

# Accessibility Strategy

2019 – 2022

Improving life  
through learning





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# Introduction

Stirling Council is committed to successful inclusion of learners with disabilities. We aim to deliver services that are accessible to all, with physical barriers and communication barriers reduced. We recognise the impact that access to education can have on the child or young person's physical and mental health and wellbeing, their employment opportunities and opportunities to contribute to their communities. Stirling Council's schools and nurseries aim to be inclusive and nurturing places where our communities are fully represented. Increased inclusion of learners with disabilities provides valuable learning opportunities for all children and young people to develop their understanding of disabilities and influence society's views and attitudes. Therefore, Stirling Council's Accessibility Strategy is part of our approach to meeting the needs of all children and young people who might require additional support to access education at some point in time. Although the strategy is required in support for children with disabilities, our commitment is to the wider group of children and young people who have additional support needs as defined in the Additional Support for Learning (Scotland) Act 2004.

For children and young people with disabilities, there are barriers associated with their identified needs/medical conditions which we have little control over. Barriers also arise from environmental factors that we can control, for example attitudes to disability and inclusion, physical barriers and communication barriers.

Stirling Council values and respects the diverse communities it serves and has policy and guidance documents in place to support its existing strong record of inclusion for children and young people with a disability and for those who have additional support needs (ASN).

## Local policy/guidance includes:

- Getting it Right for Every Child Forth Valley Guidance
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Guidance and Procedures 2019
- Staged Intervention Guidance 2016
- Improving Life through Positive Transitions 2016
- Stirling's Approach to Respect for All- Preventing and Challenging Bullying Behaviours 2018
- Stirling Council's Guidance for the Administration of Prescribed Medicines and Meeting the Health Care Needs of Children and Young People (Draft) 2019
- Positive Approach to Preventing and Managing School Exclusions Guidelines and Procedures 2018

Stirling Council's Accessibility Strategy builds on this practice, within the context of improving outcomes for children and young people and raising awareness of disabilities and ASN. A range of stakeholders were involved in the initial development of the Accessibility Policy and in its subsequent review in 2019.

## Definition of Disability

Under the Equality Act 2010, a person is considered disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities. Substantial is defined as more than minor or trivial. Long term is defined as lasting for 12 months or more.

# Legislative Framework

There is a strong legislative context relating to children and young people with disabilities.

Stirling Council's Accessibility Strategy is in place to ensure that we meet the requirements of Sections 1-3 of the Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) Act 2002, this act introduced a duty on all local authorities to prepare and implement an accessibility strategy.

## An accessibility strategy is a strategy for:

- (a) increasing the extent to which pupils with a disability can participate in the school's curriculum;
- (b) improving the physical environment of the school, or schools, in relation to which the strategy is prepared for the purpose of increasing the extent to which pupils with a disability are able to take advantage of education and associated services provided or offered by such school or schools;
- (c) improving communication with pupils with a disability and, in particular, improving the communication to pupils with a disability:
  - (i) within a reasonable time; and
  - (ii) in ways which are determined after taking account of their disabilities and any preferences expressed by them or their parents, of information which is provide in writing for pupils, or persons who may be admitted as pupils, who do not have a disability.

Under the Equality Act 2010, Stirling Council has a duty to eliminate discrimination and harassment and promote equality of opportunity for those who have a "protected characteristic", outlined below:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender re-assignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

# Summary Evaluations: Accessibility Strategy 2016-2019

## Priority Area 1

Improve the physical environment of educational establishments to enable better access to education and associated services.

Feedback has been positive about building works to ensure accessibility for children and young people with disabilities in schools. Adaptations such as the additions of ramps, lowering of kerbs and changes to toilets were helpful. A few schools have identified that if they had a child who required a wheelchair in the future, further adaptations would be required, for example, Bridge of Allan Primary and Borestone Primary do not have wheelchair access to the second floor. The development of specialist provision classes in Bannockburn Primary school has also been a success.

Physical accessibility issues are considered through staged intervention meetings, particularly at transition times and requests made to ASN Officer for further assessment by NHS allied health professionals and Stirling Council assets team. All requests have been actioned with positive outcomes.

