

North Tyneside SEND Accessibility Strategy 2020-2024



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Overview

The Local Authority is required, under the Equality Act 2010, to have an accessibility strategy in which it promotes access and inclusion for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities at school and in its local community.

All schools must have due regard to this accessibility strategy which will inform their accessibility plan. Accessibility plans will show how, over time, access to an inclusive education for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities will be delivered upon and wherever possible, improved. Schools must publish their accessibility plan with links to their SEN Information report on the Local Offer. Schools are also required to pre-emptively consider accessibility of their site in relation to parents, contractors and other site visitors under their public sector Equality Duty of reasonable adjustment.

Context

In North Tyneside, partners across education, health and care are ambitious for all children and young people. 'Our North Tyneside Plan' sets out the strategic objectives for North Tyneside; it has been developed with the North Tyneside Strategic Partnership (NTSP) and is the key driver for the work of the partnership. The Our North Tyneside Plan focuses on three policy priorities, which are: Our People, Our Places and Our Economy.

The Children and Young People's Plan operates within the 'Our North Tyneside Plan' and sets out the partnership's strategic intent, vision and priorities to improve outcomes in the five areas that children, young people and their families tell us matter most to them:



These 5 Outcomes are inherent in the priorities addressed in our proposed 'Ambition for Education' and 'SEND Inclusion Strategy', delivering on the Children and Young People's vision for:

"Making North Tyneside an even greater place for children and young people to thrive; where all, including those who are vulnerable, disadvantaged or disabled, are ready for school, ready for work and life, cared for and supported."

The 'Ambition for Education' and 'SEND Inclusion' strategies set out the approach that North Tyneside is taking to promote access to education for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, so that they can benefit from educational provision to the same extent that children who do not have a special education need or disability. We believe that improving access to education and educational achievement for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is essential to ensure equality of opportunity, full participation in society, inclusion within mainstream education and access to future education, employment and training opportunities.

1.0 Vision and Objectives for North Tyneside

In North Tyneside we believe that every child should have the opportunity to reach their full potential and that children are best supported to grow and achieve with their own families, accessing their local mainstream school wherever possible. In order to achieve this, we are focussed on collaborative working between schools, partner agencies and the Local Authority.

Identifying and removing barriers to access and participation must take in to account extended services, new ways of working and new approaches to curriculum delivery in and around partnerships with schools, both mainstream and special. Early identification and response to issues arising is paramount, and it is the function of this document to provide an overview of our approach to ensuring our inclusive strategy is championed throughout our services for children and young people.

We are committed to:

- Supporting mainstream schools and settings to lead and develop inclusive approaches to education. This will enable more children and young people with SEND to access mainstream opportunities;
- We will work together with schools and settings to support the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum for all children and young people;
- Through our leadership role we will strengthen existing arrangements and develop new opportunities for working together, ensuring children, young people, young adults and their families are at the heart of developing and planning services;
- Promoting wellbeing and inclusion, so that the right support, services and advice is available and tailored to individual needs;
- Working together with schools and settings to improve the physical environment of schools, particularly by planning improvements to the physical environment with individual pupils or groups in mind; and,
- Working together with schools and settings to improve the quality and delivery of information to SEND pupils, ensuring it is available within a reasonable timeframe.

2.0 Legal Framework

The Equality Act 2010 brought together a range of equality duties and requirements within one piece of legislation and introduced a single general Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) that applies to public bodies, including maintained schools and academies (including free schools) and which extends to all protected characteristics - race, disability, sex, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and gender identity.

In relation to disability, this general 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; and,
- take steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities even where that involves treating disabled people more favourably than other people.

An additional requirement under the Equality Act 2010, introduced in September 2012, is for schools to provide Auxiliary Aids for disabled pupils subject to the Reasonable Adjustment duty. This duty requires schools and Local Authorities to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled pupils are not at a substantial disadvantage. Reasonable adjustments meet the statutory requirements when they act to prevent disabled pupils being placed at a substantial disadvantage and when they enable pupils to participate in education and associated services. Auxiliary Aids includes aids (equipment which helps the disabled person, such as a special chair, adapted text, or special computer equipment or software) and services (something people provide, such as a personal assistance). When deciding if a reasonable adjustment is necessary, schools need to consider the potential impact on disabled pupils in terms of time and effort, inconvenience, indignity and discomfort, loss of opportunity and diminished progress.

