

**Wiltshire Council**

**Full Council**

**23 February 2021**

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## **Item 6 – Public Participation**

**From Jeremy Nettle**

**To Councillor Laura Mayes, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills**

### **Question (P21-07)**

I am a Governor of a local Primary school in Salisbury and would like to ask the following question:

How is Wiltshire Council supporting families whose children do not have access to computers/digital devices whilst schools are closed? What about internet access – what happens if they don't have broadband in their home? Is there a low cost data option plan that this Council can recommend?

### **Response**

Verbal Response

There are two schemes Wiltshire Council has supported in 2021 to support families who do not have access to computers/digital devices:

1. The DfE has rolled out an allocation of digital devices to every school based on a few factors including the number of children eligible for free school meals on roll. Wiltshire Council organised for schools to be able to order direct from the DfE and this was fully funded by the DfE. These devices have now arrived in schools and being distributed to children.
2. Wiltshire Council invested £1.1M across the County to reach the children most in need and being digitally disadvantaged in the current climate. The full details of the grant funding were published to all schools on 11 January on our Right Choice platform and appeared in the COVID-19 Schools Update from Helean on 11 January. Each school received a grant allocation as soon as they provided the necessary documentation to confirm the purchase. Here's the link for media release [Wiltshire Council to spend £1.1m on digital devices so struggling families can access remote education - Wiltshire Council](#).

With regards limited internet access and no home broadband. The DfE has linked up with 7 of the major mobile phone companies across the country. Schools can register the details of the families with the DfE, through the ordering portal, that are struggling with the cost of mobile data or home internet connections. The mobile phone companies will increase the data limits for a primary member of the family without charge. Full details are on this link. [get-help-with-tech.education.gov.uk/internet-access](https://get-help-with-tech.education.gov.uk/internet-access).