, partners were also asked about their early impressions. The questionnaire concluded by seeking out key pointers for future practice as well as information about any special initiatives which TESS had used to help launch this new aspect of their supportive work with Traveller pupils.

2.1 Selection and preparatory work

The overall tone of responses suggests that TESS staff felt it important to have a set of priorities for selection, but some were then prepared to be flexible to individual circumstance. The priorities were important in themselves in terms of choosing pupils who would benefit, but also provided a framework within which to explain decisions to other families who weren't being loaned laptops during this pilot year. This was especially important for some partners where families had already approached the service in the past and asked about being part of ELAMP.

One set of selection criteria used by some partners related to year groupings. Five of the 21 respondents had, for example, targeted a transition year as one priority (four focusing on Y6 pupils and another the final middle school year in her county). Here there was an emphasis on successful transition and one partner had made commitment to transition a condition for continued participation. Other partners had

targeted secondary pupils, some including a weighting towards those pupils in Key Stage 4. Others again had chosen to focus their efforts on Key Stage 2. The variety is interesting and probably reflects staying on rates as well as broader local priorities for raising achievement. Four partners also highlighted the relative disadvantage of local secondary pupils as part of their rationale for making choices. These older Traveller pupils were felt to be more likely than primary children to be deprived of home use of key facilities like VLEs which were available to most of their classmates, as well as missing out on tools to prepare project-based work needed for qualifications.

Some partners also included support for children with specific learning difficulties in their list of priorities, and behaviour and attendance records were also criteria used by four respondents albeit in different ways. Two focused on the need for good records as a reflection of commitment to learning, but the other two targeted pupils with poor attendance records over time and were interested in the motivational impact of an ICT-based approach. Five TESS also highlighted the need to choose pupils with the potential for positive family support, preferably accompanied by a good working relationship between the TESS and parents.

Respondents were then asked about how, if at all, they had involved local schools in the decision making process before approaching families. Again there was evidence of considerable variety. One partner had asked schools for suggestions first, nine others had consulted with schools before making decisions and another nine had kept schools informed. Two others hadn't communicated with schools at the selection stage. Some TESS mentioned that, once provisional decisions were made, checks were needed as a small number of Traveller families already had access to computers and the internet. Schools were sometimes contacted as part of these checks.

Families were then approached to discuss participation. One TESS encouraged schools to convene meetings with potential families (the TESS also attended in a supportive capacity), but the rest organized initial contact with the pupils and families themselves, and this was almost entirely through home visits, with a small number of meetings in school where this was judged a better setting.

Once participation was agreed, the next challenge for TESS was to ensure solid preparation and here they could certainly draw on their previous experience of preparing young distance learners. Respondents were asked to complete a check list and this confirmed that the following threads had all been addressed.

a) Reported as covered with all pupils and parents

- Discussing appropriate care and use of equipment
- Discussing safe use (Health and Safety) issues
- Discussing the importance of awareness and working safely on the Internet
- Discussing ways in which the laptop and connectivity could be used to support school-work

b) Reported as covered with all pupils

- Covering or reinforcing the skills needed to use the equipment

- Covering or reinforcing other basic ICT skills felt to be relevant

Every partner also did some work with parents to introduce them to the basics of using the equipment, and about two thirds also reported some work with parents on other basic ICT skills.

In addition partners were asked about how preparation was organized, how schools were involved and at what stage equipment had been handed over to families. All but three of the partners had structured preparation around home visits but normally supplemented by one or more meetings in school and there was evidence of quite a bit of flexibility to circumstance, depending on relationships with individual schools and families as well as issues like adequate connectivity. There was also evidence of a degree of flexibility in organizing visits and events which were joint (aimed at pupils and parents together) and work with pupils supplemented by separate parental meetings.

