



Neath and Port Talbot Council

Accessibility Strategy 2025-2028

A strategy to set out the approach that Neath Port Talbot Council is taking to increase access to education for disabled children and young people, so that they can benefit from educational provision to the same extent to children without disabilities.

(Welsh Government Guidance 2018).

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Section 1

Introduction

Our vision in Neath Port Talbot is to give every child the best start in life; that every community is thriving and sustainable; that our environment, heritage and culture can be enjoyed by future generations; and that local people have the skills to access well paid, sustainable jobs in the local green economy. (NPT Corporate Plan 2024)

Neath Port Talbot will be a place where all children and young people aged 0-25, regardless of their circumstances are part of a community that meets their needs and supports them to thrive in a way that works best for them (NPT Early Years, Children & Young People's Plan 2024).

This accessibility strategy sets out the approach that Neath Port Talbot Council is taking to increase access to education for disabled children and young people, so that they can benefit from educational provision to the same extent to that of children without disabilities (Welsh Government Guidance 2018).

This strategy is key in supporting some of our aims detailed in the Corporate Plan under Well-Being Objective 1 – Best start in life. These are as follows:

- Work with our partners to ensure our youngest children are better prepared for the transition into education.
- Progress our strategic schools improvement program to develop our learning and teaching environments.
- Continue roll out of education reform to support all pupils, including Additional Learning Needs legislation and the Curriculum for Wales to raise standards across our schools for all learners.
- Provide opportunities for all to benefit from the opportunity to learn, appreciate and shape their lives through the medium of Welsh.
- Support schools to secure an improvement in pupil attendance rates across all schools.
- Support schools to reduce the number of pupils subject to an exclusion.
- Enhanced facilities, improved play and leisure services for children and young people.

Legislative Framework

The Equality Act (2010) has introduced a single Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) that applies to public bodies, including maintained schools and funded non-maintained settings. This extends to all protected characteristics – race, disability, sex, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership and gender reassignment.

In carrying out their functions, public bodies are required to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Foster good relations across all characteristics – between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

In fulfilling these duties, LA's and schools have a duty to prepare Accessibility Strategies and Plans respectively as specified in Schedule 10 of the Equality Act for children and young people with disabilities.

Schedule 10 states:

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

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

Reasonable adjustments

Schools and local authorities have a duty to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils. This duty requires a school to take positive steps to ensure that disabled pupils can fully participate in the education provided by the school and enjoy the other benefits, facilities and services which the school provides.

Guidance for the practical implementation of this in schools can be found on the Equality and human Right's Commission web site.

The meaning of disability

The term 'pupil' means a child or young person of any age for who education is, or is required to be, provided.

In accordance with section 6 of the Equality Act (2010), a person (P) is disabled if:

- a) P has a physical or mental impairment, **and**
- b) The impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on P's ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

The definition of disability covers physical impairments, which include mobility and sensory impairments. It also covers mental impairments which include learning difficulties and any impairment resulting from mental illness. In the latter case, the mental illness need not be 'clinically well-recognised' but it must still have a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities. Cancer, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection and multiple sclerosis are deemed to be disabilities, as is severe disfigurement (Equality Act, Schedule 1, paragraphs 3 and 6).

Disability also covers those with a progressive condition, such as muscular dystrophy, which leads to a person having an impairment which will in the future have a substantial adverse effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities (Equality Act, Schedule 1, paragraph 8).

The effect of the impairment must be substantial, and it must have an adverse effect which is greater than having a minor impact. This is because having an impairment does not in itself mean that a person is disabled by it.

Time period Covered

This strategy will cover the period of 2025 to 2028. It will be reviewed annually and updated every three years.

NPT Context

In Neath Port Talbot mainstream schools and specialist provisions play a crucial role in supporting students with a wide range of disabilities through effective partnership working. By collaborating closely with parents, educators and external agencies, schools can ensure that their provisions meet the diverse needs of pupils.

Learning Support Centers complement the inclusive environment of mainstream schools by offering tailored resources and expertise, enabling students with disabilities to thrive academically and socially. This integrated approach underscores the importance of a cohesive system that values both inclusivity and specialised support.

