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# Accessibility Strategy 2021 - 2024

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## Accessibility Strategy 2021–2024

### Introduction

This accessibility strategy outlines how the North Lincolnshire Local Authority (LA) is making accessibility a priority for disabled children and young people and their families.

### Vision

In promoting diversity and inclusion, North Lincolnshire LA supports the ‘social model’ view of disability. This identifies that people with impairments are disabled by societal, attitudinal, physical and other barriers. The model endorsed by the experience of many disabled people highlights that attitudes can be the major disabling barrier a person with impairments can encounter.

In developing our strategy we recognise that technological advancements, improved communication and ways information can be accessed, can contribute to more inclusive teaching and learning methods. It can also remove barriers experienced by children and young people with impairments.

### The Legislative Background

There are a number of statutory duties that the LA meets in relation to children and young people with disabilities. These are as follows:

#### Accessibility Planning Duty

The planning duty for Local Authorities and schools came into force in September 2002 whereby LAs were required to produce an Accessibility Strategy. With regard to the planning duty for disabled pupils, three strands are identified as requirements for an accessibility strategy. It is a strategy, from 2021-2024 for:

- increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school’s curriculum
- improving the physical environment of the school 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 school
- improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.

#### Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 introduced a single Public Sector Equality Duty (sometimes also referred to as the ‘general duty’) that applies to public bodies and includes maintained schools and academies, and which extends to all protected characteristics – race, disability, sex, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment. This combined equality duty came into effect in April 2011. It has three main elements. 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.

The Equality Act 2010 also requires the LA and schools to meet the specific duties which are to:

- publish information to demonstrate how they we are complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty, and
- prepare and publish equality objectives.

### Children and Family Act 2014 Clause 69

- Imposes a duty on the governing bodies of schools and proprietors of academy schools to prepare a report containing SEN information. This SEN information report has to include information on the school's policy for pupils with SEN, as well as
  - o information on the arrangements for the admission of disabled persons as pupils at the school;
  - o the steps taken to prevent disabled pupils being treated less favourably than other pupils;
  - o the facilities provided to assist access to the school by disabled pupils
  - o the plan prepared by the governing body or proprietor under paragraph 3 of Schedule 10 to the Equality Act 2010 (accessibility plan).

### SEND Code of Practice 2015

- Reinforces the statutory requirements highlighted above in relation to children and young people with disabilities. The SEND code of Practice also highlights responsibilities with regards to children and young people with medical conditions. Under section 5.11 it states

*'All early years providers should take steps to ensure that children with medical conditions get the support required to meet those needs. This is set out in the EYFS framework.'*

In section 6.11 of the SEND Code of Practice it states that

*'The Children and Families Act 2014 places a duty on maintained schools and academies to make arrangements to support pupils with medical conditions. Individual healthcare plans will normally specify the type and level of support required to meet the medical needs of such pupils. Where children and young people also have SEN, their provision should be planned and delivered in a co-ordinated way with the healthcare plan. Schools are required to have regard to statutory guidance 'Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions'.*

North Lincolnshire Council has worked with schools to support pupils with medical needs and has provided a [Medical Needs Policy Template](#) to assist them in effectively meeting their needs.

### North Lincolnshire Council's Strategic Priorities

The following local strategic priorities demonstrate our commitment to making accessibility a priority for our children and young people.

## Children's Commissioning Strategy

The [Children's Commissioning Strategy](#) is to enable education, health and social care services working with children and families to have a shared understanding and ambition for children in North Lincolnshire. The Children's Commissioning Strategy adds value and supports individual agencies statutory functions.

Underpinned by our values of equality of opportunity, excellence, self-responsibility and integrity, the strategy signals an intent to work together and integrate our services and our commissioning functions where these improve outcomes for children and families; to prioritise those who have additional need; and to reduce inequalities and improve outcomes for all children and families, taking account of ethnicity, race and religion and those with certain specific additional vulnerabilities, where a child:

- is disabled and has specific additional needs
- has special educational needs
- is a young carer
- is showing signs of or engaging in anti-social or criminal behaviour
- is in a family circumstance presenting concerns for the child, such as substance abuse, adult mental health and domestic abuse
- is showing early signs of abuse and/or neglect
- is showing early signs of mental health issues, including self-harm
- is vulnerable to or experiencing sexual or criminal exploitation, radicalisation, gang or organised crime activity, or other risks that are outside of the home / family
- is living away from home, in care or a care leaver
- is vulnerable to Honour Based Abuse
- is vulnerable to Female Genital Mutilation and other forms of body mutilation
- or family have additional vulnerabilities e.g., cultural, immigration status, language, literacy, temporary accommodation, recent
- trauma, social exclusion

The strategy will include how we respond to the challenges offered by our children and families and how we safeguard and protect the most vulnerable through the 'Helping Children and Families in North Lincolnshire' document.

