

**Guidance for Educational Establishments
on facilitating building improvements
to ensure accessibility for particular pupils
with Additional Support Needs**

Introduction

The Highland Council's Education Disability Strategy anticipates that changes to school buildings and grounds will range from simple changes such as handrails and ramps to promote Social Inclusion to major structural changes that support the physical needs of the child. Children on the autism spectrum may also require specific building improvements.

This guidance includes a protocol for capturing information on needs and managing the implementation of changes to buildings. The aim is to ensure that the level of support required for the child with regard to the physical aspects of the building are appropriately defined sufficiently far ahead to ensure all works can be completed before the child attends. As major works can take a long time to plan and complete, it is essential that head teachers and childcare centres look ahead to future transition locations and make the DDA Coordinator and the receiving school aware of future needs **as far as 3 years ahead**.

Given that there are 216 schools in Highland and the budget available, careful consideration has to be given to the actual current needs of the child. Whilst it is recognised that, at an early stage, all potential changes should be identified, it must be noted that costs of these changes could prevent the meeting of the needs of another child in a different school. Assurances of what work is to be done should not, therefore, be given to stakeholders until tenders have been accepted.

Stakeholders

The following is a check list of potential stakeholders in the identification of physical needs process –

- Disability Discrimination Act Coordinator
- Pupil and Parent(s)/Carers
- Community Nurse
- General Practitioner
- Community Paediatrician (School Doctor)
- NHS Occupational Therapist
- NHS Physiotherapist
- Social Work Occupational Therapist
- Early Years staff/Nursery Teacher (particular responsibility **well ahead of** Nursery - P1 transition)
- Primary Head Teacher (particular responsibility **well ahead of** P7-S1 Transition)
- Secondary Head Teacher (particular responsibility **well ahead of** P7-S1 Transition)
- Area Support for Learning Team Leader
- Area Education Manager
- Educational Psychologist
- Principal Teacher Pupil Support
- Home Visiting Teacher/Pre-school Teaching Service)
- Assistive Technology Education Support Service
- Sensory Support Services (Vision and Hearing)
- Social Workers for Disability
- Parent Council (where major building improvements are taking place)

Information Gathering

The DDA strategy identifies the information required to be gathered. It is vital that that information is held at a point central to the process of building improvement so it is proposed that it is held by the DDA Coordinator. It is not intended that information of a medically confidential nature should be communicated or held on a central data base but it is essential that detailed building improvements required for specific pupils are recorded with location details, required time scale and the names and contact details of the range of professionals involved.

The attached Protocol outlines the process and possible professionals involved but it is not exclusive. The main priority in information gathering should be that the DDA Coordinator is informed as early as possible of future requirements so if several professionals highlight the likely need that is infinitely preferable to all presuming someone else will raise the issue.

The best time for the DDA Coordinator to be informed of all the requirements is at the earliest inter-agency meeting that is held to discuss the prospective pupil's requirements after the child has reached age two. As these are often held in the property which will require improvement, it is helpful if those directly involved in advising on physical needs give guidance on site on the day or arrange a site visit with the DDA Coordinator and architectural/property staff as soon as possible thereafter. Significant building improvements such as ramps, platform stair lifts and installation of assisted toilets, showers and changing benches can take many months through planning and tendering to installation so early involvement of the DDA Coordinator is vital.

The DDA Coordinator should issue an e-mail reminder, attaching this document, to all establishments and offices concerned immediately after the October school holidays and again after infant and nursery enrolment dates, to ensure that new head teachers or those who have not previously been involved in the process are reminded of the protocol and their responsibilities within it.

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