

Accessibility Plan 2020- 2023

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1. Context

- 1.1 An Accessibility Plan ensures that long-term planning meets the requirements of sections 1 to 3 of the Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) (Scotland) Act 2002.
- 1.2 The Plan encompasses the vision for Aberdeen: 'a place where all people can prosper' and the values and objectives stated in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan
- 1.3 The Council has a range of documents to support improvement planning and decision making, this Plan should not be considered in isolation. The Accessibility Plan aims to pull improvement activity together into one high level accessible document which can be used to support self-evaluation and planning for improvement.
- 1.4 This Accessibility Plan will ensure that the Council continues to evaluate and focus on:
 - enabling and supporting disabled pupils to access the curriculum
 - improving the accessibility of our school buildings
 - improving communication with pupils and parents and carers

2. Disability Definition

- 2.1 The Equality Act 2010: defines those who are disabled to have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities. This includes:
 - Physical, including sensory impairment
 - Mental impairment, including learning difficulties
 - Impairments as a result of mental health issue, must have substantial, long term impact on day to day, but need not be recognised through NHS
 - Cancer, HIV infection, Multiple Sclerosis
 - Severe disfigurement
 - Progressive conditions eg muscular dystrophy
- 2.2 This may include conditions like dyslexia; autistic spectrum condition; speech and language impairment; social, emotional needs and disabilities which are non-visible if they are deemed to be substantial and have a long-term impact.

3. Key Legislation and Guidance

- 3.1 The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004: provides the legal framework for identifying and addressing the additional support needs of children and young people who face a barrier, or barriers, to learning including those who are disabled. The framework guides the provision of appropriate support to help them work towards achieving their full potential.
- 3.2 The Children and Young People Scotland Act 2014 guides careful consideration of effective universal and targeted support following an assessment of wellbeing. The

legislation recognises that many children require support from a range of different agencies.

- 3.3 The Equality Act 2010 provides protection from discrimination, harassment and victimisation based on a range of protected characteristics including disability. The Act sets out duties in relation to disabled pupils including the duty to make reasonable adjustments to avoid putting disabled pupils at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to non-disabled pupils.
- 3.3 The United Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) will soon be incorporated into Scots Law. A recent [self-evaluation](#) of the extent to which Aberdeen City Council upholds and promotes children's rights and associated Child Friendly City Plan has proved a key source of information in developing this Plan.

“Education must develop every child’s personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child’s respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.” [UNCRC, Article 29](#)

4. The self-evaluation process

- 4.1 In addition to a review of legislation and guidance many sources of evidence enabled the initial drafting of this Accessibility Plan. Sources included:
- Self-evaluation against the UNCRC
 - Themes identified from the Additional Support for Learning Review
 - Data sets held by the Supporting Learners workstream
 - Quality Improvement data from recent school visits
 - School inspection reports
 - Attainment data for children registered as disabled
 - Population needs assessments
 - Attainment data
 - Tribunal data
 - Complaints
 - Pupil surveys including surveys of wellbeing and children's rights
 - Data held by Corporate Landlord
- 4.2 Data was holistically considered to help start to determine our position in regard to the three areas. This enabled a series of themes to be drawn from the data for further exploration during a period of engagement. This approach ensured that we effectively balanced quantitative and qualitative data sets and took a rounded view of our current state to help identify action for inclusion in the Accessibility Plan.

5. Our findings

- 5.1 **Is the curriculum accessible for all?**
Data from learners, parents and quality improvement visits identifies that the curriculum is accessible for most, but further efforts are required to ensure that it is

accessible to a minority of our learners. In almost all cases the children and young people most at risk of not having an accessible curriculum have an individual plan (Individual Education Plan or Child's Plan). In some cases, planning does not sufficiently include the learner and isn't sufficiently differentiated. The Supporting Learners workstream will lead on developing improved consistency in this area.

