



Department
for Education

Home Learning Environment Early Years Apps Pilot Additional Information

July 2019

Background

On 31 July 2018, the Secretary of State announced that the Department would be launching an accreditation process to identify high quality mobile/tablet apps, with the ambition of making some accessible free of charge for disadvantaged families. This commitment fits within the context of a Departmental priority to reduce by half the proportion of children who do not achieve at least expected levels across all goals in the 'communication & language' and 'literacy' areas of learning at the end of reception year by 2028.

Educational Expert Panel

We know that, whilst there are lots of high-quality early learning apps in the market, parents aren't always able to make informed choices about which app is suitable for their child. The department recently (Jan 2019) appointed an Expert Panel, made up of early years and Education Technology (EdTech) experts, to develop criteria for educational quality in early years literacy, language and communication apps. The expert panel members are:

- Professor **Jackie Marsh** - Professor of Education, University of Sheffield (*Chair*)
- **Olivia Dickinson** - Digital Consultant at Digital Olive Ltd - Sky Kids, Turner, Discovery Education, Nickelodeon (*Deputy-Chair*)
- **Peter Robinson** – Chief Operating Officer, KidsKnowBest
- **Antonio Gould** – Executive Director, Teach Monster Games Ltd (The Usborne Foundation)
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- **Dr Rosie Flewitt** - Reader in Early Communication and Literacy, UCL Institute of Education
- **Sandra Mathers** - Senior Researcher, University of Oxford Department of Education
- **Jonathan Douglas** – Director, National Literacy Trust
- **Jane Lewis** - Head of UK Programme Development and Quality, Save The Children UK

The Department for Education takes the issue of conflict of interest very seriously. All members of the Panel were invited on the basis of their expertise and not commercial or other interests, and, as such, were required to sign a terms of reference, which includes a section on declaring any potential conflicts of interest. Panel members will not therefore, be responsible for assessing an app in which they are a shareholder, have personal associations with or materially/ financially benefit from that organisation/ app.

Technical Expert

Following the delivery and conclusion of a fair and open procurement competition, the Department appointed Kryptowire to undertake the security assessment of apps.

Kryptowire was founded in 2011 and is an American cloud based automated Mobile Application Security Testing (MAST) solution. They provide mobile application security analysis tools, anti-piracy technologies, mobile app marketplace security analytics, and Enterprise Mobility Management (EMM) solutions for government agencies in the US, UK (MOD and DWP) and Europe.

The Department will also undertake checks to ensure that apps are GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) compliant.

Quality Criteria

The **educational** criteria will be used to assess apps and award an indication of quality to those apps meeting the standard.

The criteria were developed following a review of existing literature in the field, and includes elements which were found to be consistently identified across research studies as being applicable to high quality educational apps. A wide range of stakeholders including teachers, researchers, app producers and parents were consulted and contributed to the development of the criteria.

Apps which pass the educational criteria, will then be submitted to Kryptowire for **technical** assessment. We have agreed with Kryptowire to adopt the widely recognised and internationally accepted [OWASP](#) (Open Web Application Security Project) standard for this project.

OWASP operates as a non-profit and is not affiliated with any technology company, issuing impartial guidance and information free of charge worldwide. We have decided to adopt this standard as it is already widely accepted by the industry and represents an appropriate stringency level for this project. OWASP is the Department's de facto set of criteria for cyber assuring its digital services.

The General Data Protection Regulation is a European-wide law that regulates the handling of personal data. It places greater obligations on how organisations handle and protect personal data. Further information on GDPR compliance in education can be found [here](#)

Accreditation Process

App developers will be invited to submit their app for assessment from the 31st July 2019. Developers will need to complete the submission form in order to be considered for

assessment. Applications will close on the 13th September 2019. All developers will be informed if they have been successful or unsuccessful on the same day in mid-October.

Following the assessment process, apps which are deemed to have met the educational criteria and satisfied the technical standard will be provided with a quality mark, which the DfE is currently developing. Successful developers will be able to use the quality mark to promote their app for a year, after this period the app will be required to undergo reassessment to retain the quality mark. App developers who fail to obtain the quality mark will not be publicised by the Department.

Successful app developers are required to notify the Department of any substantive changes between the version of the app that has been awarded a quality mark and any subsequent version of the app released over the course of the year; the Department will provide further information on what constitutes a substantive change in due course.

App developers who are awarded a quality mark will have the opportunity to apply for the Local Authority pilot and research project ascertaining take-up, usage and impact on outcomes.

Feedback

Apps which fail to receive accreditation because they do not meet the educational and/or technical standard will be provided with brief feedback.

App developers may have the right to appeal the decision made by the educational and/or technical panel; more details on this process will be published at the point the Department shares the results from the assessment process.



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