Three TESS had, to varying degrees, encouraged the relevant schools to host and/or organize the programme with their support, and several others made it clear that they had tried to draw appropriate school staff into the process wherever possible; especially where meetings were arranged in school. There was evidence of close cooperation with some schools, but less involvement from others and five of the TESS partners had kept schools informed but not attempted involvement at this preparatory stage.

Part of the preparatory process also concerned decisions about when and how pupils should be issued with equipment, and again the pilot efforts of partners showed a degree of variability. One partner which had emphasized that schools should take preparatory initiatives left decisions to those schools. The others released the equipment at various stages, normally after the basic training agenda had been completed and as pupils gained expertise (see next subsection). In some instances there was also a short period of school use before the laptop was finally allocated to the pupil and family at home. In some, the laptop was provided for practice before internet access was enabled. At this stage ten partners had indicated to families that the equipment was normally for home-use only, whilst the other eleven had encouraged pupils to take their laptops into school as well.

2.2 The ongoing involvement of schools

It was interesting to note that five services seem to have seen their role as preparing pupils and families so that they were on a par with other pupils in terms of the basics, rather than promoting action within schools. The rest had involved schools to varying degrees in the basic training agenda, and ten noted further work with schools which was effectively a continuation from the basics of training, and sometimes integrated with these.

Here, once again, the responses suggest that efforts varied across TESS as well as within individual schools and existing working relationships with schools were likely

to have been an important factor.⁷ The most successful integrated efforts seem to have focused on encouraging the use of specific courseware materials, and of VLEs. Five partners indicated that they had supported the introduction of Education City software with these young learners, and two others reported that they were liaising with schools but providing tutorial support for Education City themselves. Others had encouraged schools to load relevant courseware onto learner machines for home use; this was sometimes software available in school and sometimes reinforcement software provided by the TESS. The potential for supporting school VLEs was also a clear focus in a number of schools. In the area covered by the Devon Consortium TESS schools were also encouraged to explore 'Moving On', a virtual school designed for Traveller children (see Subsection 3.6 for more details). Interestingly some partners took other measures to work at school awareness, like encouraging pupils to take their laptops into school, or making sure they used email and messaging facilities to contact staff from home.

In terms of progress made, much again would seem to have depended on individual schools, as well as the strength of existing relationships between schools and their TESS, and the resources available to individual TESS. There were positive comments from nine partners where most project pupils were now felt to be making good use of the equipment. However, at the other extreme, some reported progress as slow and variable and sometimes disappointing. Staff time was also identified as an issue within schools and one service reported positively on the effect of being able to provide some staff cover time to help embed ICT-based developments with Traveller children. Technical support for pupils was also raised as an issue by a number of partners. In some instances schools were willing to offer support to ELAMP pupils, but in others there were clearly issues about the ownership of the machines.

2.3 The ongoing role of TESS

It was not surprising to find that continuing background support for pupils and families was a key part of the role played by TESS, and most made it clear that they encouraged two-way contact with the families. 14 respondents made reference to continuing home visits and six mentioned meeting with participating pupils when they visited schools. Most mentioned telephone contact and some had made use of email exchanges. Visits and other communication had focused on sharing progress and ironing out problems, including technical issues. Two partners had also organized ICT courses for parents and, as noted above, two more were providing the tutorial support for the Education City package.

As noted in the previous subsection, there was a more variable set of approaches in work with schools, and in some instances ongoing contact was only made if specific problems were identified. At the other end of the spectrum, about one third of the respondents had established a regular pattern of school visits and most of these emphasized pupil progress monitoring as well as general support. Other partners were proactive in linking with schools but more flexible in terms of visits, emails and telephone contact. Visits sometimes included further support for staff who were

⁷ TESS are, of course, in varying degrees of ongoing contact with staff in large numbers of schools at a variety of levels including head teachers, class teachers, SENCOs and learning support staff.

directly involved with ELAMP learners; e.g. for individual primary teachers. Other services felt it part of their continuing role to keep schools up to date with information about new supportive software and/or new supportive websites.

