



Access and Inclusion Service Accessibility Strategy

2023 - 26

This document is available in Welsh
Mae'r ddogfen yma ar gael yn y Gymraeg



CYFLAWNI **TEGWCH** A **RHAGORIAETH**
MEWN **ADDYSG** A **GWELL LLES** I BAWB

EQUITY AND **EXCELLENCE** IN **EDUCATION**
AND **ENHANCED WELLBEING** FOR ALL



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

Foreword

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council values all pupils equally and aims to ensure that appropriate provision is made to meet the diverse needs of all its children and young people.

The Council is committed to meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 as articulated in its Education and Corporate policies.

This accessibility strategy and subsequent guidance will assist schools and the Council to fulfil their legal duties and enhance inclusive practices.

SECTION 1: The Strategy and Context

Introduction

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council values all pupils equally and aims to ensure that appropriate provision is made to meet the diverse needs of all its children and young people.

Equal opportunity principles apply to everything the Council does – from recruitment and selection to service delivery. To this end, we promote best practice and have specific policies that apply across the board to all services. Our objective is to ensure that everyone, regardless of age, disability, ethnic origin, gender, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, gender reassignment and sexual orientation is treated equally.

Equality of opportunity, including access and inclusion for all, will continue to underpin our policy development and service delivery.

Vision

Our vision is for all children and young people in Rhondda Cynon Taf regardless of disability to have access to an inclusive education that enables them to achieve the very best possible outcomes of which they are capable, to realise their aspirations and to participate fully as equal citizens in our wider society.

Duties

Under the Equality Act 2010, Rhondda Cynon Taf must have reference to the Public Sector Equality Duty this legislation places on public bodies.

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires all public authorities to have regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity.
- Foster good relations.

The Equality Act 2010 enhances the protection against discrimination, victimisation and harassment that was in place under previous legislation by ensuring that certain protected characteristics now have equal protection to those already in place.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 places a duty on the local authority/bodies responsible for schools/educational settings not to treat pupils with a disability less favourably than those who are not disabled and to undertake reasonable steps to avoid putting pupils with a disability at a substantial disadvantage compared to pupils who do not have a disability.

In fulfilling these duties, local authorities and schools/educational settings are under a duty to prepare Accessibility Strategies and Plans respectively.

The **ALN Code (Wales) 2021** promotes inclusive education and makes reference to how the Equality Act 2010 supports the Code.

Reference is also made in the Code to the duties placed on local authorities to have regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and how the Social Model of Disability, a model which focuses upon removing barriers to equality, would support local authorities in discharging their duties.

More information on the legislative context can be found in Appendix 1 of the strategy.

Strategic Direction

This Accessibility Strategy works alongside Rhondda Cynon Taf's Corporate Plan 'Making a Difference' 2020-2024. It also supports the mission of the Education and Inclusion Services Directorate Strategic Plan 2021-2024 **'To deliver equity and excellence in Education and enhanced well-being for all'** and the five strategic priorities of the plan:

- Developing a highly skilled educational workforce and excellent leadership at all levels.
- Supporting educational settings to deliver a transformational curriculum, high quality teaching and learning and improved outcomes for all.
- Ensuring equity and support for vulnerable learners and their families.
- Enhancing the well-being of our learners and the workforce.
- Delivering 21st Century learning environments and innovative services for our learners and communities.

The Strategy will be underpinned by the four core values in line with the overarching Directorate Strategic Plan:

- Collaboration
- Aspiration
- Inclusion
- Innovation

Key Aims of the Accessibility Strategy

The Accessibility Strategy sets out the local authority's objectives to increase access to education for children and young people with disabilities in the educational settings for which it is responsible.

Definition of Disability

Under the Equality Act 2010, a person is disabled if they have *'a physical or mental impairment that has substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to do normal day to day activities'*.