The Equality Act 2010 requires the Local Authority and schools to develop and publish an accessibility strategy and accessibility plans which outline how they will improve the accessibility of buildings, access to education and information for disabled pupils over time. Requirements for local authorities to put in place an accessibility strategy for disabled pupils are specified in schedule 10 of the Equality Act – Accessibility for disabled pupils.

Schedule 10 states:

An accessibility strategy is a strategy for, over a prescribed period:

- increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the schools' curriculums;
- improving the physical environment of the schools for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the schools; and,
- improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.

The delivery of information must be:

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

Schools' accessibility plans should also consider access to after school activities and extended school activities if they are based on their school site. There is a requirement for maintained schools, pupil referral units (PRUs), academies and free schools to produce an accessibility plan.

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 and hidden impairments such as dyslexia, autism and speech, language and communication impairments (Equality Act 2010).

Definition of SEND

A child or young person has a special educational need if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for specialist educational provision to be made for him or her (SEND Code of Practice 2014).

3.0 Local Context

Schools and settings

As of November 2020, there are approximately 1827 children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan in North Tyneside and 3795 children and young people with SEN Support (January census).

There are:

- 8 first schools;
- 47 primary schools;
- 4 middle schools;
- 11 secondary and high schools;
- 1 all-through school;
- 1 nursery;
- 6 special schools; and,
- 1 pupil referral unit

Local Offer for CYP and Parents/Carers

The North Tyneside Local Offer is a one stop shop for information, support and local services for children and young people with SEND and their families. It has been developed as a partnership and features a wide range of topics across education, health and social care and signposts to relevant services or activities.

<https://my.northtyneside.gov.uk/category/1243/local-offer-special-educational-needs-and-disabilities-send>

Appendix 1 is a glossary of terms to support in navigating and understanding Special Educational Needs, this is available to access on the local offer.

4.0 Support to Schools and Settings

Our Graduated approach

Special Educational Needs Support (SEN Support) is available in all early year's settings, mainstream schools and further education colleges in North Tyneside. SEN support is delivered via the Graduated Approach.

