1. Introduction

The purpose of this strategy is to make clear the local authority’s position on improving accessibility for disabled pupils and good practice. Outlining Early Years providers and Schools’ responsibilities in meeting their requirements around accessibility, including accessibility of the curriculum, the physical environment and information for disabled pupils.

Central to the scope of this strategy are all ‘pupils’ of statutory school age who attend an early years provision, maintained school or academy located in North Somerset. This document may be considered to apply to establishments where pupils are placed outside the area but where North Somerset Council remains responsible for their education. Where a place is commissioned outside North Somerset, the placing team is encouraged to require sight of any Accessibility Strategy published by the school or local authority in which it is situated, to satisfy themselves that the establishment shares our commitment to accessibility.

2. Vision

Our vision for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is that with the right level of help and support, they achieve happy, healthy and fulfilling lives. We want them to access all the education, employment, training and social opportunities that they need to enhance their life chances, prepare them for adulthood and enable them to contribute to their community.

This links to the North Somerset Council Corporate Plan which identifies three outcomes to be achieved for local people, including those with disabilities: prosperity and opportunity, health and well-being and quality places.

3. Local Context

North Somerset Council’s partnership with schools is well-established and the Vulnerable Learners’ Service provides advice and support at whole school, group and individual levels. In addition to three special schools, two schools have resourced provision to meet the needs of children with speech and language needs and hearing impairment.

All early years settings in North Somerset have access to guidance and advice from North Somerset Area Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCO) through the Early Years Team. North Somerset Area SENCOs provide advice and practical support to Early Years settings about identifying and assessing special educational needs as well as providing day-to-day support for Inclusion Co-ordinators (INCCOs) in ensuring arrangements are in place to support children with Special Educational Needs (SEN). The Area SENCOs also develop and disseminate good practice, and where necessary, keep parents informed of local support services that are available to parents of children with SEN. Early Years settings are given advice about North Somerset processes that support children with SEND such as Early Years Top Up funding and the Inclusion LINK programme through the Area SENCOs. Various SEN resources, information about inclusion support and Early Years SEN Top Up Funding can be accessed on the website at www.n-somerset.gov.uk/fis

The Local Authority (LA) SENCO Network provides an ongoing training and development partnership, enhancing provision and support for SEND pupils.

The SEND Programme Board meets six times a year and its membership consists of strategic leaders and managers from the local authority, Clinical Commissioning Group, (CCG), Health, Schools, and Parent Carers. It links to the emerging Young People’s Focus Group who have been instrumental in influencing better outcomes and access for some young people to community based activities. Its primary role is to oversee the strategic development and provide system level leadership for SEND services across North Somerset.
4. Definition of Disability

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 or hidden impairments such as dyslexia, autism and speech, language and communication impairments (Equality Act 2010). It is important to note that because a pupil has a disability does not necessarily mean that he/she has special educational needs, and a specific assessment is used to determine whether an Education Health and Care Plan is needed to ensure the pupil has access to specific support.

5. Definition of special educational needs (SEN)

A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability (with or without a diagnosis) if he or she:
- has a significantly greater difficulty in learning and/or accessing learning than the majority of others of the same age or
- has a disability which prevent or hinders them from making use of facilities of a kind generally provide for other of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post 16 institutions

A child under compulsory school age has a learning difficulty or disability if they are likely to meet the definition above when of compulsory school age (or would be likely, if no special educational provision were made). (Children and Families Act 2014)

6. Legal Context

The Equality Act 2010 and The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice: 0 – 25 Years 2015 provide the legal framework for this strategy.

The Equality Act 2010 bought together a range of equality duties and requirements within one piece of legislation. The Act introduced a single Public Sector Equality Duty (PESD). It comprises two separate duties which apply to both local authorities and schools. This includes maintained schools and academies (including free schools).

6.1 The Equality Act 2010

Schedule 10 of the Act specifies the requirement for the preparation of an Accessibility Strategy by the local authority which must demonstrate:

a. increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in 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 information in (c) must be:

- within a reasonable time;
- in ways which are determined after taking into account of the pupils’ disabilities and any preferences expressed by them or their parents.