- 5.2 In the best cases, school staff engage learners in the planning process by encouraging pupils to consider themselves as a learner and asking the learner to identify (or show) interventions or approaches that work well for them. They also work with parents, carers and partners to identify and address accessibility needs. This is the standard expected across the City and will be a key focus of Quality Improvement visits over session 2020/2021.
- 5.3 The use of accessible technology such as Texthelp and Google tools is recognised as a strength. These enable learners to personalise their support and access the curriculum as independently as possible. This resource should continue to be promoted.
- 5.4 Effective curriculum design places the needs of learners at the centre of development with high aspirations and flexible learning pathways. Although there is some evidence of flexibility not being in place in a few cases, attainment measures for children with additional support needs in Aberdeen City are higher than both the virtual comparator and national average. The Quality Improvement Team will work with colleagues in Data and Insights to ensure that they are able to track progress more easily through the use of Power BI.
- 5.5 Aberdeen City's four-year average positive destination figure is 90.68% and 84.88% for young people with additional support needs. The figure sits below the virtual comparator (88.54%) and national average (89.17%) and highlights a need to review post school transitions. This will be aligned to the work of the LOIP to ensure maximum reach.
- 5.6 The views of parents/carers were sought initially in the context of The National Parent Forum for Scotland's (NPFS) consultation around the national review of Additional Support for Learning. All parents who participated voiced the desire for mandatory professional learning regarding additional support needs. The need for high quality professional learning also came through surveys previously reported to this Committee through the Supporting Learners Programme and this is being progressed at pace with a particular focus on trauma informed approaches. A suite of professional learning has been developed by a range of partners (including CAHMS).
- 5.7 Staff are positive about the changes to the professional learning offer and uptake to the digital offer have been good. There is widespread agreement from all stakeholders that there requires to be access to professional learning at different

levels and this will continue to be addressed through the Supporting Learners Programme.

- 5.8 Access to the curriculum is impacted when learners are not in school. The total number of primary school exclusions is at a three year low. Exclusion levels across secondary schools vary significantly and a reduction is being supported through our Quality Improvement approaches, our Supporting Learners programme and a review of our Exclusion Policy and guidance. There is a need to ensure that staff have a solid understanding of [Education \(Additional Support for Learning\) \(Scotland\) Act \(2004\)](#) and the [Equality Act 2010](#) and this will be built into our professional learning calendar.
- 5.9 Parents made reference to a lack of personalised support or range of extracurricular activities of interest to all children. While it is not possible to provide activities to represent all interests, there is evidence that better promotion and communication could help children and young people access a wider range of extra-curricular activities.
- 5.10 The [Independent Children's Rights Impact Assessment on the response to COVID-19 in Scotland](#) indicates that many children and young people with additional support needs have been unable to access adequate additional support for learning or teaching either in school or remotely. Feedback from parents across Aberdeen City is mixed with 81% reporting very good support whilst others feeling that digital support was less impactful with 6% wanting another form of learning, with similar responses from learners. The needs and supports available to children over the next few months will be carefully monitored through live data monitoring to inform the shaping of services around the needs of children with additional support needs.
- 5.11 Some groups of learners with additional support will be impacted in the medium to long-term by the pandemic. Our curriculum needs to respond flexibly to the changing needs of our learners in the current context. Given this, our 2020-2021 quality improvement visits will seek to understand and support those impacted by COVID-19.
- 5.12 Resource is currently shaped around pre-defined categories of children and young people. This is limiting flexibility and the Supporting Learners Programme is looking at how best to develop a system which can analyse and predict trends to anticipate demand. This will help shape services and resource around the needs of learners.
- 5.13 Services supporting children with disabilities and children and young people often place restrictions on accessing services (such as the need for an official diagnosis) and this should be reviewed urgently. Parents highlighted this as a significant concern and this will be addressed through the Supporting Learners programme.
- 5.14 Resource allocated across an Associated Schools Group can be highly effective although the collaboration and creativity required to allocate resource for maximum impact is not consistent. There is a need to share best practice in this area.

6. Can everyone access the physical environment?

- 6.1 Aberdeen City Council has invested heavily in the school estate over recent years and are committed to building four new schools. All new school buildings are fully accessible and offer a level of flexibility.
- 6.2 34 schools (58%) are graded as A or B for suitability and some have specialist resources. The remaining 25 buildings are graded as “C – Poor”. Many of these are the oldest buildings in the estate, including nine Victorian buildings, the design and construction make it challenging to improve their suitability, often because they cannot easily be made fully accessible for those with limited mobility.
- 6.3 Parents requested that consideration be given to widening our understanding of disability access. This should include an audit of school buildings looking at access for all disabilities not just physical disabilities and consideration of how needs can be met. This must include assessing spaces from a sensory (autistic) perspective and for those with sensory impairments by or with input from specialist services including, for example NHS. This approach will help identify how best to support our school building programme but also give an indication of how best to support when operating in a building with limited flexibility.
- 6.4 Learners identified that signage in school could be improved by being at an appropriate height and labelled inclusively. This will be fed into the review of the School Estate.
- 6.5 Accessibility will be a key driver in the upcoming review on the School Estate with delivery through the Condition and Suitability Programme.

7. Does everyone have access to information in a timely manner which takes account of diversity and meets their communication needs?