'Substantial' means 'more than minor or trivial'. Substantial adverse effects can be determined by looking at the effects on a person with the impairment, comparing those to a person without the impairment, to judge if the difference between the two is more than minor or trivial. Guidance from the 'Office for Disability Issues' illustrates the factors which might reasonably be regarded as having a substantial adverse effect on normal day to day activities.

'Long term' means the impairment has existed for at least 12 months or is likely to do so.

'Normal day to day activities' could be determined by reference to the illustrative, non-exhaustive list of factors in pages 47 to 51 of the statutory guidance relating to the Equality Act 2010. (Study and education related activities are included in the meaning of 'day to day' activities).

This broad definition covers physical disabilities, sensory impairments, such as those affecting sight or hearing, learning disabilities and some specified medical conditions.

The ALN Code (Wales) 2021 sets out a definition of additional learning needs:

(1) A person has additional learning needs if he or she has a learning difficulty or disability (whether the learning difficulty or disability arises from a medical condition or otherwise) which calls for additional learning provision.

(2) A child of compulsory school age or person over that age has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she—

(a) has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or

(b) has a disability for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010 which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities for education or training of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream maintained schools or mainstream institutions in the further education sector.

(3) A child under compulsory school age has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she is or would be if no additional learning provision were made, likely to be within subsection (2) when of compulsory school age.

(4) A person does not have a learning difficulty or disability solely because the language (or form of language) in which he or she is or will be taught is different from a language (or form of language) which is or has been used at home.

Children and young people with a medical or physical disability do not necessarily have an additional learning need (ALN), but there is a significant overlap between children and young people with a disability and those with an ALN.

Rhondda Cynon Taf's Accessibility Strategy will focus upon the following key priorities:

1. Ensure compliance of the Local Authority and all educational settings for which it is responsible with the requirements of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.
2. Maximise inclusion and an inclusive ethos for all children and young people in their educational setting.
3. Increase the extent to which children and young people with a disability can participate in the school's curriculum, including the wider enrichment curriculum (e.g. after school activities, school visits, sporting / leisure events).
4. Improve the physical environment of educational settings to increase the extent to which children and young people with a disability can fully access education and other facilities and services provided by the setting.
5. Improve the delivery of information, advice and guidance to all children and young people with a disability and their families.

The above priorities will be delivered through a combination of actions, individual service plans, linking to the Education and Inclusion Services Strategic Plan and the council's Corporate Plan.

A range of guidance, support and professional learning regarding inclusive practice is available via the Education Directorate to build the capacity of educational settings to enable consistent, inclusive and consistent practice across educational settings in Rhondda Cynon Taf, for example the Access and Inclusion Graduated Response guidance and the Access and Inclusion Professional Learning Offer. Bespoke advice / training can be provided on request.

Priority 1: Ensure compliance of the Local Authority and all educational settings for which it is responsible with the requirements of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Everyone working in and alongside all educational settings should be aware of the Equality Act and its implications for children and young people, their families and the wider community and aware of their duties under the Act.

The local authority will:

- Provide and signpost training on the Equality Act, diversity and disability for educational settings.
- Ensure that educational settings complete the Accessibility Audit Tool to support them in assessing their compliance with the relevant legislation
- Undertake audits of school accessibility plans as part of the Council's audit cycle to ensure compliance with relevant legislation

Schools will:

- Ensure all staff understand their duties in relation to the Equality Act 2010 and other associated legislation – e.g. ALNET Act 2018 & ALN Code 2021.
- Write an Accessibility Plan in collaboration with stakeholders and publish on the school website in a range of accessible formats.
- Ensure that progress against the Accessibility Plan is reviewed by the Governing Body on an annual basis.

Priority 2: Maximise inclusion and an inclusive ethos for all children and young people in their educational setting

The local authority is committed to ensuring that all educational settings promote inclusion and a positive inclusive ethos so that all children and young people with a disability and their families have equity of opportunity and feel able to make a valuable contribution to their educational community and beyond.