## Case Study

*Ben is 3 years old and has cerebral palsy. Ben attends a mainstream nursery class. He is a proactive, non-verbal communicator. Early assessment by speech and language therapists identified that he has excellent eye tracking skills. Ben has a team of professionals from education, physiotherapy, speech and language therapy and occupational therapy working together to ensure he has access to the technology he requires to communicate most effectively. Ben has been provided with a computer and eye gaze technology, jointly funded by NHS and Education. Ben can communicate through eye tracking which the computer then produces as a vocal output. Direct work at home is enabling Ben to develop his confidence using the device and joint sessions with speech and language therapy, his parents and education staff have enabled this technology to be used in the nursery setting. This technology supports Ben to be an active participant not only in his learning but in all aspects of his life.*

Many schools have purchased Boardmaker software and visual signage is evident in schools. Use of visual timetables in schools is common and an embedded Makaton training programme ensures opportunities for training for staff when required. More specialised needs are met through use of switches and appropriate IT solutions.

Speech and language therapists have worked within nurseries to audit communication environments, this has now been developed into a self-assessment tool for specialist provisions to use and, following a pilot, will be available for use within mainstream schools.

Clearer systems are in now place to request specialist equipment and adaptations from the ASN officer. Robust safeguarding training and recording of participants is undertaken annually in all schools. A calendar of training ensures opportunities for statutory training e.g. Moving and Handling and Risk Assessment training for managers.

Staff are confident with GIRFEC processes and transitions within education are managed effectively. Further developments to ensure consistent use of the Wellbeing App as a secure means of developing and storing child's plans within SEEMIS, is required to ensure all schools are confident in using it.

## Priority Area 2

Children and young people with additional support needs or disability, have improved attainment and achievement.

### Feedback

There is an annual calendar of learning and development activity for staff throughout the year, the support for learning teachers continue to work together to maintain skills and knowledge.

Certificated postgraduate courses for ASN specialist teachers are prioritised and funded.

Schools have invested in inclusive technology, some identifying this as an appropriate use of equity funding. Although some challenges remain in connectivity and technology updates, which are gradually being addressed.

Schools consistently reported that some children were involved in their planning and setting their own learning Intentions. Teachers' planning evidenced opportunities to support children making choices about their learning. Staff have been trained in talking mats, intensive interaction and picture exchange communication (PECs) in order to improve and support communication.

### Case Study

*Sarah is 16 years old and has a learning disability and autism spectrum disorder. Sarah attends a mainstream high school. She is very keen to communicate orally but needs support to share her views clearly. She benefits from the use of visuals to ensure she is able to communicate effectively with others in a variety of contexts. Sarah worked with an adult using Talking Mats to enable her to demonstrate her views clearly in relation to her subject choices, personal interests and wider world. Using Talking Mats with the support of an adult has meant Sarah is more able to share her views within decision making and planning. This work to enable her to share her views has also built her confidence and supported a more holistic understanding of her needs across all areas of her life.*

Some schools are making use of the Wellbeing App to develop individual plans for children.

Teachers' planning evidences differentiation which takes account of individual needs and learning styles. Tracking and monitoring is in place for children who have targeted interventions.

Schools report they are confident about Staged intervention and GIRFEC processes and that Local Authority guidance is clear and helpful.

A network of ASN principal teachers meet regularly to share and validate good practice. This year a moderation event was held across the authority's provisions enabling a collaborative approach to improvement activity.

## Priority Area 3

Improve communication with children and young people who have a disability or additional support need in relation to the provision of information in appropriate alternative formats, taking account of any support need preferences expressed by them or their parents.

### Case Study

*A representative group of secondary age young people with additional support needs shared their experiences of leading their own learning as part of ongoing consultation within the local young inclusion ambassador network on various themes. Young people mentioned they were able to take a lead in the projects they were interested in across a range of curricular areas. For example, the young people have played a key role in consultation around Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood Education. In order to ensure each young person could have their views heard, a variety of approaches were used to facilitate the conversation.*

The implementation of the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) programme across all secondary schools has included the development of MVP materials for young people with ASN and communication needs. The specialist MVP ASN course will be piloted by St Modans Autism Provision in session 2019-2020.