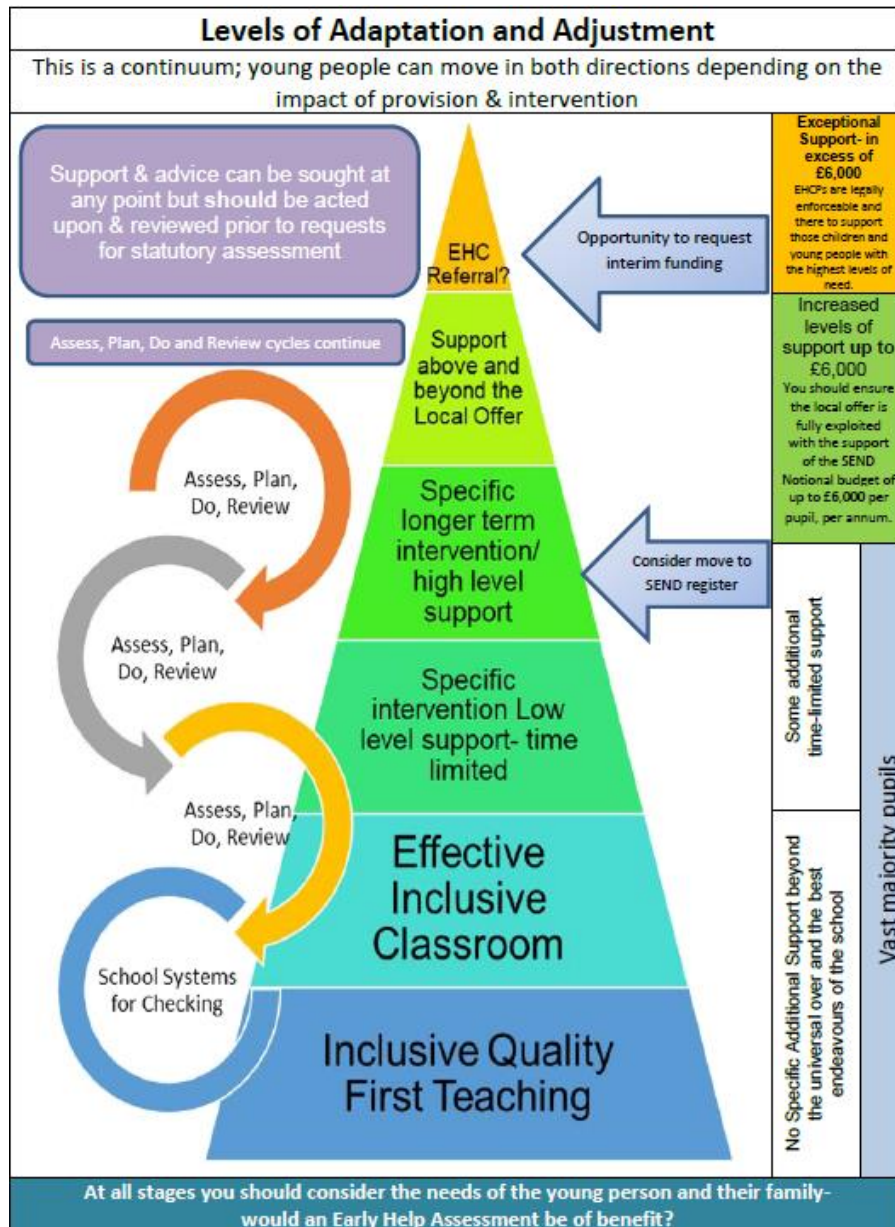


Figure 1: The Graduated Approach to SEN Support

A SEN Support Plan is the first level of additional support for pupils with SEN at a mainstream school. It involves:

- assessing the needs of the pupil;
- planning how they can be met;
- providing additional support; and,
- reviewing progress.