The local authority will:

- Ensure that educational settings complete the Accessibility Audit Tool to support them in assessing their inclusivity
- Provide guidance, support and training on inclusive practice, including access to specialist services available through Access and Inclusion
- Listen to views of children and young people with disabilities and their parents/carers in relation to inclusion
- Listen to views of practitioners regarding good practice and identified barriers to inclusive practice
- Undertake a review of the use of Enhanced Capacity Funding to enhance inclusive practice
- Review relevant local authority data – e.g. exclusion data, bullying returns, elective home education data, to identify and address any potential themes relating to disability discrimination

Schools will:

- Ensure that all children and young people with a disability have a voice and are included in pupil forums
- Arrange personalised and creative support so that all children and young people can access all activities – e.g. school visits, school clubs.
- Utilise their budget effectively, including ECF, to ensure all children and young people can be included in all activities / events.
- Seek feedback from parents / carers on their views regarding inclusive practice at the setting
- Ensure clear processes are in place to deal effectively with and overcome incidents of discrimination and bullying
- Ensure effective arrangements are in place to support transition from setting to setting for children and young people with a disability

Priority 3: Increase the extent to which disabled children and young people can participate in the school's curriculum, including the wider enrichment curriculum

Ensuring children and young people with SEND can access the curriculum is an essential element of high-quality provision. It enables them to make good progress and achieve outcomes that prepare them well for adulthood. The curriculum covers not only all classroom teaching and learning but wider aspects such as participation in after school and extended school activities or trips and visits. It also includes formal and informal tests, assessments and examinations. Schools and educational settings are responsible for providing a broad, balanced and inclusive curriculum for all children and young people.

The local authority will:

- Provide access to support and advice for ALNCoS to enhance inclusive approaches and share good practice and build capacity of all staff to support children and young people with disabilities
- Provide advice, guidance, resource and professional learning in relation to person-centred practice and individual development plans
- Provide advice, support and consultation around the graduated response to meeting ALN via the Learner Support Service and Educational Psychology Service.
- Provide advice, support and consultation around supporting the needs of pupils with a physical / medical / sensory need via the Learner Support Service
- Implement Quality Assurance (QA) processes in relation to person-centred practice, provision mapping and Individual Development Plans to ensure high quality provision for children and young people with Additional Learning Needs (ALN).
- Review the use of delegated Enhanced Capacity Funding (ECF) to schools in providing enhanced support for curriculum access for learners with ALN and/or disabilities.
- Provide technological support to enable access to the curriculum where the cost is greater than £500.
- For children with access needs known to the Access and Inclusion Service who are transferring schools, ensure Council officers will begin to support the school in preparing for their admission in the Spring Term, prior to admission. A similar approach will be taken to provide for pupils starting school for the first time.
- Provide specialist provision for young people whose complexity of need is unable to be met in mainstream provision.

Schools will:

- Provide a broad balanced curriculum for all pupils, ensuring that it is appropriately differentiated to ensure that all children and young people with ALN and/or disabilities can take part in learning activities fully and effectively alongside their peers.

- Identify young people who face barriers to learning and respond to individual learners' requirements for curriculum access in order to remove these barriers to learning through appropriate planning.
- Ensure the school takes a person-centred approach to adapting the curriculum for children and young people with a disability, ensuring that children and young people have a voice and involving them and their parents / carers in the review of IDPs and other accessibility plans regarding curriculum access.
- Ensure effective provision mapping for all young people with ALN, which includes a variety of strategies, interventions and approaches appropriate to a range of learning styles to ensure that they respond to the diverse range of individual needs within the school community.
- Implement a planned professional development programme to ensure that staff are trained in a range of strategies, interventions and approaches that enables them to plan / implement appropriate additional learning provision (ALP) for children and young people with ALN and/or a disability.
- Ensure that staff are aware of the needs of young people with ALN/disabilities by means of a one page / About Me profile.
- Use a range of resources and auxiliary aids to ensure children and young people can be included in the curriculum.
- Provide technological support to enable access to the curriculum where the cost is less than £500.
- Consider the needs of individual pupils prior to admission and, where necessary, plan in partnership with other agencies to meet these needs.
- Implement appropriate arrangements for access to special examination arrangements.