2.4 Early learner progress indicators

Again, in judging learner progress, variability was an issue which seemed to relate to both TESS resources and to individual schools. However almost every service reported some encouraging experiences related to motivation, attainment and attendance. Several services commented on a mixture of improved self-confidence, improved self-esteem, engagement and enjoyment. There were also reports of improved independent learning skills, better presentation of homework, significant impact on project work during Key Stage 4 and 'invaluable' access to web-based materials for GCSE revision. There were also positive comments about progress with literacy, and the development of ICT skills seems to have been both important in itself and in giving these young learners confidence through being on a par with others in their classes. Some partners went on to comment about reinforced parental commitment which had then had a knock on effect for their children.

2.5 Key pointers for the future.

The 21 partners were asked to reflect on their early experiences and to highlight what they felt to be key features which could inform successful future practice in supporting families who were being given access to ICT equipment for home use. Putting their comments together proved a bit like summarizing the positives from earlier subsections, but with some warnings which act as a preface.

In particular, before making a start colleagues should be aware of the potential time pressures for both TESS and school-based staff. They should also be fully aware of potential connectivity problems which were likely to affect a significant minority of families; one third of respondents made specific reference to connectivity as an issue. In addition, new colleagues should be aware of technical support issues which could affect families, and should think carefully about how these could be addressed.

Keeping these issues in mind, the advice which emerges is certainly relevant to further developments, like ELAMP, where TESS are directly involved with providing equipment for selected families and then offering support. Some of it is, however, also relevant to the main Home Access programme, where TESS will hopefully be involved with proactive support for families who apply for and/or start using their own ICT equipment for the first time. This is especially true of the direct support which many families will need. TESS may, however, also become involved in supportive measures within schools and with local authority officers, and here it is possible to identify underlying themes within the suggestions made by these respondents which may prove important. These are summarized in the final paragraph of this subsection following a discussion which is more directly focused on the ELAMP context and which follows a process through from selection to continuing support and monitoring.

If TESS are involved in selection processes (which will not be the case within the Home Access programme) the general advice is that they should think carefully

about their priorities and develop a framework which could then demonstrate fairness to other families. In practice this may need to allow for some flexibility and it was also important to consider the circumstances of individual children as well as supportive potential within families. At the selection stage it might also be useful to check out local internet connectivity; not as a bar to participation but so that families and schools could be forewarned about limitations.

Amongst respondents, there was then a distinction between the five partners who saw their role as preparing pupils and the others who included a focus on work with schools. However, it was always felt to be important to inform/involve head teachers as early as possible, and to identify 'the right' named person in school to act as the main contact point. It was also important to establish whether there was a school VLE, or for plans to introduce one, and to design preparatory work accordingly. Most partners felt that it was then important to try to involve school staff in familiarizing and training both pupils and parents.

Training needed to be handled sensitively and flexibly; depending on family circumstances and levels of confidence. Local factors might influence where the training took place, but most felt that, ideally, some training should be on school premises. The programme should cover the skills, appropriate use and safety awareness which the young learners would need, as well as being a basic introduction for parents. Parent training should also cover use of equipment and balance the need to reassure with the responsibility to be aware of internet safety, and safe working, issues. Additional parental skills' training would be a desirable bonus.

Following training, partners agreed on the need for ongoing support for pupils and families. TESS needed to be proactive in making contact to check progress. They should also be aware that they would need to actively encourage some families to alert them to perceived problems with the equipment or their schools.

The majority of partners also stressed the advantages of continuing to work with schools after the initial training period and good practice suggestions included having a review/monitoring agreement from the outset to provide a structure for this. Other partners drew attention to the value of investing time with particular staff after the initial training period in order to develop their skills and to give them confidence with using ICT tools to support learners.