A Service Level Agreement with speech and language therapy ensures support for children with language and communication needs and informs practice development across schools and nurseries.

Some children regularly take part in staged intervention meetings and use of alternative and augmentative communication approaches (AAC) to gather views and opinions. Development of new tools such as the Drawing and Talking Approach are supporting more children to share their views.

Digital technology has been used to improve communication with parents and carers about their children's learning. Many schools are using pupil equity funding to develop this, by purchasing IT equipment. GLOW is increasingly used to support children's learning and to support adults' development with more schools working towards digital awards.

Feedback is consistently clear from partners and from families, that transitions to life after school is a worrying time for young people who have a disability.



# New and Continuing Priority Actions

Within each area of improvement, ongoing activity supports us to ensure that children and young people who have a disability are able to access education.

## Priority Area 1

Improve the physical environment of educational establishments to enable better access to education and associated services.

Physical barriers to accessing services for identified children and young people are reduced through transition planning processes.

Services work together to ensure that all new builds and refurbishments meet the duties under the Equality Act 2010 taking account of the range of needs of children and young people with a disability.

An acoustician and visual impairment specialist advises on the specific requirements of deaf and visually impaired children and young people. Physio, speech and language and occupational therapists can assess and advise on adaptations and the sensory or communication environment.

A Right to Speak resource is available to support the development of appropriate communication environments for individuals. Educational establishments can identify suitable areas within their learning environments to support learners with sensory integration needs. An audit of specific areas in regards to physical access including; car parks, entrance areas and visitor toilets can take place as required.

## Priority Area 2

Children and young people with additional support needs or disability, have improved attainment and achievement

Child's Plans are developed for children and young people who require targeted interventions to improve their opportunities for learning and achievement. Children are supported to be included in decisions made about their learning and what they need to support them.

Staff are able to access an annual programme of additional support needs staff development to support access to the curriculum and to be aware of many different approaches to differentiating activities for a wide range of children.

Improvement processes in schools, nurseries and services are informed by validated self-evaluation of current practice.

Networks of managers involved in supporting learners meet regularly to learn together share practice and stay informed of developments and initiatives. There will be a focus on improving partnerships for specialist provision staff.

Children and young people are supported by access to appropriate environments, access to services and resources such as AAC and digital technology.

## Priority Area 3

Improve communication with children and young people who have a disability or additional support need in relation to the provision of information in appropriate alternative formats, taking account of any support need preferences expressed by them or their parents.

Communication with children about their learning is supported by skills and resources which facilitate this.

Educational establishments will have access to an audit tool to identify various options for improving communication both with and for young people. A young person, parent and staff consultation on accessibility of the physical environment, curriculum and communication is carried out for individuals as required.

The best means of communicating with children, parents and staff is considered as part of planning to meet needs. Use of social media and eLearning supports communication. Appropriate alternative formats of important information are provided when required.

## Priority Area 4

Children/young people have successful transitions between placements and into Adult Services

Assessments are developed to support the sharing of information at times of transition. These can include children's and young people's views, preferred communication styles and physical and sensory needs. Adult Services representatives attend the resource allocation group to with children and families colleagues to plan jointly for successful transitions.

Schools access information and support from other agencies to plan transitions. However, there are currently challenges in ensuring that this takes place as early as it is required.

Plans are developing in partnership with social work colleagues to ensure that children and families are well informed and involved in successful transition planning processes and that there is confidence in the processes to access support, including through a new transitions forum.

## Parent and Carer Views

Parents and carers have been asked for their views about our identified areas for improvement and asked to consider whether there are other priority areas.

Views were gathered at our ASN parents' reference group and by our specialist settings and ASN Outreach Service.

Most parents agreed with our areas of priority and provided useful additional information which has informed our plan.

Two things of most significant for parents were: the availability of digital technology, including alternative, augmentative communication devices, to support learning and communication; and the early consideration and communication about transitions into school and post school.