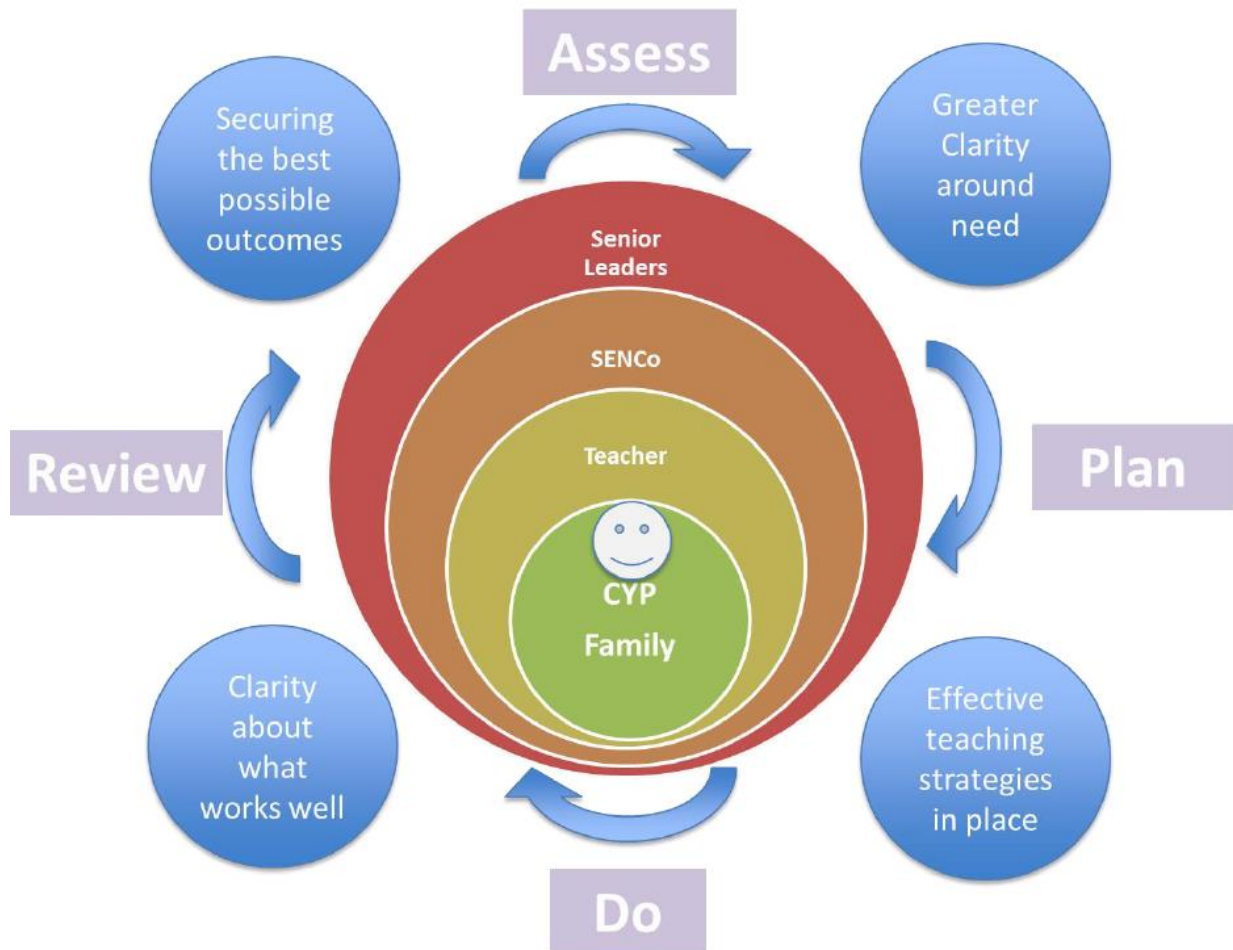


Figure 2: The Graduated Approach to SEN support: Assess, Plan, Do, Review Cycle

Through this cycle the right additional support is provided to help the child achieve at school. This can help a pupil who is struggling compared to their peers. SEN Support may involve extra staff, using different learning materials or special equipment or adopting a different approach to teaching.

All schools have a Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator (SENCO), a teacher who is responsible for Special Educational Needs. They work in partnership with other teachers and parents to make sure that pupils with special educational needs get the right support and help they need at school. The SENCO will work alongside a pupil's teacher to find ways of supporting and improving the pupil's learning. This may include working with other professionals, for example, the Speech and Language Team. The SENCO will also ensure that the pupil's progress is regularly monitored and reviewed.

If a pupil does not make progress with additional assistance through SEN Support, the school and parents might consider requesting an Education Health and Care Needs Assessment.

Please refer to Appendices 2-7 for specific guidance on application of the Graduated Approach to SEN support.

SENCO Networks and Local Authority Training Offer

The Local Authority hosts a very successful Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Co-ordinator network that provides ongoing training to further enhance support across the borough for our children and young people with SEND.

SEND Support Services

Underpinned by the SEND Code of Practice, the service works closely with children, parents, carers and key stakeholders. The service receives requests for Education Health and Care Needs Assessments and undertakes these where required. Where, as a result, children require a Education Health and Care Plan, the service is responsible for ensuring that need, provision and outcomes are reviewed in line with the SEND Code of Practice.

Prevention and Early help

Prevention and Early Help support are vital for improving children's life chances and delivering better outcomes for them and their families. The sooner we can help families, the more likely it is that they can achieve positive and stable futures.

Whilst our aim is for children, young people and parents to be confident and independent through their own personal resilience and the support of social networks, this isn't always possible without some external support. This support needs to be delivered by a variety of partners who are available universally to all (early years, health services, education, play and youth provision), and effective accessible targeted or specialist services, when needed.

Early Help can be identified and offered through any agency a family maybe involved with or from the MASH. All of the support works with families to find out about and access support from local organisations that already exist in their area or, if they want to, help them set something up themselves; where needed we can also offer direct support at a variety of levels.

Early Help Co-ordinators support professionals working with families. They can advise on 'Team Around Family' meetings and suggest what interventions/ services could be tried.

More information and advice about Early Help can be found at [North Tyneside Early Help for Professionals](#)

Transport

The Local Authority has a duty to ensure that suitable travel arrangements are made, free of charge, for certain, 'eligible children' in their area where it is considered necessary to facilitate their attendance at relevant educational establishments. A child or young person with an EHCP, or who is attending a specialist provision or undergoing a special educational needs assessment, may be entitled to free transport:

- as a consequence of their special educational needs, and/or
- because the distance between home and school exceeds the minimum distances as set out in the Home to School/College Transport Policy.

