

Northumberland Accessibility Strategy

2016 to 2018

(Accessibility for Disabled Pupils)

This is the local authority's accessibility strategy for disabled pupils (under paragraph 1 Schedule 10 to the Equality Act 2010)

INTRODUCTION

The Equality Act 2010 brought together a range of equality duties and requirements within one piece of legislation. The Act introduced a single Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (sometimes also referred to as the 'general duty') that applies to public bodies, including maintained schools and academies (including Free Schools) and which extends to all protected characteristics - race, disability, sex, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment. This combined equality duty came into effect in April 2011.

The duty has three main elements. In carrying out their functions, public bodies are required to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act,
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it,
- foster good relations across all characteristics - between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

DEFINITION OF 'DISABLED'

Requirements for local authorities to put in place an accessibility strategy are specified in schedule 10 of the Act: *Accessibility for disabled pupils*.

A person is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities. A physical or mental impairment includes learning difficulties, mental health conditions, medical conditions and hidden impairments such as dyslexia, autism and speech, language and communication impairments (Equality Act 2010).

This definition often includes learners who also have a 'Special Educational Need' (SEN). This happens when their disability has led to a learning difficulty. The Northumberland Accessibility Strategy 2016 to 2018 includes both disability and SEN considerations.

The national SEND Code of Practice 2014 also brought together these issues for the first time.

WHAT MUST BE INCLUDED IN THE STRATEGY?

Schedule 10 says an accessibility strategy is a strategy for, over a prescribed period—

- (a) increasing the extent to which disabled **pupils can participate in the schools' curriculums**;
- (b) **improving the physical environment of the schools** for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the schools;
- (c) **improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information** which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.

The delivery of information in (c) must be:

(a) within a reasonable time;

(b) in ways which are determined after taking account of the pupils' disabilities and any preferences expressed by them or their parents

The Northumberland accessibility strategy 2016-2018 is as follows:

INCREASING ACCESS TO THE CURRICULUM

The role of schools:

All schools are responsible for providing a broad, balanced and inclusive curriculum for all pupils and in particular for disabled pupils.

Some pupils need adaptations to their curriculum, so they can be included with other pupils or so they receive personalised learning which is only for them. Schools must work with both parents/carers and children/young people to develop appropriate outcomes for their personalised plans.

Mainstream schools publish on their websites an SEN Information Report. This document sets out how that school ensures pupils with different kinds of needs are included.

Mainstream schools also have a lead teacher for SEN, called a SENCO or SENDCO. This means '*Special Educational Needs & Disability Coordinator*.' They ensure the needs of SEN learners are provided for by the school and others.

Although specialist schools do not have the same legal requirements, in Northumberland we do expect the same standards of support and inclusion to apply.

School must also have a policy for supporting children with medical conditions. The Department for Education provides national guidance on this. The local authority and local NHS provide support, policy development guidance and advice to schools.

Schools must publish accessibility plans setting out how they plan to increase access for disabled pupils to the curriculum, the physical environment and to information.

School governing bodies and proprietors must also publish information about the

arrangements for the admission of disabled children, the steps taken to prevent disabled children being treated less favourably than others, the facilities provided to assist access of disabled children, and their accessibility plans.

The role of the local authority and local NHS partners:

The local authority provides specialist services to support schools in their SEN & Disability work. In some areas there is also a partner NHS service.

The different kinds of SEN and Disability and which services provide the support and training are listed here:

Type of SEN & Disability	Service to schools available including specialist teachers, teaching assistants and Educational Psychologists
Autism / ASD	Autism Team Inclusion support workers NHS Children & Young Peoples Service
Speech, Language & Communication / SLCN	Speech & Language Team NHS Speech & Language
Social Emotional and Mental Health / SEMH	Behaviour Team Inclusion support workers NHS Children & Young Peoples Service
Learning difficulties (moderate, severe or profound & multiple) / MLD, SLD, PMLD	Inclusion support workers Educational Psychology Service NHS Children & Young Peoples Service
Specific Learning Difficulties (including dyslexia) / SPLD	Literacy Team
Physical Difficulties / PD	NHS Physiotherapy NHS Occupational Therapy
Visual Impairment / VI	Sensory Team
Hearing Impairment / HI	Sensory Team