6.2 The General Duty

This duty requires schools, when carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010
- eliminate harassment of disabled pupils that is related to their disability
- promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people
promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
encourage participation by disabled people in public life
take steps to take account of disabled people’s disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled people more favourably than other people

The General Duty applies across schools’ duties, and applies to disabled pupils, staff and parents/carers, along with other users of the school.

6.3 The Specific Duty

In addition to the General Duty, there is a Specific Duty for schools to demonstrate how they are meeting the General Duty. The main requirement is for schools to prepare and publish a single equality scheme, involving disabled people in the development of this scheme, and to implement the scheme and report on it. In effect, the General Duty sets out what schools do with the Specific Duty setting out how schools have to do it, and what they need to record as evidence of what they have done.

Schools and the local authority must be aware of the wider Equality Act 2010 requirements in Part 3 of the Act relating to the provision of services, goods and facilities. This may affect a range of activities, where they involve the use of school premises by community groups or the local authority when delivering its education service and support to schools.

Importantly, the Act including Part 3 relating to Early Years settings encourages the use of reasonable adjustments in order to achieve equality of access for disabled people. This applies to both schools and local authorities in exercising their duty to advance equality.

7. Access to the Curriculum

Ensuring access to the curriculum is crucial in developing life opportunities, preparing for adulthood and enabling contribution to the community. All children and young people should have access to high quality teaching that focuses on inclusive practice and breaks down barriers to learning.

All schools are responsible for providing a broad, balanced and inclusive curriculum for all pupils, and in particular disabled pupils. Parents and carers are key partners in developing support for children and young people with disabilities. Schools must work with both parents and carers and pupils to develop aspirational and appropriate outcomes for their personalised plans.

The joint commissioning of education, health and care provision for children and young people required by the Children and Families Act 2014 should lead to the development of more integrated packages of support which will support children and young people with disabilities in accessing the curriculum. This, in partnership with the graduated approach expected by the SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years, focuses on making the curriculum more accessible to all children and young people.

The local authority supports the principles of personalisation and person-centred planning; and may work with providers to ensure their work with children and young people with SEND reflects these principles. The local authority also supports schools to be able to meet the individual needs of pupils and the training needs of staff by offering a range of specialist services.

North Somerset’s Special Educational needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIAS), Supportive Parents, works with the local authority and education providers to support parental engagement and participation and to develop good practice. North Somerset Parent Carers (previously Our Voice Counts) is an independent group of parents in North Somerset who represent and advocate for parents/carers of children with SEND. North Somerset Parent Carers are represented on the SEND Programme Board and on various task groups. They provide feedback on experiences of parents and carers in North Somerset to these groups.
All schools must have an Accessibility Plan that shows what actions the school is taking to increase access to the curriculum, particularly for those pupils with SEND. When considering the curriculum, schools should include broader aspects and not just individual subjects. Planning ways to increase access to the curriculum should include activities to:

- overcome any barriers which prevent or make it difficult for disabled children and young people to participate fully in school trips and activities such as school plays, after-school clubs and study support clubs; and
- ensure that the ethos of the school is one which celebrates diversity and encourages inclusion.

There is an example of a School Accessibility Policy and Plan attached to this document (Appendix 2).

8. Increased Access to the Physical Environment

This will be achieved by:

- supporting schools in reviewing the physical access audit of their premises and ensuring they understand the ‘anticipatory duty’
- ensuring that the Planning Authority monitors all building project carried out centrally or by schools to address accessibility issues
- providing schools with advice on disability and accessibility issues
- creating a climate in which schools always think ‘disability’ whenever any change to the physical environment is proposed

Assessment by schools of physical access to the curriculum and facilities within schools will be encouraged and supported by the local authority. Specialist disability physical access advice and support is available from the local authority on request. The local authority will also aim to ensure physical support from specialist educational services is in place to enable the plans for all pupils with Statements and/or Education, Health and Care Plans to be implemented in the relevant timescales.