The Additional Learning Needs team consists of various groups of professionals who support disabled learners, providing advice and guidance to schools:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder Advisory Team
- Educational Psychology Service
- Speech and Language Advisory Team
- Literacy Difficulties Team
- Deaf Education Team
- Wellbeing and Behaviour Service
- Occupational Therapy
- Visual Impairment Service

Specific data on the number of disabled learners on roll with schools is currently not collected. However, we can use the ALN figures collected through the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC), to provide us with a picture across NPT. (See table below)

Latest data informs us that there are 19,923 pupils aged 3-16 attending the 73 schools across Neath Port Talbot. 13% or 2516 pupils are currently recorded with ALN.

January 2024

<i>Need</i>	<i>Actual Number</i>	<i>% of Total ALN</i>
Moderate Learning Difficulties	372	14.78%
Severe Learning Difficulties	106	4.21%
Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties	31	1.23%
Specific Learning Difficulty	99	3.93%
Behaviour Emotional and Social Needs	652	25.91%
Autism Spectrum Disorder	440	17.48%
Speech Language and Communication	851	33.82%

A Person being recorded as ALN does not automatically mean that person is registered as disabled

Review of previous strategy:

The previous strategy outlined several key workstreams that positively impacted disabled pupils' ability to access school. These are illustrated under three main areas: curriculum, environment, and information.

Access to School's Curriculum;

The Education Support Team, in collaboration with the ALN team, implemented a program designed to help teachers enhance their pedagogy in support of pupils with ALN and disabilities. Now in its second year, the program has trained over 50 teachers, all of whom have shared their knowledge with colleagues, further enriching staff understanding of effective teaching strategies.

In addition, the Educational Psychology Service, working alongside other support services, has delivered a series of training sessions for parents, teaching staff, and ALN Cos. These sessions have deepened their understanding of diverse learning needs, leading to improved access to the curriculum for a significant number of pupils across NPT.

The Early Years Team launched a pilot project called "Ready Steady School" at Melin Primary School, aimed at supporting pupils transitioning into Nursery and Reception. The initiative effectively provided timely support to both families and schools, helping pupils attend school regularly and fully engage with the curriculum. The project will be expanded next year.

A new provision was built at Blaenhonddan Primary School and additional planned places were created at Waunceirch and Ysgol Hendrefelin in response to need.

Access to Physical Environment;

The Disability Access Group hold regular meetings to address urgent challenges faced by schools. As a result, a variety of improvements are made, including the installation of handrails, ramps, accessible toilets, and changing beds, all designed to enhance pupils' access to their learning environments.

Several significant improvements have been made to school buildings to enhance accessibility and the learning environment. Notable examples include YGG Trebannws and Maesmarchog Primary School, both of which underwent classroom remodels to better support the needs of their pupils.

Access to Information;

The Deaf Education Team assisted Llangatwg Comprehensive School in installing a sound system which enabled staff to deliver constant voice coverage throughout their classrooms, creating an improved sound environment that supported all learners.

The Educational Psychology Service has created podcasts for families of children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN). These audio episodes provide practical tips and strategies to support students in school, while also sharing examples of good practice. The podcast format makes the information more accessible to a broader audience, including those who may not have the opportunity to engage with written materials.

Assessment of current accessibility levels:

Neath Port Talbot Council maintain Accessibility gradings for all schools and educational buildings. In recent years, efforts have focused on improving those with the lowest grades to ensure they meet required accessibility standards.

A new survey has been identified as necessary and is now incorporated into the action plans linked to this strategy.

Section 2

Approach to developing the strategy

NPT established a core group of professionals to facilitate the development of this strategy. The group included representatives from

- Education Support
- Think Family Partnership
- Child and Family Support

- Asset Management
- Transport
- Early Years and Partnerships
- Voluntary services
- ALN Teams
- Support Services and Transformation

Consultations Undertaken:

A key part of the exercise was the view of stakeholders. To achieve this, questionnaires were sent to

- Pupils
- Parents
- School Staff
- School Leaders
- Professionals associated with schools

Respondents

Schools	16
Learners	110
Parents / Carers	87
Professionals	3

Summary of consultation:

Pupils:

Nearly all pupils commented that they were able to take part in all lessons and activities offered by their school. In the very few instances where pupils felt they were unable to access the curriculum, the reasons given focused on the anxiety felt by pupils in different environments and self-identified issues with behaviour in unfamiliar places. When asked to suggest possible solutions to support them accessing lessons and activities, pupils suggested quiet spaces in school where they can regulate and additional support in lessons.