The strategy informs children and families, stakeholders and others of our commissioning intent, the intent being based upon national and local guidance, data and intelligence and the views of children, young people and their families as well as from practice wisdom and best practice.

The strategy forms the work of and is monitored by the Integrated Children Trust (ICT) Board which also has a direct reporting link to the North Lincolnshire Health and Wellbeing Board, including the transition between children and adult services and opportunities for 16- to 24-year-olds, including those impacted by recent circumstances (Covid-19 pandemic).

## Helping Children and Families in North Lincolnshire 2020-2024

[Helping Children and Families in North Lincolnshire 2020-2024](#) sets out how services utilise a **One Family Approach** in order to support children, young people and families to participate, find help online and in their networks and communities, to be resilient, stay safe and independent, remaining within their family, school and community.

We want children, young people and families to be supported by a workforce that is resilient, confident, competent and with delegation to do what they think is the right thing to do without escalating children and families unnecessarily through a range of organisational systems and referral processes when the day-to-day contact with trusted professionals can make the difference.

We listen to families, work to build upon the child and family's strengths, help them find solutions and only when necessary, consult with others to seek assurance, check they're doing the right thing and continue to support the child and family.

We want to create equality of opportunities by acknowledging inequalities and removing barriers and we will prioritise services to our most vulnerable children and young people so they have fair and equitable opportunities to be the best they can be, irrespective of their background and circumstances.

We are continuing to develop an integrated workforce, one that works with the whole family and where we reduce unnecessary duplication of professionals involved with a child and family. We are doing so by implementing an agreed practice model, based in psychological approaches to consultation and formulation where the initial contact both with the child and family and or professional is one of enablement.

## Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Inclusion Plan 2021–2024

The [SEND and Inclusion Plan for the period 2021-2024](#) is linked very strongly to our North Lincolnshire Children's Commissioning Strategy 2020-2024 (suite of documents) and to our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (SEND) 2019. The plan describes how children and young people with SEND are included within our 'One Family Approach' (OFA) to integrated support - ensuring that our children and young people with SEND in North Lincolnshire are enabled and supported to achieve even better outcomes – ensuring that they remain within their family, within their school and as part of their wider communities.

It describes how children, young people and their families will build upon their strengths and resilience and be supported by an integrated workforce that is confident and competent. It also includes how we respond to specific challenges and provides a particular focus upon how we want to 'shine a light' on children and young people in receipt of SEN/D Support. This is to ensure we continue to deliver equity of access and consistency of support - enhancing inclusion and further improving preparation for adulthood.

Our One Family Approach is underpinned by four values which drive and unite our practice, behaviour, and decisions. These are:

- **Equality of opportunity** - where all children, young people and families, regardless of need, community, or diversity, have equal access to the same opportunities to achieve their potential and positive outcomes. To achieve this involves working anti-oppressively to challenge disadvantage and adversity.

- **Excellence** - where we have high aspirations for children, young people and families and high expectations of each other across the workforce, and support and challenge together as we strive for best practice and best outcomes.
- **Integrity** - where we are respectful, honest and accountable in our actions, where behaviours build trust and effective relationships, and we uphold the highest standards including the creative use of resources across the partnership to achieve shared outcomes for children, young people and families.
- **Self-responsibility** – where confident and autonomous professionals enable and empower others to have choice and control over their lives, to make decisions and have a voice, and to live independently from services in their families and communities.

The plan forms the work of and is monitored by the SEND and Inclusion Partnership and will be used to inform the Integrated Children’s Trust Board (ICT) with direct accountability and governance oversight through the North Lincolnshire SEND Standards Board.

### Implementation of the Children and Families Act 2014 in North Lincolnshire

**The SEND Standards Board** was established in November 2016. It recognises the collective accountability for supporting children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities to achieve outstanding outcomes within North Lincolnshire.

The SEND Standards Board ensures a clear line of sight for holders of statutory responsibilities on the duties of the local area for children and young people aged 0-25 years with SEND contained in the Children and Families Act 2014 and amplified in the Code of Practice published jointly by the Department for Health and the Department for Education. Additional duties for promoting the wellbeing of adults are set out in the Care Act 2014.

In the context of our Place Partnership, through implementation of our One Family Approach, we have articulated what successful outcomes will look like:

- Safe – where children and families feel safe in their homes, schools and communities
- Well – where children and families enjoy good health and emotional wellbeing
- Prosperous – where children and young people have excellent education and improved skills
- Connected – where children and families live in flourishing communities

Consequently, young people will be well prepared for adulthood, including being as healthy as possible in adult life, living independently, participating in society and being successful in higher education and employment.

