



ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY

**Somerset's Strategy for the
Accessibility of Disabled Pupils
in Schools for which Somerset
Local Authority is responsible**

2015-2017

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1. Vision and Priorities

Somerset County Council is committed to working together across agencies and with our service users to provide the best outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disability. We want to work hard to support pathways to a positive and rewarding adulthood by providing inclusive education that recognises the learning potential of all children and young people.

2. Background and Context

Somerset County Council is committed to the principles in the national inclusion charter (2011).

- Inclusion is a right
 - All children have the right to be included in every aspect of society.
 - Disabled children should not have to ask or fight to be included in the things that other children do.
 - Inclusion is a right in UK law (the Disability Discrimination Acts) and international law (UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities).
- Inclusion is about all of life.
 - Inclusion is a process of change where all children are valued in every aspect of their life and in the life of their community.
- Inclusion means no one is left out.
 - Inclusion means all children, whatever their impairment, wherever they live and however they communicate.
- Inclusion starts early.
 - From the very earliest age, disabled children should have the right to play and learn with other children, enjoying all the aspects of life and friendships that other children do.
- Inclusion means everyone is heard.
 - “We want to be respected”. All children have a right to communicate – some express their views without using speech and services must respond.
- Inclusion is everyone’s responsibility.
 - “We want to go where other children go”. Disabled children are not just the responsibility of specialist disability services. All services need to ensure that disabled children can take part in everything they do.

- Inclusion is built in.
 - Everyone who works with children must have training in disability equality to equip them with the skills to ensure disabled children are able to participate.
 - Inclusion benefits everyone – Inclusion benefits all children and young people, as well as adults. It promotes citizenship and helps create a society that celebrates difference and is at ease with itself.
 - Inclusion works –Disabled children can and should be included in every area of life.

Children and Families Act 2014

The Government is transforming the system for children and young people with special educational needs (SEN), and/or disability, so that services provided consistently support the best outcomes for them through to adulthood.

The Act will extend the SEND system from birth to 25, giving children, young people and their parents' greater control and choice in decisions and ensuring needs are properly met.

There will be a single, simpler assessment process for children with special educational needs or disabilities, backed by a new Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan.

Equality Act 2010

- Disability is a protected characteristic within the terms of this Act. The requirement to prepare, deliver, keep and review an accessibility strategy is in schedule 10 of this Act. The strategy is required to:
 - Increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the schools' curriculum.
 - Improve 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.
 - Improve the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily available to pupils who are not disabled.
- As well as general duties for public bodies, the Equality Act states specific duties, mainly:
 - Not to treat pupils with SEND less favourably.
 - To undertake reasonable steps to avoid putting pupils with SEND at a substantial disadvantage.

The SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 years

- Promotes inclusive education and describes how the Equality Act and the Children and Families Act 2014 work together to ensure this:

‘As part of its commitments under articles 7 and 24 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the UK Government is committed to inclusive education of disabled children and young people and the progressive removal of barriers to learning and participation in mainstream education. The Children and Families Act 2014 secures the general presumption in law of mainstream education in relation to decisions about where children and young people with SEN should be educated and the Equality Act 2010 provides protection from discrimination for disabled people.

SEND Code of Practice 2015 para 1.26

‘Local authorities must ensure that children, their parents and young people are involved in the discussions and decisions about their individual support and about local provision.’

SEND Code of Practice 2015 para 1.3

3. Aims and Priorities

The key aims of this Accessibility Strategy are:

- To have high aspirations for all children and young people which are reflected in improving outcomes for young adults with special educational needs and/or disability.
- To ensure that the achievement gap between those with SEND and their peers is narrowed.
- To be able to include the majority of children and young people in their local schools, settings and colleges.
- To increase the participation of children and their parent carers and young people in the strategic work, evaluation and development of SEND provision and services in Somerset.

Progress towards these aims will be monitored by the SEND Strategy Board which will report the Children’s Trust Board.