The local authority Equality and Diversity Team can provide wider training to schools to identify where there is a need for reasonable adjustments or auxiliary aids to support pupils and promote the “Inclusive School”.

Accessibility Strategy for Disabled Pupils 2018 – 2021
9. Access to Information

The local authority will ensure the Local Offer describes the provision and information available for children with SEND and fulfils the two key requirements of:

- providing clear, comprehensive, accessible and up-to-date information about the available provision and how to access it; and
- making provision more responsive to local needs and aspirations by directly involving disabled children and those with SEND and their parents, and disabled young people and those with SEND, and service providers in its development and review.

The local authority will seek to engage with children, young people and their parents and carers in its operation of the Local offer in terms of its operation and content. It will involve them in reviews of the Local offer. The Local Offer can be found at http://nsod.n-somerset.gov.uk/kb5/northsomerset/directory/localoffer.page?localofferchannel=0

10. Evaluation, Consultation and Review

10.1 Consultation and Involvement

In reviewing this draft policy the following will be consulted and involved:

- North Somerset Local Authority (LA)
- Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
- Supportive Parents
- Young Persons Focus Group North Somerset Parent Carers Working Together
- Schools
- School Governors
- SEND Programme Board

10.2 Co-ordination

This strategy will be led by the Equality and Diversity Team and will be co-developed with key stakeholders including:

- North Somerset Parent Carers Working Together
- Supportive Parents
- Young People focus group
- Schools
- Early Years settings
- Representation from Health including providers and the CCG
- Representation from the LA including Disabled Children Team, Special Educational Needs Team, Early Years, Children Centres etc.

The Strategy will link to the following strategies and plans:

- Council Corporate Plan
- Education Provision in North Somerset – A Commissioning Strategy 2018-2021
- Children & Families Partnership Plan
- Home to School Travel Assistance 2017
10.3 Duration, Review and Revision

This is a draft version which will be under review and development from April 2018 through to February 2019. This will allow opportunities to undertake robust engagement and consultation with those mentioned and with wider audiences from Children Centres through to Post 16 Students, families and carers.

During this time the draft strategy will be kept on the Local Offer where there will be opportunities for parents, carers and young people to contribute towards developing the final version.

Once the final draft is ready, the partnership approach will continue with sign-off by the People and Communities Director Leadership Team for the local authority and the Education Excellence Partnership Board for local schools. The final version will be shared with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Board for endorsement ready for the sign-off by each body.
SCHOOL ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

The school’s Governing Body holds responsibility for publishing the Accessibility Plan, and as part of the regular review process, schools will need to have regard to the need for providing adequate resources for implementing this plan and reviewing this plan.

An Accessibility Plan will be deemed satisfactory when:

- it is in writing
- it covers the following three strands of increasing access over time:
  - increased access to the curriculum for SEN and disabled pupils
  - improvements to the physical environment to increase access to education and associated services at the school; and
  - improvements in the provision of information for SEN and disabled pupils where it is provided in writing for pupils who are not disabled

In addition, an Accessibility Plan should be:

- adequately resourced
- implemented
- reviewed regularly
- revised as necessary (e.g. when accommodation improvements or repair and maintenance work are being planned)
- revised, if necessary, during a three year period and ensure information is reported to parents/carers annually
- a free-standing document or part of the school development plan
- published in the context of the Equality Act 2010, which can be interpreted as making the school’s plan widely and easily available in different formats including electronically via the school’s website and the North Somerset Local Offer.

An example template is included at Appendix 2 for schools to use as a starting point in developing their own Accessibility Plan.
ACCESSIBILITY POLICY AND PLAN

WRITTEN BY: RATIFICATION

DATE:

FUTURE REVIEW/RENEWAL DATE:

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school’s SEN Policy

Statutory Requirement

This Accessibility Plan is drawn up in compliance with current legislation and requirements, as specified in Schedule 10 relating to “Accessibility for disabled pupils” of the Equality Act 2010. School Governors are accountable for ensuring the implementation, review and reporting of progress of the Accessibility Plan over a prescribed period.