The **SEND and Inclusion Partnership** has a role in SEND strategy development and has direct connectivity to the SEND Standards Board. There is also direct reporting to the Children and Young People’s Partnership (CYPP).

The Partnership is a multi-disciplinary partnership group that includes representatives from across the range of educational settings – mainstream and specialist - pre and post 16. It also includes North Lincolnshire’s Parents’ Forum, the Youth Council and representatives from across health, care, housing, leisure and transport.

The Partnership focuses upon championing inclusion and challenging exclusion, improving attainment and achievement and ensuring quality and sufficiency of education, health and care provision.

### Local Context

North Lincolnshire LA has a wide range of provision available to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. The LA works effectively with schools to ensure that local provision is of high quality. The provision and support across education, health and care available for children and young people with SEND and their families is clearly listed in North Lincolnshire's [Local Offer](#).

Ordinarily Available Education Provision 2021 describes a range of approaches and workforce development opportunities that can be expected to be ordinarily available in schools and settings for children and young people, including those at SEN/D support. It should be read alongside the SEND Code of Practice 2014. It cannot, however, describe every intervention or strategy but indicates the type of arrangements that are typically available. More examples of interventions can be found on our SEND Local Offer website. This document will also help schools and Local Authority to make decisions:

- At a setting level as plans are made to meet pupil or student needs,
- At a Local Authority level when the Special Educational Needs and Disability Panel (SENDAP) considers whether there is evidence that in spite of the setting applying the graduated response over a reasonable period of time, provision is needed for the pupil that is over and above what is ordinarily available.

In North Lincolnshire we have two special schools, one for secondary and the other for primary aged pupils. In addition, we have one school with a resourced provision and three schools with inclusion support provision. An outreach service from special schools provides an additional resource of support to mainstream colleagues. We have specialist teams who are able to provide advice and support at whole-school, group and individual levels. These specialist services are all listed in our [Local Offer](#).

The Local Authority continues to work closely with all our schools to support and challenge them in meeting their statutory duties with regards to disability equality. This includes the following:

- **Equality Act 2010.** This includes three duties in relation to the Public Sector Equality Duties (PSED) and well as their specific duties.
- **Accessibility plans** – ensuring schools are aware that they are required to have Accessibility Plans showing how they are planning strategically to increase access over time. Their plans must show how the school is:
  - increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum;
  - improving the physical environment of schools to enable those with disabilities to take better advantage of education, benefits, facilities and services provided; and
  - improving the availability of accessible information to those with disabilities.
- **SEN information report and SEND Policy** – schools are continuing to comply with The Children and Families Act 2014 to publish this report on their websites.

### **Increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school's curriculum**

Schools are responsible for providing a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils and have a key role in planning to increase access to the curriculum for disabled pupils. The curriculum covers not only teaching and learning but the wider curriculum of the school such as participation in after school clubs, leisure, sporting and cultural activities or school visits. The curriculum should provide relevant and challenging learning to all children. The statutory guidance for the National Curriculum for England: Framework for key stage 1 to 4 sets out three key principles in its inclusion statement which schools are required to follow:

- setting suitable learning challenges
- responding to pupils' diverse learning needs
- overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of pupils.

Schools should consider the needs of a range of disabled pupils and prospective pupils and are required to make reasonable adjustments to meet a range of specific needs. As part of this it is essential that LA services and schools actively engage with children and young people and their parents to seek their views so that local provision takes account of their needs.

Additional provision to enable pupils with learning difficulties to access the curriculum is already delivered through the SEN framework and this will cover the needs of many disabled children, but the LA recognises that schools are likely to require external support to maximise their ability to respond to diverse needs. Therefore, the LA supports schools to respond to individual needs of pupils and the continuing professional development needs of staff with a range of services, commissioned and traded services. Further details are available on North Lincolnshire's [Local Offer](#).

### **Improving the physical environment of the school 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 school**

North Lincolnshire LA is committed to developing the range of provision available across the area and recognises that investment in buildings supports improved access to a full curriculum for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

All new school buildings comply with current building regulations at the time of their construction and are accessible to disabled pupils. Since 2000 there have been fourteen new schools/academies built in North Lincolnshire that meet the Equality Act 2010 standards. In addition, there is one Post 16 Special Free School planned (DfE funded). North Lincolnshire has modernised a large part of the remaining school estate and has, where feasible, included improvements to entrances, circulation areas and welfare facilities to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. Where modifications are required to meet the needs of a specific pupil, the LA will work with maintained schools to make reasonable adaptations. Advice is also available for academies where this is required.