The Home Access programme

TESS may become involved with the Home Access programme in a variety of ways, through their local authorities and through their links with schools and families. They will be able to encourage families to participate, but at the same time need to think through their supportive roles within a process which will involve 'getting started' with equipment, initial training and ongoing support. Hopefully those with ELAMP, or similar, experience will be proactive as local authorities and schools prepare the ground and plan for the new initiative. All TESS also have the potential to become involved at a variety of levels as the programme unfolds. The following list attempts to extract some general themes from the feedback. It is by no means exhaustive but attempts to offer some pointers for TESS as they consider their potential roles.

- Be aware of connectivity issues which may affect a significant number of Traveller pupils who opt for non-terrestrial connectivity. Families need to be aware of this potential problem. Similarly schools need to be aware, especially as they develop facilities like VLEs.
- Support and supplement training initiatives aimed at pupils and parents, be especially aware of literacy and confidence issues, and of the possible need to reinforce messages about internet safety and safe working (See also Section 3.2).
- Provide proactive on-going support for families. Encourage and support them in using other support services which emerge.
- Create, or build on, effective links with relevant schools. Share ideas about ICT-enhancement for learning for individual Traveller children. Encourage progress monitoring.

2.6 Special initiatives

Partners were also asked whether they had developed any special initiatives which might be useful to share with colleagues. Two were identified. One was an inter-agency project aimed at using this new dimension of ELAMP as a way of raising the profile of ICT developments, and of learning, within local Traveller communities; as a platform for future developments like the Home Access programme. The other was the use of dedicated space within a regional website to support the efforts of both dispersed learners and their schools; an important venture as many Traveller pupils live on small sites and schools are typically supporting between one and three learners.

The Hertfordshire 'Enjoying to Achieve' initiative

This initiative has set out to involve 15 secondary-age pupils drawn from nine different schools across Hertfordshire and selection criteria included recent attendance and behaviour profiles. The participants are called 'learning champions' and are aware that they have been chosen to demonstrate what can be achieved with ICT equipment, and that they will be used as a sounding board for discussing the needs of young Travellers across the county. Each of the participating schools has a Learning Support Assistant (LSA) with dedicated time for work with Traveller pupils. Part of their role has been to prepare learners for using the laptops safely, and with appropriate care in the home environment. The LSAs are also involved in introducing the young Travellers to Education City, and with encouraging the use of this software for literacy reinforcement. The fifteen learners are using the equipment for school work and for special projects. These projects will be structured around four sessions in a central library facility, spread over a period of time. Parents were involved from the start, and both parents and siblings are being encouraged to make use of the equipment and to consider/pursue further learning opportunities.

The central projects are underway at the time of writing. There has been a successful launch event and the first project has had a local Traveller history dimension with contributions linked to the national 'Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month' initiative. The efforts of the young learners are also published and celebrated on 'Mogo'; the county council youth portal.

This is an exciting venture which suggests a useful model for others. Arrangements have also been made with the John Warner school to provide the learning champions with their own VLE space. The school has been a lead pioneer in ELAMP developments and will now provide facilities for a closed chat area for participants and for the young learners to share and mentor each other's efforts.

Moving On: Using a Virtual school site to support dispersed Traveller learners

Part of the rationale for introducing a VLE space within the Hertfordshire project was the spread of young participants across the county, and The Devon Consortium venture has a similar starting point. As in many parts of the country, Traveller pupils live on small sites. This means that they can be relatively isolated from each other, but also that schools are faced with the challenge of supporting small numbers of Traveller learners in the midst of other priorities which may be perceived as more pressing in terms of targets. The Devon Consortium set out to combat these challenges by negotiating space for a virtual school site within Merlin, the South West Grid for Learning VLE. This means that pupils can have a dedicated and password protected space with their own portfolio area for schoolwork and can keep in contact with other Traveller pupils via access to a protected Blog and messaging area.

Just as important school staff can share experiences and resources across the consortium area, as well as acting as tutors in terms of setting and assessing work, and giving feedback where this is an appropriate complement to school-based interaction with their Traveller pupils. The members of the Devon Consortium team are also enrolled in the virtual school so that they can directly support learning, again where this is felt to be appropriate. In addition they have access to shared teacher spaces and can add to the pool ideas and resources within these spaces.