The Strategy Board will include representation from the Young People’s SEND Young People’s participation team and the Somerset Parent Carer Forum.

The strategic context for this strategy includes the following priorities:

- Better schools producing better results for our children (County Plan 2013-17).
- Consult with, and listen to, our residents, communities and visitors (County Plan 2013-17).
- Raising Achievement – implementation of Children and Families Act and SEND reforms Children Trust Aim A4- 2014-16).

Priorities to deliver the aims of this strategy 2014-16 have been informed by:

- Work with SENCOs through workshops, conferences and County Forum..
- Work with Teaching partnership (special) school as part of the SEND professional leads group.
- Somerset Centre for Integrated Learning (course feedback from teaching assistants).
- Advice from our parent carer forum.
- The Aiming High programme consultations and evaluations.
- A review of person centred planning in annual reviews (2012).
- A review of specialist resource provision for children and young people with high level needs relating to hearing impairment (2012-14).
- Evaluations of projects delivered through School's Access Initiative.

Priority 1: To increase the participation of children and young people with SEND and their parent carers in our strategic understanding of what works and what does not work so well in Somerset and to plan action and activity to address and develop our Local Offer

Priority 2: To increase the extent to which children and young people can participate in the curriculum in all educational settings.

Priority 3: To improve the physical environment in our educational settings to ensure that children and young people can participate fully in education.

Priority 1: To increase the participation of children and young people with SEND and their parent carers in our strategic understanding of what works and what does not work so well in Somerset and to plan action and activity to address and develop our Local Offer

In Somerset, we are committed to increasing the opportunities for children and young people to participate in shaping their educational provision and outcomes.

We will develop an Engagement and Participation Strategy which will include Young People's Champions who will be tasked with the development of a pathway to a Young Person's Forum.

We will continue to work in partnership with the Somerset Parent Carer Forum to develop our SEND Strategy Board and associated work programme.

We will prioritise preparation for adulthood as a SEND Reforms key development work stream, working across organisational and age phase boundaries to agree a joint vision for effective transitions.

We will support young people to inform, lead and support our 2015 annual SEND conference and work in partnership with our Parent Carer Forum to organise and deliver this event.

Priority 2: To increase the extent to which children and young people can participate in the curriculum in all educational settings.

We will promote person centred planning through our SENCO Forum and the development of guidance, training and support for schools as part of SEND reforms.

We will ensure the inclusion of children and young people with medical needs through the provision of specific training and refreshing of the advice and guidance to schools

We will consider the potential value of an Accessibility Audit Tool for support to educational settings so that through the Audit Tool, settings are encouraged to ensure that, among other things:

- All of their written information is accessible to all pupils, considering print size, plain English, symbols, verbal explanations, additional/ different approaches etc.
- Signposting to information, advice and guidance is effective, for example the Local Offer, SENDIAS and SPCF.
- Identify adaptations needed, including adaptations for children and young people with sensory needs.
- Create solutions to accessibility issues if adaptations are not possible, such as moving groups to accessible areas.
- Use consultation effectively, asking children and young people about physical accessibility, eg access to toilets and changing facilities.
- Think creatively about classroom interiors, eg making calm, low-sensory stimulation areas available, thinking about the use of curtains to reduce noise levels, removing clutter etc.
- Use auxiliary aids effectively, eg use of radio aids, visual overlay.

All children and young people should have access to high quality teaching that focuses on inclusive practice and breaks down barriers to learning.

Schools and other educational settings are responsible for providing a broad and balanced curriculum and play a key role in planning to increase access to the curriculum for all pupils. As part of the planned SEND review we will consider the effectiveness of the following:

- Use of a graduated approach when meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND, using the 'assess, plan, do, review' cycle to inform this.
- Provision to staff of the opportunity for regular and updated training relating to additional needs, eg physical education staff being trained in including children and young people with disabilities in the curriculum.
- Use of auxiliary aids effectively to ensure children and young people can be included in the curriculum, eg providing coloured layovers for pupils with dyslexia.
- Prioritising and monitoring of staff planning for children and young people with SEND.
- Deployment of staff effectively to provide flexible support and facilitate independent learning.