The Local Authority considers that Home to School/College Transport involves a partnership between the Authority, Parents/Carers, Transport and Education Providers. The ['Home to school/college transport policy'](#) sets out the Local Authority's Transport Policy and provides guidelines in a clear and comprehensive manner to facilitate consistency of operation.

The Local Authority also commissions an Independent travel programme through Beacon Hill school, for young people in education. Independent travel training is about providing children and young people with the skills and confidence to travel safely using public transport. It is about expanding their knowledge of road safety and learning how to plan journeys. This training is aimed at children and young people with additional needs, who receive support from the local authority to get to school and focuses on using public transport to school. It can help to build children and young people's confidence, social and independence skills. Further information on the Independent Travel Programme can be found in [Appendix 8](#) or by contacting independent.travel@beaconhill.org.uk.

Buildings and Investment

The Local Authority buildings and investment team holds an annual budget to address pupil specific access requirements in mainstream schools. Funding is generally accessed when a student joins a school, either at reception, year of transition, a new in-year admission, or if a child is returning following injury, or a medical diagnosis that has impacted their mobility.

The team would work with the pupil's Occupational Therapist, the school and their SENCO to determine what is required to ensure accessibility to all necessary areas of the school, including curriculum spaces, hygiene and social spaces. This can also include items which would assist the pupil's independence at school. Where possible, items would remain with the child or young person and follow them through their education journey where appropriate.

For further information and support, please contact Rachael Coyne, School Organisation and Investment Manager: Rachael.Coyne@northtyneside.gov.uk

Specialist Commissioned Services

North Tyneside commissions several teams of specialist teachers and support staff who assess and work with children and young people who have a range of Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities. Referrals from school staff and health professionals can be made. These include:

- Portage and Pre-School Service
- Dyslexia Team
- Language and Communication Team
- North Tyneside Sensory Service at Beacon Hill
- The Connexions Service
- Transient Children Team
- The RHELAC Team and The Virtual School for Looked After Children
- Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS)
- The Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)

[Appendix 9](#) provides full details of these services and how to contact them.

Joint Strategic Needs Analysis

Every local area is required to have [Joint Strategic Needs Analysis \(JSNA\)](#). The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) shows the health and wellbeing needs of local people which is used to provide and develop health, wellbeing and social care services.

Roles and Responsibilities of Governing Bodies in Maintained Schools

In maintained schools in England, the Governing Body is ultimately responsible for the duty not to discriminate. Maintained schools must make their accessibility plans publicly available in their Governors' Annual Report to Parents and on their own school website. This duty is placed on the Governing Body of a school, whether or not they currently have a disabled pupil on roll.

Schools are required not to discriminate against either existing or prospective students in their admission arrangements. They must ensure that they:

- do not treat children and young people less favourably for reasons relating to their disability;
- take reasonable steps to ensure that disabled students are not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to those children and young people who are not disabled; and,
- plan to increase access to education for disabled children and young people.

Schools must prepare and implement accessibility plans which should be kept under review and revised as necessary. To develop an accessibility plan schools should:

- consult with children and young people, parents / carers, support services and local organisations;
- review current provision for access;

- identify internal adjustments that could be made to increase access for disabled children and young people; and,
- develop short, medium and long-term plans and identify how they will be put into practice.

Whilst the Act imposes a distinct planning duty, schools are not required to undertake a separate planning process. Accessibility plans might be dovetailed with other plans, e.g. the School Improvement Plan.

5.0 Strategic Aims

The overall aim of this strategy is to ensure that North Tyneside Council supports schools in meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. The purpose of the strategy is to ensure that accessibility of the curriculum, the physical environment and information for pupils with SEND is central to the delivery of services. Here we provide information and a framework to help schools create individual accessibility plans. Schools and settings accessibility plans should show how, over time, access to education for disabled pupils will be improved. Schools must publish their accessibility plan with links to their SEN Information report on the Local Offer. This strategy will dovetail with the proposed **SEND Inclusion Strategy (2021-2024)**, whose broad aims are:

- All partners have committed to a joint, multi-agency inclusion strategy to make North Tyneside a 'great place to thrive'; where our children and young people with SEND, including those who may need support to have a 'gloriously ordinary' life.
- To be ambitious and accountable in our aspiration for all children and young people with SEND and aim to ensure our joint offer facilitates this ambition and that of the children, young people and their families.
- A clear, transparent and fair commitment that is reflected in all our daily practice. Our daily practice will also reflect our pledges to children and young people:
 - We intervene early with evidence based; family focussed services
 - We work in partnership to keep children in school
 - We keep children and young people safe at home and connected to their local communities
- To identify and celebrate the successes of our children and young people with SEND and publish a clear focus on where we want to improve.
- To be unambiguous in what success will look like and in the areas where improvements are identified. Where improvements are identified we will be clear about the resources required and when we intend to achieve it. We will publish clear end goals so that impact can be measured and evidenced.