It is hoped to extend this facility to all schools within the South West grid area, and this development would also seem to provide an important model for other parts of the country.

Section 3: Other evaluation foci

3.1: The take up and use of Education City learning materials

Following reports of successful and helpful use of Education City materials by some individual TESS, ELAMP provided funding for access to this package for all project partners for three years starting from 2008-09. The agreement allows for registered ELAMP learners and their siblings to use the materials. The basic package centres on KS2 and covers English, Maths and Science, and there was an option for pupils to use modern foreign language (MFL) materials as well. The project steering group felt it important to monitor progress with the package during its first year and a questionnaire was distributed to all partners in June, 2009.

All 35 TESS involved with this aspect of the work of ELAMP provided returns related to requests for feedback. Of these 29 were using, or supporting use of, aspects of the package; using either English, Maths and Science materials or focusing on just English and Maths. Six were also using materials for at least one MFL.

25 were supporting the package with primary age pupils and 19 with secondary age pupils; although some of the latter TESS were restricting their use to Y7 pupils and several partners were cautious about using the software with older pupils. Apart from the lack of availability of Key Stage 3 and 4 materials, the main issues here were the look and feel of the software for older learners and that the classification of materials could be seen by these learners to be designed for younger year groups. However, it is important to note that some partners were clearly using the software successfully with older learners.

Most of the feedback from TESS was positive, although sometimes with provisos as some partners felt they needed more time to gain experience and evaluate the package. In general terms, pupils clearly liked the interactive activity, the feedback they got, the non-school fun feel, and options like games. TESS staff and school-based teachers had used Education City to support both mobile and non-mobile Traveller pupils, and to varying degrees. Some were just setting tasks and activities for general reinforcement, and others were using the full range of tracking/monitoring functions to target work as well. Where the package was being used to support distance learning, the most successful approaches seem to have been in schools where the TESS worked with both pupils and staff to prepare the ground. Pupils used the materials in school first and teachers then took over the tutoring role before the pupil left their winter base. However, another interesting model was for TESS staff to support and tutor the package directly, as a way of ensuring that pupils had a flow of work whenever there were gaps in communication with school.

Significant longer-term provisos included concerns about the time needed for staff to take on the tutorial role, especially as the package is clearly at its best when carefully targeted work can be set regularly and monitored. Eight partners (just over a quarter of respondents) also highlighted problems which their learners had had with localized wireless connection and/or with connectivity speeds. The broadband requirements of the package had led to frustration for a number of families, who were of course dependent on mobile telephone data networks, and had made its use impracticable for a significant minority of the young learners involved with the project.

3.2: Health and Safety and internet safety

The project has always stressed the importance of addressing both Health and Safety and internet safety issues for families involved with ELAMP, and has a member of the project steering group, Penny Lenton, who is responsible for keeping partners informed about resources and developments in these areas. The project also strongly encourages specific safety training and awareness sessions for pupils and parents, as well as the use of agreements and checklists which parents/carers are asked to sign.

This year it was decided to ask partners about how they were addressing these responsibilities as part of project evaluation, and appropriate questions were included in the June questionnaire. Partners were first asked about the approaches they used, and it was interesting to see the range and variety of responses across the 35 responses. This variety was parallel to that evidenced in Section 2 which drew on a separate questionnaire and discussed more general

aspects of training and support for non-mobile families. The additional safety questionnaire was aimed at work with both mobile and non-mobile families and also asked about the use of the materials made available by the project to reinforce safety messages

The responses indicate that almost all partners use a mixture of home visits and special events to address safety considerations, but a small number seek to ensure that the schools which the young Travellers attend cover some or all of these. One also drew on the services of an LA-based specialist team. Some ELAMP partners also indicate that they focus work with pupils and parents separately but others aim at joint initiatives or a mix of joint and separate approaches. The underlying rationale throughout seems to be flexibility to the realities of local and family circumstance.