Pupils shared a range of resources that are accessible to them to assist them in participating in the curriculum. Examples given included, laptops, ear defenders, immersive readers and fidget toys. Nearly all pupils stated that their teachers and teaching assistants are aware of their needs and know what to do to help them in school. Some pupils felt that school staff needed more training on their specific diagnosis in order to help them properly and other suggestions centered on reducing the class size to make them less noisy.

Pupil responses on movement around the physical environment were very positive, with nearly all pupils stating there are no barriers to movement and that their school is very effective in ensuring pupils have access to all areas. Likewise, pupils raised no concerns regarding accessibility of school transport.

Most pupils agree that they understand the majority of information given to them in school. In cases where this is not true, pupils refer to the pace of lessons or a noisy learning environment. Respondents agree that their ideas and opinions are listened to in school and many are part of a school council.

Parents:

The parental responses gathered came from a diverse group of families, including those with and without children with disabilities. The variety of disability types provided valuable insight into the different family experiences.

Almost all parents reported that their children are able to participate in all lessons and activities offered by the school. In the few instances where this was not the case, breakfast clubs, after-school activities, and trips were mentioned as exceptions. The primary reason for missing these events was the anxiety students experienced in new or crowded environments. Other factors included staffing shortages at the school and certain events being unsuitable, such as those involving excessive walking.

Parents commented that when specialist equipment is needed to support their children in lessons, schools meet this need. Examples given included specialist furniture, laptops, ear defenders and medical equipment. A very few examples were given where equipment was not supplied due to a lack of funding.

Parents expressed positive feedback about the work of the Additional Learning Needs Team, highlighting staff members who regularly visit their children at school to collaborate with both the students and school staff. When asked how support for their children could be improved, suggestions included increasing staff numbers, securing more funding for schools, raising awareness of diagnoses, providing more training opportunities for staff, and enhancing communication between the various teachers involved with a child.

The responses collected strongly suggest that parents who completed the questionnaire feel their children can access various areas of the school and move around with ease. Negative feedback was minimal, with a few mentioning issues such as too many stairs, uneven flooring, and a lack of 1:1 support. Concerns regarding school transport were rare, but where they were mentioned, the main challenges included anxiety and insufficient adult support.

Most parents believe that their children have difficulty reading and understanding all the information provided to them. Many responses highlighted their children's limited reading skills and the school's lack of flexibility in presenting information differently. While parents feel their child has a voice at school, they believe that ideas or suggestions are not always acted upon. Additionally, the majority of parents were unaware of their school's accessibility plan.

School Leaders:

School leaders are confident that disabled learners can fully participate in all curriculum areas, as well as access breakfast clubs and after-school activities. They also affirmed that disabled learners can take part in trips and productions. In a small number of responses, schools noted that a scoping exercise was needed to address the question. Schools shared various initiatives they have implemented to reduce barriers for disabled learners, such as hiring additional staff, organising trips specifically for ALN learners, strengthening parent engagement to improve communication, and utilizing apps and online resources to support learning.

Nearly all school leaders believe that disabled pupils have access to all areas of their school, with many citing new buildings or significant improvements made to ensure accessibility. However, some responses mentioned that the school field or Forest School area can be difficult to access for certain disabled pupils. A small number of schools also highlighted the need to develop outdoor play equipment to promote inclusivity. Responses also provided examples of adjustments made to create dedicated spaces for disabled pupils, with many schools mentioning the installation of sensory rooms and areas designed to support the

increasing number of ASD children. However, a few schools cited a lack of space as a barrier to further development, despite around 50% of respondents indicating that development work will be necessary within the next five years.

Responses indicated that school leaders believe they are providing disabled learners with access to a variety of information through different methods. These include the use of images, coloured overlays, large text, assistive technologies, QR codes, and phone calls instead of letters. School leaders believe that all disabled pupils have access to pupil voice activities and have opportunities to suggest improvements.

Other Professionals:

The low response rate for this section of the questionnaire makes it challenging to identify any clear trends. However, the professional group discussion was valuable in capturing views and opinions.

Many professionals were able to identify schools that had made reasonable adjustments to support disabled learners in accessing the curriculum and extracurricular activities. Examples were shared of school staff who had undertaken specific training and went above and beyond to assist the learners in their care. Good practices were also highlighted in several schools that had developed designated areas to help with regulation. However, several areas for improvement were mentioned, such as reducing noise levels, evaluating the use of space, and ensuring consistency among support staff. The rising number of learners experiencing anxiety to the extent that it severely impacts their school day was raised multiple times, with a need for further training on this issue identified.