Priority 4: Improve the physical environment of educational settings to increase the extent to which children and young people with a disability can fully access education and other facilities and services provided by the setting

Education providers have a duty to make 'reasonable adjustments' to make sure children and young people with disabilities are not discriminated against (Equality Act, 2010). The local authority and schools are committed to improving the physical environment of schools to increase the extent to which pupils with a disability can access education alongside their peers.

This may involve, for example, the creation of safe spaces, calming areas, and individual workstations, as well as providing a suitable physical environment for children and young people with disabilities or sensory needs.

Improvements to physical access might include the following:

- Children and young people with physical disabilities: Ramps, handrails, widened doorways, electromagnetic doors, adapted toilets and washing facilities, emergency evacuation routes, physical access to outside areas and specialist curriculum areas.

- Deaf children and young people or those with vision impairment : Adjustable lighting, blinds, interior and exterior surfaces, induction loops, well designed room acoustics, signage and way-finding systems.

All new school buildings have to comply with current building regulations in relation to accessibility, although further adaptations may be required to meet the needs of specific children and young people.

The responsibility for funding minor adaptations, accessibility works and reasonable adjustments (including equipment and aids) is covered under the SLA between the School and the LEA. Where major works are likely to be required, local authority-maintained schools / registered education providers can submit a business case request additional funding as part of the wider Schools Capital programme.

The local authority will:

- Provide a self-audit tool kit for schools to use.
- Ensure all new build/extension projects completed on schools are designed and built in accordance with DfE guidance/standards and Building Regulations (Part M), regarding accessibility.
- Review accessibility audits undertaken by schools on an ongoing basis and provide support and challenge and appropriate advice where necessary.
- Support schools by providing access to advice on the graduated response to need.
- Assess the suitability of all schools' buildings as part of ongoing strategic capital investment planning and Education Directorate Business Planning.
- Consider improvements to physical accessibility when refurbishment of school buildings is being undertaken through the Capital Programme and 21st Century Schools Programme.
- Provide direct advice and consultation to schools in relation to planning for improvements to the physical environment.
- Audit welfare facilities to ensure accessible toilets, changing and hygiene rooms are 'readily' available to be used for the purpose to support pupils, staff and visitors.
- Work collaboratively with schools to ensure smooth transition arrangements for children and young people starting school for the first time and those moving to other schools/colleges.

Schools will:

- Carry out the Accessibility Audit toolkit to inform their accessibility action plan.
- Ensure that reasonable adjustments are made so that young people with ALN/disabilities are able to access the curriculum and wider school site, e.g. schools should seek to re-organise teaching spaces and timetable wherever possible if some teaching rooms are inaccessible to individual pupils, visual and auditory requirements need to be implemented in line with specialist advice.
- Ensure the physical environment is accessible. This includes the use of physical space to reduce noise and distractions, ensuring lighting is appropriate and providing quiet spaces for time out.

- Use suitable resources to meet a child/young person's individual needs. This may include auxiliary aids, braille and visual timetables.
- Ensure that staff facilities do not substantially disadvantage a disabled employee compared to a non-disabled person. Therefore, reasonable adjustments need to be made in these situations.
- Ensure, when admitting a disabled pupil that all planning is done well in advance. Schools should carefully consider the needs of individual pupils and the works required and communicate with the Access and Inclusion Service and Integrated Transport Unit about any changes required.
- Seek to ensure that the main entrance, administration area, hall and visitor toilet facilities are accessible to disabled visitors, e.g. for external users and parents' evenings in order to comply with the requirements of the current Disability and Equality legislation.
- Revise their emergency evacuation procedures to consider the needs of disabled pupils or disabled visitors. Advice on procedures is available from the Access and Inclusion service.
- Ensure guidance on the graduated response to meeting need is followed, with respects to adaptations to the environment and learning resources.
- Ensure training is made available to governors and school staff to raise awareness of responsibilities.