As also evidenced in Section 2, such safety-focused meetings and events are often part of a broader training agenda. They are generally reported to encourage discussion as well as having an input covering the importance of basic safe-use of equipment, and of proactive awareness of the dangers of the internet. The responses suggest that filtering (e.g. via Synetrix or school-based VLEs) is normally explained, but that there is still a stress on exploring the dangers of open chat rooms, 'Facebook' and similar social networking sites. The need for sensitive parental vigilance seems to be a common theme alongside a stress on responsible use by learners. The signing of checklists and safety agreements is normally integrated into the training but is sometimes part of follow-up home visits.

The materials made available by the project are also used within meetings and during visits and can be given to families to keep. The following table gives a breakdown showing those resources which partners had requested and used during the 2008-09 school year.

Item	No. of TESS using
Be SMART on the internet (Z card)	29
Keep SMART on your mobile/online (Z card)	25
Being Smart Stickers	24
Young People, Music and the Internet	14
Young People Social Networking	18
Mouse mat (SMART)	5
Information and Online resources sheet	18
Know it All A4 folded guide	23
Know it All CD Rom for parents	27
Jenny's Story video	4
Let's Fight It Together	6
KnowITALL	22
Who wnts 2 no? the Cybernuts	11

A small number of partners also indicated that other materials had been used. Some had been provided by partner schools or their LAs, but others by TESS. The latter included a CD on cyber bullying and resources provided by Childnet but not specifically listed above. In general the comments made by respondents indicate

that the materials provided by the project play an important part in preparing and training pupils and families. However, two TESS expressed concerns that much of the available materials were too dependent on written language given the low level of some parental literacy skills. One⁸ is experimenting with some visual-based materials for use next year which may give non-literate parents better clues about types of sites to be aware of when (discretely!) checking screen displays.

Section 4: Further developments

Current ELAMP funding will come to an end in 2010. The main focus for the project for 2009-10 will therefore be on consolidation and helping partners to explore ways of embedding practice, as well as linking effectively into the new Home Access programme. From the evaluation perspective, one of the tasks for the new school year will be to ensure that relevant findings from Section 2 of this report are disseminated not just to partners but to all English TESS in the run up to the Home Access launch. The new programme will encourage every family to consider the advantages of having a computer and internet access at home to reinforce schoolwork, and will provide financial support for this where families are on a low income. The project will be cooperating with Becta to ensure that TESS are kept up to date with Home Access developments as they emerge.

As noted in last year's report the roll out of this new initiative will represent a complex and potentially demanding challenge for staff working with families. It will need to take account of the needs of the different communities, the spectrum of relationships which families have with their local schools and other localized factors. The project has a pivotal role in helping TESS to plan and prepare so that, wherever possible, Traveller families have the support to make good use of the new scheme as it unfolds.

Section 2 will also inform a new guidance document which is being written with the support of the DCSF and will be issued in parallel with the launch of the Home Access initiative. The major focus of this document will be a reminder to local authorities and schools that the task of encouraging and supporting home access to ICT includes the particular challenge of catering for mobile families; where such provision only makes sense if there is a distance learning framework to back it up. In a sense the new document will build from the DfES publication entitled *School Supported Distance Learning*, which was issued in 2006.⁹ However it will include a broader overview of the options open to schools in supporting young distance learners, and will also focus on key issues which have been identified as essential to successful practice.

In policy terms it also remains important for the project to continue to promote further thinking about 'attendance' credits for youngsters who are engaged in school-supported distance learning. Headteachers can now credit supervised work undertaken at home but only if carried out during the school day. This is a good

⁸ Northumberland

⁹ available from the Standards website

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities/resources/dfessdlp2006.pdf

starting point for creating a structured learning environment within the home, but a degree of flexibility is needed to fit with the mobile lifestyle. An approach based on weekly targets for work to be completed and returned (rather than time slots) has been discussed with the DCSF. This may also offer a more realistic way of tracking progress which can be related to crediting attendance.

