

Appendix 2



Accessibility Funding Framework

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1. Executive Summary

Included within the Safety Valve Agreement is Capital Accessibility Funding inclusive of both mainstream and special schools. An allocation of £375k p.a. for each of mainstream and special schools is included across the 4 years of Safety Valve.

The intention of Schools Accessibility Funding is to support schools to meet a wider level of SEND need through adaptations to existing buildings. This supports our sufficiency strategy through moving the SEND continuum towards the mainstream.

To support the development of Accessibility Funding the LA's School's Accessibility Strategy has been updated with input from across Specialist Inclusion Services, Education and wider partners such as SENDIASS and Guiding Voices.

The School's Accessibility Strategy identifies the support available to schools from the local authority whilst also identifying schools statutory responsibilities in relation to their own Accessibility planning.

Included within the Schools Accessibility Strategy is a clear LA action plan which details outcomes against each core area. This will be tracked and reported over time to measure progress.

The Accessibility Funding Strategy proposes three distinct areas including:

- Targeted work across mainstream and special schools linked to accessibility requirements for individual pupils and cohorts
- Individual requests and contributions for individual pupils linked to established equipment panel
- A small capital grant programme for schools open through application and assessment in line with schools own accessibility planning

In order to inform the Special Schools Accessibility planning capacity assessment work has been completed by an external consultant. This has identified capacity gaps across the SEND estate which could be mitigated through Accessibility Funding.

Where sufficient capacity does not exist it is proposed Accessibility Funding will contribute to the development of additional provision for specific pupil cohorts who are struggling to access the existing curriculum offer within our special schools.

2. Purpose of Funding Framework

The Accessibility Strategy that underpins the Funding Framework identifies support for SEND pupils three core areas:

- **To increase the extent to which SEND and/or disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum**
- **To improve the physical environment of schools to increase the extent to which disabled pupils can take advantage of education**
- **To improve the delivery of information to disabled pupils and their parents/carers through the Rotherham Local Offer**

3. Funding Process

Please see below the process which has been developed:

- New requests and contributions associated with individual pupils will be facilitated through Equipment Panel (Appendix 1). Where new requests and contributions fall outside of the remit of Equipment Panel these will be escalated for consideration for targeted accessibility funding.
- Targeted work with the EHCP Team is planned to identify pupils who require adaptations to school buildings in order for their needs to be met in mainstream. Scoping will include key transition points and ensuring a spread of accessible provision across the LA.
- In addition to this a small Capital Grants Programme will be developed for mainstream schools in an initial funding round with grants being capped at £50,000. Contributions will be sought from schools through the application process to maximise value for money. Depending on applications received and interest further funding rounds could be rolled out from September 2023.
- To support implementation there is a clear application process, guidance, timeline and shortlisting model. This is supported by performance measures which will track impact over time against successful applications
- The grant funding process will include a mixed model of procurement including direct award of grants to schools to complete any capital works.
- The School's Accessibility Strategy and associated Accessibility Funding Strategy will be monitored by a dedicated sub-group feeding into the established CYPS SEND Sufficiency Board. The sub-group will be responsible for monitoring the action plan within the over-arching strategy and implementing the funding framework

4 Expected Outcomes

Schools will be required to report on measurable outcomes detailed in their application form. The reporting information can be provided from the school along with termly data submissions or upon request from the Commissioning Team and Asset Management.

The expected outcomes will be analysed by the commissioning team to insure there is impact, positive outcomes, and the best utilisation of the Accessibility Funding.

Outcomes will be in line with both the Local Authorities School's Accessibility Strategy and the schools individual Accessibility planning.

5 Risks

- Despite market engagement with schools both directly and at SENCO network event the demand for funding is not known. To mitigate a funding process has been developed to facilitate the monitoring of applications, managing expectations and delivering against identified areas of need.
- Schools were notified during the market engagement that their School Accessibility Strategy/Policy is required to be updated prior to awarding funding.
- Intelligence across the two remaining funding strands is currently being established, this will be supported by refreshed terms of reference for the Equipment panel and insight from the EHCP Team.
- School's Accessibility Funding was rolled from 22/23 as such there is an additional allocation for both mainstream and special schools in 23/24