- Positive evidence about how children and young people with SEND can be involved in activities, trips and residential stays.
- Involvement of children and their parent carers and young people and in the review and development of individual plans regarding curriculum access.

Core and traded services offered by the centrally funded support services:

- Through the support services and special schools outreach offer, the LA will work with Schools Forum and Compact ensure that core and bespoke training to meet individual SEN and setting capacity needs continues to be made available.

Priority 3: To improve the physical environment in our educational settings to ensure that children and young people can participate fully in education

We will continue to provide a School's Access Initiative (SAI) programme and supporting advice and guidance from specialist education support services such as the mobility and independence officer (Vision Support Team), educational audiology, advisory team for physical impairment and medical support needs including the Special Educational Needs Information Technology and Augmentative and Alternative Communication Service (SENITAS).

We will encourage schools to consider a full site access audit which is available from the specialist support services as part of their traded offer.

The Schools Access Initiative (SAI)

The SAI provides capital funding for maintained schools to make them more accessible and is key to addressing this priority. Funding is allocated on a named child, bespoke basis and can be used for items such as lifts, ramps, accessible toilets and handrails. As part of the programme the development of a through phase accessible schools route will be considered across areas. Property services advice linked to SAI can also contribute towards school-led schemes which also improve accessibility, for example, toilet refurbishments where the school also wants to include an accessible shower or changing facility.

In some cases, rather than making building adaptations, accessibility issues can be 'managed' at a school level, for example swapping an inaccessible upstairs classroom with a ground floor classroom rather than installing an expensive lift.

The staff managing the SAI programme and other LA support staff work closely to ensure; early identification of need, accessibility and effective use of resources.

Note: Voluntary-aided schools have separate funding, applied for through the relevant Diocese. The SAI option applies to local authority maintained nurseries, it does not apply to private nurseries, pre-schools or children's centres or academies (who should apply to the EFA).

4. School Accessibility Plans

Just as Section 10 of the Equality Act requires local authorities to prepare an accessibility strategy for schools for which it is responsible, it also requires the responsible body of a school to prepare an accessibility plan.

*All providers **must** make reasonable adjustments to procedures, criteria and practices and by the provision of auxiliary aids and services. Most providers **must** also make reasonable adjustments by making physical alterations. Schools and local authority education functions are not covered by this last duty, but they **must** publish accessibility plans (and local authorities, accessibility strategies) 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.*

SEND Code of Practice 2015 p.17

A school accessibility plan is a plan for:

- Increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school's curriculum.
- Improving the physical environment of the school 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 school.
- Improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.

Accessibility plans should be adequately resourced, regularly reviewed and revised as necessary, eg when accommodation improvements or repair and maintenance work are being planned, where the organisation of the curriculum is being considered or school activities are organised. It should also be reported to parents/carers annually.

All other educational settings are encouraged to have accessibility plans.

5. Review

The Local Authority will keep its Accessibility Strategy under review during the period to which it relates and revise it if necessary. This strategy is the responsibility of the Educational Outcomes SEND and Sufficiency teams within Children's Services.

A review of the strategy is scheduled to occur by the end of 2017 and will be informed by the feedback collated from the Local Offer and associated consultations e.g. Autism Strategy, the 2015 & 16 customer satisfaction survey and the 2015 & 16 annual report from the Schools Access Initiative Panel.

APPENDIX 1

Key Legislation and Guidance

Equality Act 2010:

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/pdfs/ukpga_20100015_en.pdf

Equality Act: Schedule 10

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/schedule/10>

Equality Act 2010: Guidance on matters to be taken into account in determining questions relating to the definition of disability (specifically schedule 10).