During 2009-10 the evaluation process itself will continue to monitor the general progress of the project. However, at the request of the DCSF, there will also be an exercise to try to gauge the impact of the project on progress using National Curriculum levels (i.e. sub-levels), both for mobile and non-mobile Traveller pupils. A parallel exercise will be designed for Key Stage 4. The limitations of using quantitative estimates over a 12 month period are acknowledged and the exercise will therefore also collate information for each learner based on their teachers' contextualized views on general learning progress. It will also seek information on (a) the impact of ELAMP participation on attendance, and (b) the impact on family commitment to schooling (e.g. staying on at school).

Appendix 1: Partners in phase 6 of the project

Partners	Involvement in the phases
ACTES ¹⁰	Original E-LAMP ₂ partner (from 2004)
Bolton	Original E-LAMP ₂ partner (from 2004)
Cambridgeshire	Original E-LAMP ₂ partner (from 2004)
Derby & Derbyshire	New partner from E-LAMP ₃ (from 2005)
DCTES ¹¹	New partner from E-LAMP ₃ (from 2005)
Hertfordshire	New partner from E-LAMP ₃ (from 2005)
Northants	New partner from E-LAMP ₃ (from 2005)
Northumberland	New partner from E-LAMP ₃ (from 2005)
Gloucestershire	New partner from E-LAMP ₄ (from 2006)
Leeds	New partner from E-LAMP ₄ (from 2006)
Leicestershire ¹²	New partner from E-LAMP ₄ (from 2006)
Manchester	New partner from E-LAMP ₄ (from 2006)
Norfolk	New partner from E-LAMP ₄ (from 2006)
Oxfordshire	New partner from E-LAMP ₄ (from 2006)
St Helens	New partner from E-LAMP ₄ (from 2006)
Sunderland	New partner from E-LAMP ₄ (from 2006)
WMCESTC ¹³	New partner from E-LAMP ₄ (from 2006)
Wiltshire	New partner from E-LAMP ₄ (from 2006)
Buckinghamshire	New partner from E-LAMP ₅ (from 2007)
Cheshire ¹⁴	New partner from E-LAMP ₅ (from 2007)
Cornwall	New partner from E-LAMP ₅ (from 2007)
Kent	New partner from E-LAMP ₅ (from 2007)
Oldham	New partner from E-LAMP ₅ (from 2007)
Tameside	New partner from E-LAMP ₅ (from 2007)
West Sussex	New partner from E-LAMP ₅ (from 2007)
Bedfordshire ¹⁵	New partner from E-LAMP ₆ (from 2008)
Blackpool	New partner from E-LAMP ₆ (from 2008)
Bradford	New partner from E-LAMP ₆ (from 2008)
Bury	New partner from E-LAMP ₆ (from 2008)
Dorset	New partner from E-LAMP ₆ (from 2008)
Greenwich	New partner from E-LAMP ₆ (from 2008)
Hampshire	New partner from E-LAMP ₆ (from 2008)
Nottinghamshire	New partner from E-LAMP ₆ (from 2008)
Salford	New partner from E-LAMP ₆ (from 2008)
Somerset	New partner from E-LAMP ₆ (from 2008)

¹⁰ The Avon Consortium Traveller Education Service covers four LAs.

¹¹ The Devon Consortium Traveller Education Service covers three LAs

¹² Leicestershire had developed their own project which ran in parallel with E-LAMP and also made a valuable contribution to developmental efforts. The TESS then linked with E-LAMP more formally for the fourth phase

¹³ The West Midlands Consortium Education Service for Traveller Children covered 11 LAs during 2008-09

¹⁴ This TESS has now been split into three following reorganizations. There are now separate services covering Cheshire, Halton and Warrington.

¹⁵ This TESS has been divided into two following reorganization. The new LAs are Bedford and (the rest of) Bedfordshire.