Children's rights and their views were important to some parents and clear communication in general was a core theme in the feedback. We have made sure that these views are addressed in the action plan.

A range of individual views were expressed and these included: better access to mainstream and more specialist placements; concerns about reduced availability of support for learning assistant time and mainstream teachers understanding of disability. Sensory and outdoor space were also a priority on one response. Another response mentioned improved opportunities for life-skills development.

Finally one group of parents discussed their view that it would be good to have a wider range of 'extra-curricular' activities in one setting, including more residential trips and excursions.

These views will inform our ASN improvement priority which covers wider themes for improvement and will be considered in more detail in work with specific settings.

# New Planned Actions

**Duty 1:** Improve the physical environment of educational establishments to enable better access to education and associated services.

**National Priorities:** Inclusion and Equality

**QI:** HGIOS 1.1, 1.2, 1.5, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3

<b>Actions</b> (What we will do to achieve this improvement)	<b>Outcome</b> (What the improvement will be for children and young people)	<b>Success Indicator</b> (How we will measure a successful outcome)	<b>How Are We Doing?</b>	<b>What Next?</b>
Educational establishments will keep good information about their pupils with a disability and act on it.	Accessibility Strategy process and systems will be clear for all, taking account of the wide and varied range of disabilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensory</li> <li>• ASD/sensory/communication processing – appropriate signage including AAC, visual objects of reference.</li> <li>• Physical and motor.</li> <li>• And others – see list from guidance (please note there may be other disabilities/ASN not on the list).</li> </ul>	All children and young people with a disability or ASN will be able to access any part of the school that they need to. Access will also be possible for a parent/carer with a disability or ASN who is visiting the school about their child.  All new builds and refurbishments will meet the Equality Act standards and beyond if appropriate to meet the specific needs of children and young people with a disability or ASN.		
Areas of physical access are audited using an environmental audit based on individual needs and any requirements resulting are put in place: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Car parks.</li> <li>• Entrances.</li> <li>• Reception.</li> <li>• Toilets for visitors.</li> <li>• Anywhere access is required.</li> </ul>	The specific needs of children/young people will be met in time for them starting in a setting wherever possible, so that they are not disadvantaged.	All information is shared so that required adaptations are enabled quickly.		

<p>Educational establishments will identify suitable areas within their learning environment to support learners with sensory needs. They should work in partnership with appropriate agencies to do this.</p>	<p>Educational establishments adapt learning environment appropriately to take account of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASD</li> <li>• Sensory</li> <li>• HWB</li> </ul>	<p>Children/young people will access learning in their local educational establishment.</p> <p>All educational establishments understand process to request support for adaptation.</p>		
<p>Educational establishments will use the Right to Speak resource to ensure appropriate communication environments are in place for all learners.</p>	<p>All children/young people who require communication support are fully engaged in their learning.</p>	<p>All children have an appropriate means of communication.</p> <p>Visual environment is appropriate to meet learner's needs.</p> <p>Communication profiles are developed and consistently updated.</p>		
<p>Staff training will be provided to ensure that all Disability processes and procedures are known and followed in relation to the physical environment. Partnerships across the regional improvement collaborative and validated self-evaluation across settings will support improvements.</p>	<p>Children/young people with a disability or ASN will have their needs met quickly and sympathetically by well trained, knowledgeable staff. Information will be given in good time to support successful transitions.</p>	<p>All children with a disability/ ASN can access the physical environment of the school</p> <p>Attendance records.</p> <p>Knowledgeable staff.</p>		

**Duty 2:** Children and young people with additional support needs or disability, have improved attainment and achievement.