Multi-Sensory Impairment / MSI	Sensory Team
Medical Needs	EOTAS teachers those who are unable to access school due to significant illness School Nurses NHS Health Visitors NHS specialist services: specific to the nature of the condition e.g. epilepsy

In reality, the work of the specialist teams and NHS services often crosses into more areas than described above. This may be because a pupil has a complex combination of needs or because a multi-disciplinary approach to a single need is being undertaken.

The Local Authority also provides geographic multidisciplinary 'Early Help Hubs' where all of the services listed above, health partners and social care will together accept any request for support from a school or other person. In most cases the need is already being addressed with support from a single service but any case which does not already have a clear single-service pathway or has complexity of need will be accepted by the Early Help Hub.

In this way Northumberland seeks to provide an integrated offer to schools which extends into all services, not just those traditionally seen as education services.

This in turn provides better outcomes for pupils, including their ability to engage with and be included within education curricula.

The local authority and local NHS partners also provide a specialised equipment scheme for loan or purchase of any items required for a pupil to successfully access their learning and school community. This covers such items as adapted seating to maintain posture, personal hygiene access through hoists, mobility equipment and more.

IMPROVING THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The role of schools:

As described above, all schools must publish an accessibility plan for setting out how they plan to increase access for disabled pupils to the physical environment.

School governing bodies and proprietors must also publish information about the facilities provided to assist access of disabled children.

Improved access to the physical environment can be achieved through reasonable adjustments and schools do need to consider potential adjustments which may be needed for disabled pupils generally, as it is likely that any school will have a disabled pupil at some point. Schools should ensure that in an emergency, there is provision to evacuate all building users, including disabled people, to a place of safety.

The role of the local authority:

All new school buildings have to comply with current building regulations and should be physically accessible to disabled pupils. Each year schools identify issues where the admission of a new learner with specific disabilities requires further adaptations to be made to the building. This usually occurs in older buildings, though over the years many of the necessary changes in Northumberland have already been made incrementally.

When a new issue does arise schools may wish to consider an accessibility audit and may seek advice from the local authority health and safety officer, school nurse, SEND Team or a building consultant.

IMPROVING ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The role of schools:

Schools must publish accessibility plans (and local authorities, accessibility strategies) setting out how they plan to increase access for disabled pupils to information.

The role of the local authority:

The requirement in the Children and Families Act 2014 to develop a local authority Local Offer has the express purpose of making information more accessible. The Northumberland Local Offer is available at

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Children/Needs/Offer.aspx#northumberlandlocaloffer>

For those families who are not able to access the internet access to the Local Offer is being made available through:

- Printed materials
- Staff in education settings including pre-school, schools and colleges
- Information, advice and guidance services
- Training for partner organisations such as NHS services, social workers and careers guidance.

The local authority has recruited parents and young people to take part in 'editing groups' where printed and online SEND information is scrutinised and improved. The process began in 2016 and focuses upon these key questions:

- Is the information clear?
- Is it helpful?
- Does it cover all the things I would want to know?

The local authority specialist teams for visual impairment, hearing impairments and speech & language provide adapted information to those with specific communication needs.

The constant evolution and advances in information technologies require that we look for and take on new opportunities for making information more accessible. This focus is included in our annual review of the Local Offer. It also includes a review of any comments made by users as to how the Local Offer should be adapted or better communicated.

CONSULTATION, IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

This proposed strategy is to be presented to the following groups for consultation, development and eventual approval:

- Parent carer forum

- Schools, including representative SENCOs and head teachers
- Elected members

The strategy is proposed to be replaced in 2018 when the existing 2014-2018 cycle of national reforms have been completed and the government's proposed changes regarding the roles of schools and local authorities have been confirmed.

April 2017