5.1 Increasing participation in the curriculum

We will support schools with their responsibility of providing a broad and balanced curriculum for all children and young people, to include the wider curriculum (including after school clubs) for children and young people with SEND. Schools need to consider how to improve the accessibility of the curriculum, covering both teaching and learning, trips and visits, after school activities and extended school activities. North Tyneside schools achieve this for individual children and young people by utilising the graduated

approach following the assess, plan, do, review cycle (See Figures 1 and 2 and Appendices 2-7 for detailed information).

To enable this, we will continue to support schools through the provision of targeted, high quality training and development that embeds the principles set out in the SEND Code of Practice 0 – 25. The council and its partners also provide a range of services to support schools in making inclusive and accessible provision. Details are available in the Local Offer at:

<https://my.northtyneside.gov.uk/category/1243/local-offer-special-educational-needs-and-disabilities-send>

5.2 Improving the Physical Environment

Schools must consider the needs of individual pupils or groups when planning improvements to the environment to ensure that accessibility is not a barrier in preventing pupils or groups from attending a school when their needs could be met there. In addition, they have a duty to consider reasonable adjustments for individual disabled pupils and disabled pupils generally. This includes improvements to the physical environment of the school and the provision of physical aids to education.

Improvements to physical access might include the fitting of ramps and handrails, widening doorways and creating accessible toilet and changing facilities. Physical aids to education could include ICT equipment, concept keyboards, specialist desks or chairs.

Improved access to the physical environment can also be achieved by rearranging room space, removing obstructions from walkways, changing the layout of classrooms or reallocating rooms to subject specialisms and improving the acoustic and visual environment.

In addition, we will:

- ensure that aligned to our asset management plan (AMP), all maintenance of, improvements to, and additions to school property within our control comply with current building regulations and are physically accessible to disabled pupils. Where this work is not within our control, we will advise and influence all partners, including academies, on accessible environments;
- continue to advise schools about their own responsibilities regarding reasonable adjustments;
- improve the physical environment of our school estate by ensuring that the Local Authority, in partnership with individual schools, take full account of the needs of pupils with disabilities and, where appropriate, members of the school community in the planning of any new buildings, remodel or refurbishment projects;
- support schools in maintaining and updating an audit of their premises and provide specialist advice on improvements as required;
- strategically increase/enhance the number of accessible mainstream schools in localities both at secondary and primary level so that parental choice can be accounted for and travelling times for pupils reduced;

- work with schools and key partners to maintain and provide access to a database detailing the accessibility of all schools and the location of students with accessibility needs to inform planning and provide information to parents and pupils.

5.3 Improving Access to Information

Schools have a duty to ensure that all written information normally provided to its pupils is available to disabled pupils, within a reasonable timeframe. School web sites must be reviewed annually, and the school's SEN Report must be published on the website.

In addition, we will:

- further develop and improve our Local Offer through consultation and engagement with children and young people with SEND and their families.
- liaise with partners in schools, social care and health professionals, to ensure that there is a consistent and equitable method of securing technological aids, e.g. Alternative and Augmentative Communication Aids.
- continue to work across schools and settings to make information available through alternative methods and formats in partnership with our sensory specialist provisions.
- continue to offer impartial information, guidance and support through independent partners.
- through the work of our Engagement Strategy, continue to improve our engagement with children and young people with SEND and their families
- provide accessible, impartial and factual advice, information and support to Young People and Parents/Carers whose children have Special Educational Needs via the Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)

6.0 Implementation and Review

This strategy covers the period 2020-2024 and will be reviewed annually.

The local authority and partners will support schools in implementing the strategy. The SEND strategic board will oversee the delivery of the strategy as part of their overall strategic role. This group has representation from health, education and social care.