- 7.1 The recent local Child Friendly Cities Evaluation Report highlights key strengths including well-established participatory approaches and groups which enable children and young people to influence decision-making. It noted further work being required to ensure greater opportunities to influence a wider range of decisions that directly affect the lives of learners, personally and at a city-wide level. This ability to influence decision making will be taken forward through the Child Friendly Cities Action Plan.
- 7.2 Most staff take positive and proactive steps to reduce communication barriers to the curriculum. 81% of our children and young people advised that information was easy to understand. Work is required to ensure that the 19% who reported that it wasn't easily understood are effectively catered for.

- 7.3 Further consideration and efforts need to be undertaken to ensure that communications from all services including health, justice, social services are accessible, easy-to-understand and child friendly. The planned communication plan will help to co-ordinate messaging from across the council and wider partnership and enable more formal measurement of impact. This again will be progressed in partnership with Community Planning Partners as we progress our Child Friendly City Plan.
- 7.4 Work is underway to increase the accessibility of information to families and staff, particularly around process and services to meet learners' needs. It is hoped that we can build on the digital developments made over the last few months to further enhance our Digital Hubs.

8. Review and Evaluation

- 8.1 The Implementation of this Plan will be monitored and reported to Committee through the Supporting Learners Programme.
- 8.2 Formal review of this Plan will take place every three years to ensure that we maintain a focus on improving outcomes for those who are disabled.

Improve access to the curriculum:

What are our goals?	What will this achieve?	When will we do this by?	Who will make sure this happens?	How will we know our progress?
Improve awareness of legislation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disability and Equality ▪ Additional support needs legislation ▪ Exclusion 	Improve consistency of practice and build confidence and knowledge base of staff	June 2021	Building Capacity Team Supporting Learners Workstream	Attendance at professional learning and feedback Reduction in the number of associated complaints Reduction in the number of ASN Tribunal references Reduction in levels of exclusion
Learners use digital technology independently by increasing the provision of technology and use of accessible tools	Improve accessibility of the curriculum	Dec 2022	Raising Attainment Workstream Senior Leadership Teams	Increase in the provision of technology Quality Improvement Visits
Staff have an appropriate understanding of additional support needs of disabled pupils through a suite of professional learning opportunities at different levels	Increased confidence and knowledge base of a range of additional support needs.	Dec 2022	Supporting Learners Programme Building Capacity Workstream	Feedback from Professional Learning Programme Quality of planning and practice
Improve knowledge of and improve access to extra curricular activities	Improved access and uptake of activities outwith the school day	December 2023	Supporting Learners Workstream	Learner feedback Feedback from parents and carers

Learners are fully involved in their own learning, planning and review.	More impactful plans	June 2021	School teams	Plans for learners
Improved transition planning for children with a disability	Improved outcomes and destinations (Link with Economic Rescue Plan)	Dec 2023	Senior Leadership Team Skills Development Scotland	Positive destination data Learner feedback
Curriculum personalised to meet the needs of individual learners including the provision of Locality Hubs with a particular focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Those with a disability Those impacted adversely by COVID-19 	Reduction in exclusion of learners with a disability Increase in attainment Increase in the overall time learners access education	June 2023	Senior Leadership Teams Supporting Learners Workstream Educational Psychology	Reduction in exclusion Increase in engagement

Improve access to the physical environment:				
What are our goals?	What will this achieve?	When will we do this by?	Who will make sure this happens?	How will we know our progress?
Augmentative and alternative signage at learner appropriate height Toilets signposted as accessible	Inclusion of those with disabilities, hidden and visible	June 2023	School support managers Senior Leadership Teams Corporate Landlord	Signage in buildings compliant
Involve children, parents, specialists and services in the development of the school estate strategy	Meet statutory duties, anticipate need and look forward to what is best practice	June 2021	Corporate Landlord Children and Family Services	School estate strategy in place

Provide guidance on how to meet a range of needs (particularly sensory needs) when environments are not as flexible	Sensory needs being better met	June 2022	Supporting Learners Workstream	Individual plans for children and young people
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Improve communication and access to school information:				
What are our goals?	What will this achieve?	When will we do this by?	Who will make sure this happens?	How will we know our progress?
Information regarding additional support need is meaningful, relevant and readily available in variety of formats or language	Learners use the form of communication which suits. Everyone can access and understand information	Dec 2023	Senior Leadership Team Children and Family Services Child Friendly City Project group	Parents and carers/children and young people and staff report improvement in the quality of information being shared
Establishment of Digital Hub as a one stop shop for all information for all stakeholders	Improve staff awareness of digital technology and accessibility for all	June 2022	Supporting Learners Workstream Digital Depute	Hit to the Digital Hub Quality Improvement visits
Information gathered and shared directly ASN Parent forum	Partnership with parents to share and inform practice Appropriate format agreed –to include virtual meetings	Dec 2022	Children and Family Services	Feedback from participants