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# Accessibility Strategies and Access to Learning Resources

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## Quick Guide

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### The Law

The Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) (Scotland) Act 2002<sup>i</sup> describes the planning duties that need to be carried out by local authorities, independent and grant-aided schools in Scotland to meet legal requirements introduced by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) and Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). Each local authority and other education provider - the so-called responsible body - has to set out how it plans to improve accessibility in an 'Accessibility Strategy'. These are prepared on a 3-yearly cycle and local authorities in Scotland had to submit their first 3-yearly plan in 1 April 2003.

The Scottish Executive Education Department produced valuable guidance<sup>ii</sup> for local authorities to help them prepare their accessibility strategies. There are three areas of improvement needed in relation to disabled pupils:

- Improving access to the physical environment
- Improving access to the curriculum
- Improving access to communication and delivery of school information.

### Improving access to communication and delivery of school information

Three paragraphs from the SEED Guidance are given here:

62. "The third duty requires responsible bodies to improve communication with pupils with disabilities. Responsible bodies should take steps to improve how these pupils can give their views on any issue about which they have an interest, gather in those views and consider them. Consideration should be given to whether class work or homework could be given in alternative forms and, also, consider how any homework, or other work pupils do in alternative forms, can best be marked/commented on by school staff. Pupils' communication with teaching and auxiliary staff as part of their learning should also be considered under the "access to the curriculum" duty."
64. "In particular, this communication duty covers the delivery of information normally provided to pupils in writing. This 'school information' includes any information given to pupils by the school, such as: handouts and worksheets, textbooks, timetables, handbooks, test and examination papers, posters around the school, information



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about school events. Responsible bodies should ensure that any information that is important to enable pupils to learn or to be able to participate in school activities can be provided in an alternative form if the pupil may have difficulty reading information provided in standard written form."

65. "Information may need to be provided in alternative forms, such as: providing information orally (for example, to ensure that a pupil has understood information provided on posters or in their timetable), in Braille, in large print, in audio formats, through ICT, through sign language (either on video or by using appropriately qualified teachers or auxiliary staff) or through a recognised symbol system (such as Makaton). The responsible body should ensure that this information is provided within a reasonable time so that it does not place pupils with disabilities at a disadvantage in relation to other pupils. Therefore, demands would have to be anticipated in advance and school staff would need make sure that any materials to be provided in alternative forms, such as Braille, large print, audio tape, video signing and electronic files were provided for translation well in advance of the time when they will be needed."

## Implications

Local authorities should therefore be considering how they can provide learning and curriculum resources in suitable alternative formats for pupils with disabilities "if the pupil may have difficulty reading information provided in standard written form". Many local authorities have procedures, structures and specialist teams to provide materials in Braille, enlarged text or audio format to visually impaired students and this new legislation requires consideration of how this provision can be extended to any pupil who has difficulty reading or accessing information.

Local authorities may wish to consider a number of questions:

- Which formats are required and by whom (e.g. Braille, enlarged, audio tape, audio MP3, PDF, Word, switch accessible, symbolised etc?)
- How will materials be adapted and by whom?
- How will materials be distributed to schools and accessed by pupils?
- How will copyright issues be addressed (see other CALL Quick Guides<sup>iii</sup>)

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<sup>i</sup> The **Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) (Scotland) Act 2002** can be downloaded from: <http://www.hms0.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/acts2002/20020012.htm>

<sup>ii</sup> The Scottish Executive: **Guidance on Planning to Improve Access to Education for Pupils with Disabilities: Guidance on Preparing Accessibility Strategies** 2002  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/education/gpas-00.asp>

<sup>iii</sup> CALL Quick Guide: **Copyright Licencing Agency Schools Photocopying Licence**.  
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