Further advice and information on buildings works and funding sources can be obtained from the Corporate Estates Department.

Priority 5: Improve the delivery of information, advice and guidance to all children and young people with a disability and their families.

Schools and other education providers have a responsibility to provide accessible information to parents and pupils to ensure that children and young people with a disability are not disadvantaged. Information provided should be clear and free of jargon. Where appropriate, particularly for children and young people or parents who are deaf or have a visual impairment, information may need to be made available through alternative methods and formats.

The local authority will:

- Adhere to and make available the 'see it right clear' print guidelines.
- Provide advice to schools around providing information in different formats to young people with sensory needs.
- Ensure information about services available for children and young people with disabilities aged 0-25 and their parents / carers, is up to date and easily accessible on the council website and other social media platforms.
- Implement the annual Family Engagement Plan to engage with families and children and young people to disseminate information and to seek views on accessibility and equality in education settings across the local authority.
- Provide guidance for schools in meeting the needs of children and young people with a disability / ALN through the Graduated Response guidance.

- Involve children, young people and parents/carers in the development and review of local strategies.
- Provide accessible information for children and young people with ALN and / or disabilities and their parents/carers; where necessary providing interpreters, including sign language interpreters, and information in other formats including braille and large font.
- Continue to commission SNAP Cymru, independent parent partnership, to provide information, support and advice to children and young people with disabilities and their parents / carers with matters relating to disability and ALN, including advocacy and dispute resolution.

Schools will:

- Write an Accessibility Plan and publish it on their school website.
- Request support and advice from the Learner Support Service sensory team around alternative formats to meet the ALN of sensory learners.
- Use a one page profile to ensure staff are aware of the needs of young people in order to provide information in the correct format.
- Review and audit information provision in school to ensure that it is accessible to all.
- Provide accessible information for children and young people with disabilities / impairments and their parents/carers, to meet their individual needs, including braille and large font, where required.
- Use alternative forms of communication with individual children and young people, where required.
- Provide interpreters, including sign language interpreters, where required.
- Use the Access and Inclusion Graduated Response guidance when meeting the needs of children and young people with a disability

Rhondda Cynon Taf Accessibility Plan

This strategy will be supported by an annual local authority action plan. The Education Directorate will consult with a range of stakeholders, including schools, children and young people and their families, and the Accessibility Steering Group to inform the development of the action plan.

School Accessibility Plans

This strategy and the RCTCBC Accessibility Plan Guidance and Model Policy (September 2022) and the Accessibility Audit Toolkit aim to support schools to meet their statutory duty to write and publish their 3-year accessibility plan. Links to these documents can be found in Appendix 2.

Monitoring and Review

The Equality Act 2010 required the local authority to keep its Accessibility Strategy under review during the period to which it relates and to revise it as necessary. Revisions to the strategy and the annual action plan will be informed by:

- Audits of schools' accessibility plans.
- Implementation of 21st Century Schools workstreams.
- Review of schools' completed accessibility audits.
- Audits of expenditure of school budgets.
- Impact of interventions / adaptations on pupil progress.
- Feedback from children and young people and their families.
- Feedback from Improvement Partners.

Appendix 1: Legislative Context

Welsh Government Guidance on preparing an Accessibility Strategy and Accessibility plan [planning-to-increase-access-to-schools-for-disabled-pupils.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#).

ALN Code for Wales 2021 [The Additional Learning Needs Code | GOV.WALES](#)

Supporting learners with healthcare needs 2018 [Supporting learners with healthcare needs | GOV.WALES](#)

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/disability-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>

Appendix 2



Accessibility Plan
Guidance for Schools



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