The Equality Act 2010 replaced all existing equality legislation, including the Disability Discrimination Act. The effect of the law is the same as in the past, meaning that ‘schools cannot unlawfully discriminate against pupils because of sex, race, disability, religion or belief and sexual orientation’.

The Equality Act 2010 and Schools, May 2014

Purpose of the Plan

School’s Accessibility Plan relates to the key aspects of physical environment, curriculum and written information.

Focus of the Plan

The Accessibility Plan contains relevant and timely actions to:

- increase access to the curriculum for all pupils, expanding the curriculum as necessary to ensure that pupils with SEN and or Disabilities are equally prepared for life as their peers (if a school fails to do this, they are in breach of their duties under the Equality Act 2010). This covers teaching and learning and the wider curriculum of the school such as participation in after-school clubs, leisure and cultural activities or school visits. It also covers the provision of specialist or auxiliary aids and equipment; which may assist these pupils in accessing the curriculum within a reasonable time frame

- improve and maintain access to the physical environment of the school providing specific facilities for disabled pupils or staff and carers as well as making wider physical access improvements to a school. This covers improvements to the physical environment of the school and physical aids to access education within a reasonable time frame

- improve the delivery of written information to pupils, staff, parents and visitors with disabilities. Examples might include handouts, timetables, text books and information about the school and school events. The information should be made available in various preferred formats within a reasonable time frame.

School’s Accessibility Plan relates to the key aspects of physical environment, curriculum and written information.
Definition of Disability

According to the Equality Act 2010, a person has a disability if:

- he or she has a physical or mental impairment; and
- the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities

According to the SEN Code of Practice 0-25 years, a child or a young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special education provision to be made for him or her.

School Values

<< insert information relating to school’s motto, ethos, values-driven curriculum as appropriate/ relevant >>

Links to Other Documentation and Policies

This document should be read in conjunction with the following:

<< insert list of relevant documentation and policies, for example School Development Plan, SEND Policy, Health and Safety Policy, curriculum policies >>

Training and Resources

Training needs for all staff can be identified in the following ways:

- Audit of staff expertise and training needs
- Recognizing specific needs for individual pupils and how staff can be trained to support that child/group of children
- Elements of the School Improvement/Development Plan to be addressed through training

Resources are purchased as and when they are required and/or recommended from professionals working with pupils.
Supporting Partnerships

We will work closely with parents to ensure that the plan is implemented effectively. The following agencies will be used to support the plan, amongst others:

<< insert list of agencies, for example Educational Psychologists, Health Care professionals, Advisory Teachers >>

Complaints Procedures

Positive home/school relationships often mean that concerns and complaints can usually be dealt with between parents, carers and school staff. However, when a more formal complaint is made, this need to be in accordance with our school’s Complaints Policy.

Monitoring Procedures

This Accessibility Policy and Plan will be reviewed every three years by the senior leadership team, including the school’s Inclusion Leader, alongside the Governing Body, and ratified accordingly.