The professionals shared numerous examples of adaptations made to the school environment to support the movement of disabled learners. They emphasized the importance of planning for transitions to ensure that specific needs are understood and addressed promptly. The challenges schools face with in-year movement were discussed in detail, with a focus on funding for support staff and the transfer of information between schools. There was also a call to remind schools of their responsibility to use their delegated budgets to fund necessary work, along with the need to conduct surveys of the school site.

Several examples of good practice were highlighted regarding disabled learners accessing information, including equipment-sharing arrangements between schools, the use of technology, and parent engagement. However, the language used in Independent Development Plans was identified as a barrier, along with their format, which makes them difficult to read on screens. A suggestion was made to produce audio versions. Additionally, communication platforms used in schools were noted as challenging for some disabled learners, with a need for schools to provide alternative software.

Section 3

Increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the schools' curriculums

The primary responsibility for ensuring that disabled pupils have equal access to the curriculum lies with schools, who must ensure that these pupils receive their entitlement to the Curriculum and are offered opportunities to extend their experiences and understanding in a range of contexts.

The action plan which supports this Strategy sets out the specific steps which the Authority will take to support schools in fulfilling their duty to ensure equal access to the curriculum for disabled pupils.

Schools will continue to receive support, guidance and advice from the LA's support services for specific types of disability.

Priority	Impact	Cost	Timescale
Develop and share guidance for school leaders and governing bodies on developing their accessibility plans.	High	Low	Short
Share examples of best practice to support professional development.	High	Low	Short
Ensure that schools and leaders are aware of and have access to the range of specialist teams and services available within the authority, offering advice, guidance, and consultation.	High	Low	Short
Encourage schools to collaborate as professional learning communities, sharing best practices and expertise.	High	Low	Mid

Assist schools in auditing their learning environments to address the diverse learning needs of all students.	High	Mid	Mid
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Improving the physical environment of the schools for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the schools.

Schools must ensure that their accessibility strategies include an audit of their buildings, and demonstrate how any shortcomings will be addressed over time. Schools are expected to consider how the range of resources available to them can be used to achieve this, including delegated formula funding.

This strategy includes a set of principles which guide the Authority's approach to achieving access improvements to school buildings and wider resources. The Authority holds a range of information about the accessibility of school buildings, and aims to work with schools strategically to identify improvements required.

Neath Port Talbot's support services will continue to provide support and guidance to schools on how improvements to buildings and wider resources can improve accessibility for pupils with a disability.

Priority	Impact	Cost	Timescale
Offer training and guidance to all staff and governors on enhancing the physical environment to support inclusion for all.	High	Low	Short
Accessibility grading assessments to be completed on all schools and educational buildings.	High	Mid	Long
Offer advice and guidance to schools on planning improvements to the physical environment.	High	Low	Short
Compile up-to-date data on the number and age distribution of pupils with disabilities in the authority, enabling timely planning and action.	High	Mid	Mid

Improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled

Disabled pupils and their families or carers are entitled to receive information about their education and the opportunities available to them in a format which is accessible for them. NPT authority will endeavor to include all information that it provides for the public in a format that is accessible to them. NPT will continue to review the accessibility of all documents which it produces.

Priority	Impact	Cost	Timescale
Review the arrangements for providing IDPs and the formats in which they are made available.	High	Mid	Mid
Review the use of technical language in IDPs.	High	Low	Short
Support schools in identifying software that can be used to insert subtitles into presentations or video clips used during lessons.	Mid	Low	Short
Support schools in reviewing virtual platforms used to share information and resources.	High	Low	Mid

Monitoring, Review and Evaluation Arrangements

All individuals working in Neath Port Talbot, including those in educational settings, have a responsibility to ensure the implementation and adherence to this Accessibility Strategy. This will enable children and young people with disabilities to fully participate in and enjoy an inclusive educational experience.

This Accessibility Strategy will be reviewed in accordance with Welsh Government guidance and will actively seek input from children and young people, parents/carers, funded non-maintained settings, maintained schools, and other relevant stakeholders.

This document will be shared with schools and be made available to parents / carers through the Council's website.

This document is also available in Welsh.