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/85010/dis_ability-definition.pdf

The Equality Act 2010 and schools: Departmental advice for school leaders, school staff, governing bodies and local authorities

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-advice-for-schools>

Reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils (2012): Technical guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/private-and-public-sector-guidance/education-providers/schools-guidance/key-concepts/reasonable-adjustments>

Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions (2014) (DFE)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions>

Children and Families Act 2014

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/contents/enacted>

The Special Educational needs and Disability Regulations 2014

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/1530/pdfs/uksi_20141530_en.pdf

SEND Code of Practice 2014 revised 2015

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

The Mental Capacity Act Code of Practice: Protecting the vulnerable (2005)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-capacity-act-code-of-practice>

Lightening Guide 05: Lighting for Education

<http://www.cibseknowledgeportal.co.uk/Knowledge/CIBSE-LG/Lighting-Guide-05->

Lecture – Teaching and Conference

BB93 Acoustic Design of Schools

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bb93-acoustic-design-of-schools-performance-standards>

APPENDIX 2

Support for Educational Settings and Parents/Young People

Somerset Parent and Carer Forum (SPCF) www.somersetpcf.org.uk

SPCF is for anyone caring for children/young people aged 0-25 years with any disability and/or additional need. They aim to empower and involve parent carers to have their say in order to influence local and national decision making. On the website there is 'Finding Your Way,' an online handbook and Directory of Services for parents and carers.

Contact: 01278 699397 and help@somersetparentcarerforum.org.uk

Somerset SENDIAS www.somersetsend.org.uk

Somerset SENDIAS is a statutory service which provides impartial information and support for children and young people, and the parents and carers of children with Special Educational Needs. It offers a range of services, including leaflets relating to SEND, a telephone enquiry line, individual support through trained Independent Parental Supporters and a website.

Contact: Freephone 01823 355578 and info@somersetsend.org.uk

Careers South West- Independent Supporter Service

www.cswgroup.co.uk

Owned and controlled by four Local Authority corporate members, Cornwall Council, Devon County Council, Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council, Careers South West is a provider of Information, Advice & Guidance services across the South West.

Contact: 0800 97 55 111 and contact@cswwgroup.co.uk

The Choice Advice Service

This service offers advice and support to all parents on the school admissions and appeals procedures.

Contact 01823 356903 and choiceadvice@somerset.gov.uk

Children and Young People's Education – Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs)

Every preschool and nursery has access to support and guidance from an area SENCO. Every preschool and school has a SENCO who is responsible for ensuring that all aspects of a child's needs are met.

SENCOs are trained and experienced teachers who can support practitioners in practical strategies and ways of adapting the learning environment to meet the needs of children with specific or special needs. They work very closely with Speech and Language therapists and Portage workers.

In all mainstream FE colleges, a senior lead will have responsibility for coordination of learning support services.

Children's Education – Special Educational Needs Support Services

Educational Psychologists and Specialist teachers can support schools to better understand, and adjust provision, to meet the needs of children with special educational needs. They are based in 4 area bases across Somerset. The SENCO from the school/college will have regular contact with support services and can ask them for help if this is appropriate.

The following documents can be found on the Somerset Local Offer website:
<https://slp.somerset.org.uk/sites/ess/SitePages/Local%20Offer.aspx>

School's Access Initiative Policy

<https://slp.somerset.org.uk/sites/ess/ESS%20Documents/Accessible%20Schools%20-%20Schools%20Access%20Initiative%20Policy.doc>

Physical Impairment and Medical Support Team information which provides advice and templates for health care planning in schools and related guidance documents relating to accessibility and support in education settings

<https://slp.somerset.org.uk/sites/ess/ESS%20Documents/Somerset%20Physical%20Impairment%20and%20Medical%20Support%20Team%20Local%20Offer.docx>

Somerset's Local Offer <https://somerset.local-offer.org/>

The Local Offer sets out, in one place, the support and provision that is available for children and young people with SEND and their families. It enables children and young people and their families to make informed choices about support and provision and is used to review and develop provision in Somerset.