<b>Actions</b> (What we will do to achieve this improvement)	<b>Outcome</b> (What the improvement will be for children and young people)	<b>Success Indicator</b> (How we will measure a successful outcome)	<b>How Are We Doing?</b>	<b>What Next?</b>
<p>All children/young people are included in decisions about their learning and what they need to support them to learn.</p>	<p>Children/young people are fully involved in their own learning, planning and review.</p>	<p>Evidence that children’s views are recorded and acted upon:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In meetings.</li> <li>• On learner’s plans.</li> <li>• In learning conversations.</li> <li>• Within the Wellbeing App.</li> <li>• Increased use of Talking Mats and other AAC approaches.</li> </ul>		
<p>Children’s and young people’s attainment and achievement are improved through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to staff, particularly support staff, with appropriate knowledge of additional support needs.</li> <li>• Access to an appropriate curriculum.</li> </ul> <p>Supported by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to an appropriate physical environment.</li> <li>• Access to services.</li> <li>• Access to resource such as AAC and Technology.</li> </ul>	<p>All children are assessed and know what resources, equipment, technology will support their learning and are confident in their use.</p> <p>Tracking and monitoring evidence progress within and across levels for children and young people who have additional support needs.</p>	<p>All staff are confident that they can meet the needs of all young people in their educational establishment, including mainstream settings.</p>		

**Duty 3:** Improve communication with children and young people who have a disability or additional support need in relation to the provision of information in appropriate alternative formats, taking account of any support need preferences expressed by them or their parents.

**National Priorities:** Leadership and Management/Learning Provision/Success Achievements

**QI:** HGIOS 1.1, 1.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3

<b>Actions</b> (What we will do to achieve this improvement)	<b>Outcome</b> (What the improvement will be for children and young people)	<b>Success Indicator</b> (How we will measure a successful outcome)	<b>How Are We Doing?</b>	<b>What Next?</b>
Improve practice in communication with children about their learning through all being aware of and being able to use the best means from a range of practice, skills and tools that can facilitate this.	All children and young people will learn, succeed and achieve well using the best formats for this at the same time as their peers through being fully engaged and participating in learning discussion.	Children and young people are at the centre of all communication with them, their parents and staff. In partnership this leads to improved accessibility around physical environment, curriculum access and communication: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child plan in appropriate format.</li> </ul>		
Educational establishments will use an audit tool to involve stakeholders in identifying and improving communication with all.	Feedback from the audit will result in improved communication for/with all where the child/young person is at the centre.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital formats.</li> <li>• ICT.</li> <li>• Presentation formats.</li> <li>• Attendance at meetings/ reviews.</li> <li>• Makaton signing.</li> <li>• Visual timetables.</li> <li>• Symbolised environment.</li> <li>• AAC signage.</li> <li>• School leaflets and websites.</li> </ul>		
Identify and support the best means of communication with all children, parents and staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children and young people can use the best means of communication with their teacher, in class and homework.</li> <li>• Email and social media are used appropriately and to best advantage.</li> </ul>	Children/young people with a disability have their accessibility needs appropriately addressed using the best means of communication: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GLOW is used in educational establishments by all to develop creative learning.</li> <li>• Digital learning, including digital exams is identified and used by children and young people who will benefit from this.</li> <li>• ICT technologies, both hardware and software is used by all who will benefit from it.</li> </ul>	All children and young people develop creative learning skills using innovative digital technologies.  Increased evidence in establishments of digital technologies being used by children/young people.		

**Duty 4:** Children/young people have successful transitions between placements and Adult Services.

**National Priorities:** Leadership and Management/Learning Provision/Success Achievements

**QI:** HGIOS 1.1, 1.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3

<b>Actions</b> (What we will do to achieve this improvement)	<b>Outcome</b> (What the improvement will be for children and young people)	<b>Success Indicator</b> (How we will measure a successful outcome)	<b>How Are We Doing?</b>	<b>What Next?</b>
High quality information is available, including children/young people’s voice, preferred communication styles and physical and sensory needs.  The named person is able to access appropriate support from other agencies when required.	Children and families will experience successful transitions.	All named persons are confident in the process to access agencies, including the new transitions planning forum, and are familiar with the variety of supports available.		





### Accessibility Strategy

	Date	Lead Officer(s)
<b>Produced</b>	June 2016	Bryony Monaghan, Service Manager
<b>Updated</b>	June 2019	Bryony Monaghan, Service Manager
<b>Review</b>	June 2022	

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