## Overall Outcome: A LA Accessibility Strategy with a clear vision, contributed to and supported by all stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desired outcome</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Person/s responsible</th>
<th>Timescale</th>
<th>Monitoring process</th>
<th>Success criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 1:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial development</td>
<td>Exploration of the LA’s legislative requirements for an Accessibility Strategy, what it should look like, report to SEND Board</td>
<td>Strategy and Policy Team</td>
<td>By end of October 2017</td>
<td>Continued development of understanding</td>
<td>Report presented to board COMPLETED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEND Programme Board engagement</td>
<td>Report to board to share what the requirements are and how this may be implemented</td>
<td>Strategy and Policy Team</td>
<td>November 2017</td>
<td>Continued development of understanding</td>
<td>Direction of travel identified and implemented COMPLETED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate teams engaged with within the LA</td>
<td>Meetings held with Equality and Diversity Team</td>
<td>Strategy and Policy Team</td>
<td>September – ongoing 2017/18</td>
<td>Update meetings</td>
<td>Development of the strategy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Audit of schools and provisions in North Somerset Accessibility Strategies (including schools out of area which are currently accessed by NS based CYP) | Using the local offer to access school and providers websites, consideration will be given to:  
- have a strategy or not  
- quality of information (up to date)  
- how easy is it to find | Strategy and Policy Team                           | By end of April 2018                          | Report shared with E&D team, reported in the 2017/18 SEF | Robust data collated – COMPLETED                       |
<p>| North Somerset Draft Accessibility Strategy written                             | Document written                                                        | Equality and Diversity Team and Strategy and Policy Team | April 2018                       | Regular meetings and updates                    | Finished draft strategy COMPLETED                      |
| Draft update shared at SEND Programme Board                                     | Update given                                                            | Strategy and Policy Team                           | May/July 2018                     | Updates implemented into final draft version    | Board acknowledgment COMPLETED                        |
| <strong>Phase 2:</strong>                                                                 |                                                                        |                                                   |                                  |                                                 |                                                       |
| Early years providers and schools made aware of the draft strategy              | Draft Strategy shared with Early Years Leaders, Managers &amp; Owners Briefings, SHINS, PHANs and SENS for comment &amp; contribution | Equality and Diversity Team supported by NSC SEND Teams | September/December 2018           |                                                  | EY providers and Schools informed of and contributed to final strategy |
| Local Offer Task Group involvement in contributing to the final document       | On the task groups agenda and added to Local Offer                      | Strategy and Policy Team                           | September / December 2018         | Page reviewed and updated as required           | Information sharing                                   |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2019/20 Strategy completed</th>
<th>Updates noted and final strategy shared at SEND Board, SHINS, PHANS and SENS and other apocope meeting</th>
<th>Equality and Diversity Team supported by NSC SEND Teams</th>
<th>March 2019</th>
<th>Regularly reviewed</th>
<th>All are aware of the strategy and what it means to them Parent and Young People satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensure all EY providers and schools are inclusive and able to meet duties under SEND 2014</td>
<td>Provide design guidance to EY providers, schools, parent carers and young people Offer training support</td>
<td>NSC SEND teams supported by Equality and Diversity Team</td>
<td>Over life of plan</td>
<td>Review regularly</td>
<td>School and other stakeholders awareness of guidance Take up of training Feedback from parent, carers and young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All EY providers and schools encouraged to have a current and relevant Accessibility Strategy</td>
<td>Encourage EY providers and schools to consult with pupils on their own accessibility statements, providing pupils with the opportunity to share with schools about what was difficult or challenging in their learning environment and for schools to respond to this in their school accessibility strategies</td>
<td>NSC SEND teams supported by Equality and Diversity Team, Schools, Early Years providers</td>
<td>Review regularly</td>
<td>Regular input and updating of EY providers and school’s strategy Parent and young people’s satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide support to prepare plans through audit of premises and drafting of new co-produced plans</td>
<td>Equality and Diversity Team</td>
<td>Over life of plan</td>
<td>Review annually through direct contact with schools and MAT administrations</td>
<td>EY providers and Schools have up to date Plans in place EY providers and schools have skills to maintain and implement plans Positive feedback and input gathered from parent carers and young people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CYP with SEND have the right level of support to help them achieve happy, healthy and fulling lives</td>
<td>Awareness and skills training for provider committees, MAT administrators and School Governors made available</td>
<td>Equality and Diversity Team supporting NSC SEND teams</td>
<td>Focus in first year on assessing Governor/Committee skills moving to training being offered where required</td>
<td>Governor awareness improved, shown through survey feedback and actions in schools Feedback from parent carers and young people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record impact and outcomes in the Local Area Self Evaluation Framework</td>
<td>Completion of the SEF questionnaire</td>
<td>Equality and Diversity Team</td>
<td>March – April annually</td>
<td>Key points identified in the annual review and shared with the SEND Programme board and others as appropriate</td>
<td>Part of the annual SEF review</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This publication is available in large print, Braille or audio formats on request. Help is also available for people who require council information in languages other than English.

send@n-somerset.gov.uk