The LA completed building accessibility assessments for maintained schools. The objective of the assessment was to understand how the buildings/grounds function, having in mind the needs of

people with disabilities, and establish priorities for future investment. The North Lincolnshire Capital and Buildings Team is available to update these assessments to support schools developing their accessibility plans as required by the Equality Act 2010.

### **Improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to all.**

North Lincolnshire LA is actively committed to ensuring that information routinely provided by schools and the LA to its pupils and parents is readily accessible to all.

The information should, where reasonably practical, take account of pupils' disabilities, pupils' and parents' preferred formats and be made available within a reasonable time frame. The information might include handouts, timetables, and information about school events. Where reasonable, schools must make adjustments to provide information in alternative formats (such as large print and audio tape) using ICT, or other ways such as providing the information orally.

The Children and Families Act 2014 explicitly requires the LA to publish information about provision and services directly of use for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in an area, through a Local Offer. The Local Offer has the express purpose of making information more accessible.

The [North Lincolnshire Local Offer](#) website also provides a direct link to all schools and colleges websites covering the 0-25 years, where further information on their provision for children and young people is available. For those families who are not able to access the internet, Local Offer information can be requested through schools, libraries and other local places, including our SEND Team (Tel: 01724 297148 or e-mail [special.needssection@northlincs.gov.uk](mailto:special.needssection@northlincs.gov.uk)).

We have also ensured that the Local Offer website has accessibility features built into it. We also regularly hold face to face events or conferences, to ensure that those who have disabilities and are unable to access the Local Offer directly, can speak to relevant officers within the LA to get the information they require. The accessibility of the Local Offer is reviewed regularly with parents and carers and children and young people and feedback received is used to further refine and improve the offer further.

### **Information, Advice and Support**

There are a number of dedicated services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and their families which provide information, advice and support. Young people can also access the service independently from their parents. The service is impartial, confidential and free. In North Lincolnshire it is provided by **SENDIASS** (Special Educational Needs and Disability, Information, Advice and Support Service). **SENDIASS** staff work with families and young people in relation to SEND and education inclusion.

**Independent Supporters** will be able to work with children and young people with SEND and their parents / carers by:

- Helping them to understand and access the local range of information, advice and support
- Acting as a named contact person throughout the Education Health and Care (EHC) Planning assessment process

- Liaising across a range of local provision and services to help them to gather the information required for an EHC Plan assessment (where needed)
- Signposting them to Information Advice & Support Services (IASS) when the issue is outside the remit of an Independent Supporter.

Any questions or further information required on Independent Supporters can be obtained through contacting:

SENDIASS on 01724 277665 or emailing [sendiass@northlincs.gov.uk](mailto:sendiass@northlincs.gov.uk)

Our local [Parent Carer Forum \(PIP\)](#) group can also provide independent and impartial support for parents and carers.

[Healthwatch North Lincolnshire](#) is the independent voice for the people of North Lincolnshire. It can also help to shape, challenge and improve local health and social care services.

Healthwatch North Lincolnshire, telephone: 01724 844986 or email: [enquiries@healthwatchnorthlincolnshire.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatchnorthlincolnshire.co.uk)

North Lincolnshire Council Capital and Buildings Team: [schoolorganisation@northlincs.gov.uk](mailto:schoolorganisation@northlincs.gov.uk)

### Consultation, Implementation and Review

- The SEND and Inclusion Partnership, which is a multi-agency partnership group, has been consulted on this Accessibility Strategy.
- Parents and carers of children and young people have the opportunity to provide their views via the Local Offer website.

The LA, in partnership with schools and key stakeholders, will implement this strategy to ensure that disabled children enjoy a fully inclusive experience. The Accessibility Strategy will be kept under review and amended as necessary to reflect newly published legislation and statutory guidance, developments in local resources and service delivery, and progress against the action plans. It will be reviewed annually by the SEND and Inclusion Partnership.

## Appendix A – Definition of Disability

The Equality Act 2010 states a person has a disability if:

- a) They have a physical or mental impairment and
- b) The impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

The Government guidance states that the term substantial means more than minor or trivial.

The term physical and mental impairment implies that a disability can arise from a wide range of impairments such as:

- Long term medical conditions such as asthma and diabetes
- Fluctuating or progressive conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis or motor neurone disease
- Mental health conditions such as bipolar disorder or depression
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Learning difficulties such as dyslexia and autism
- Sensory impairments
- Learning disabilities such as Down's syndrome and autism spectrum conditions
- Cancer
- Multiple sclerosis
- People with severe disfigurement will be protected as disabled without needing to show that it has a substantial adverse effect in day-to-day activities.