



SHETLAND ISLANDS COUNCIL
EDUCATION AND
CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Accessibility Strategy

Improving access to education provision

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1. Introduction

Shetland Islands Council is committed to ensuring that all children and young people can access, participate in, and benefit fully from education. It is committed to ensuring learning environments are inclusive, equitable, and accessible, where physical, sensory, communication, and other barriers to learning are identified and reduced wherever possible.

Education and Learning recognise as a Service that equitable access to education has an impact on a child or young person's wellbeing, achievement, future employment opportunities, and ability to contribute to their communities. By removing barriers to learning and participation, children and young people are enabled to realise their potential and experience a genuine sense of belonging within their school community.

Schools and early learning and childcare (ELC) settings strive to be welcoming, nurturing and inclusive environments that reflect and celebrate the diversity of communities across Shetland. By learning alongside peers with a wide range of abilities and experiences, children and young people develop understanding, empathy, respect, and a greater appreciation of diversity, helping to foster more inclusive attitudes within society.

While this Accessibility Strategy is required for children and young people with disabilities, it also forms part of a wider commitment to meeting the needs of all children and young people who may require additional support to access education. The strategy reflects the principles of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, recognising that children and young people may require additional support for a wide range of reasons, whether long term or short term. Through this strategy, Shetland Islands Council reaffirms its commitment to removing barriers, promoting equality of opportunity, and ensuring that every learner is supported to participate, achieve, and thrive.

2. Aims of the Accessibility Strategy

This strategy sets out the actions that Shetland Islands Council will take, both now and in the future, to improve accessibility across education provision in Shetland.

The strategy also aims to ensure that everyone with responsibility for delivering education, in any educational setting, understands and fulfils their statutory duties in relation to accessibility and equality. It recognises that creating inclusive learning environments requires a shared commitment across the Council, parents, carers and families, partner agencies, and the wider community. Through collaborative working, barriers to learning and participation will be removed so that every child and young person can achieve, belong and thrive.

This strategy applies to all education provision provided by Shetland Islands Council, including provision delivered both within and out with school and ELC settings.

3. Vision of the Education and Children's Services Directorate

The Education and Children's Services Directorate Plan sets out the following long-term commitments:

- Improve wellbeing, learning and inclusion outcomes for children and young people with additional support needs.
- Reduce the number of children and young people affected by poverty.
- Keep The Promise by ensuring care-experienced children and young people receive support they can rely on.

The Accessibility Strategy supports the delivery of these commitments by contributing to the Directorate's strategic outcomes:

- a) Deliver inclusive support for all learners (Directorate Outcome i)
- b) Improve attainment and wellbeing (Directorate Outcome ii)
- c) Advance education reform (Directorate Outcome iii)

These objectives align with the wider ambitions of the Directorate Plan and are reflected in the Admissions Policy, the Learning Estate Strategy, the Accessibility Design Brief.

Document	Purpose
Accessibility Strategy	Improving access to education provision.
Learning Estate Strategy	Strategy for managing and improving the school estate.
Admissions Policy	Admissions arrangements for early learning and childcare, primary and secondary schools.
Accessibility Design Brief	Guidance for creating accessible and inclusive learning environments.

4. Links to Local Policy and Guidance

This strategy should also be read in conjunction with key local policy and guidance documentation including:

- [The Ambition – excellence and equity for Shetland's Learners](#)
- [Shetland's Standard for Learning, Teaching and Assessment - Schools](#)
- [Shetland's Standard for Learning, Teaching and Assessment – Early Learning and Childcare](#)
- [Promoting and Managing School Attendance in School Policy 2024](#)
- [Preventing and Managing Exclusions in Shetland Schools Policy 2024](#)
- [Shetland's GIRFEC Practice Framework](#)
- [Nurturing Relationships Guidance](#)
- [Getting Transitions Right: Post School Transitions Policy for Young People with Additional Support Needs](#)

5. Support for Learning Review 2025-2027

A comprehensive review of Support for Learning (SfL) provision is currently being undertaken across Shetland, with completion planned for September 2027.

The purpose of the review is to evaluate current approaches, identify strengths, gaps, and areas for improvement, and develop recommendations that support the delivery of inclusive, effective, and equitable education for all learners. The review will also consider the development of a sustainable model of SfL provision that is responsive to the evolving needs of children, young people, and their families.

The objectives of the review are to:

- Identify effective practices benefitting children, young people and their families.
- Identify challenges, barriers and gaps in current provision that may impact negatively on children, young people and their families.
- Develop evidence informed recommendations to improve the quality, consistency and sustainability of support for learning provision.

6. Learning Estate Strategy

The Learning Estate Strategy was updated in August 2026 to align with and support the aims and objectives of this Accessibility Strategy.

Shetland's learning estate is diverse, encompassing a wide range of buildings and facilities that vary in age, condition, size, and geographic location. This diversity presents both opportunities and challenges in ensuring that all learning environments are accessible, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of children and young people across the islands.

The aim of the Learning Estate Strategy is to support the delivery of high-quality education through a learning estate that is equitable, enables excellence, promotes inclusion for all learners, and remains sustainable for the future.

7. Accessibility Design Brief

The Accessibility Design Brief provides a framework to support the planning, design, and development of accessible learning environments across Shetland. It sets out key principles and expectations to ensure that new builds, refurbishments, and adaptations within the learning estate consider the diverse needs of all children and young people.

Recognising the unique geographical context and diverse nature of Shetland's learning estate, the Accessibility Design Brief promotes a consistent approach to creating inclusive spaces that enable all learners to participate fully in education. It supports the removal of barriers to learning by considering physical access, sensory needs, communication, safety, wellbeing, and the flexibility of learning environments. The brief complements the Learning Estate Strategy and Accessibility Strategy by ensuring that accessibility is embedded from the earliest stages of planning and design. Through the creation of inclusive and adaptable learning environments, it supports Shetland Islands Council's commitment to providing equitable opportunities for all children and young people to learn, achieve, and thrive.

8. Legislative Framework

Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) (Scotland) Act 2002

The Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) (Scotland) Act 2002 requires all Education Authorities to prepare and implement an Accessibility Strategy for all schools for which they are responsible. The strategy demonstrates how the education authority and schools will improve accessibility by:

- Increasing the extent to which pupils with disability can participate in the curriculum.
- Improving the physical environment of schools to enable children and young people with disabilities to access education and associated services.
- Improving communication with pupils with a disability, including ensuring that information provided in writing to other pupils is made available in appropriate alternative formats and taking account of any preferences expressed by them and their parent/carer(s).

Equality Act 2010

Under the Equality Act 2010, Shetland Islands Council has a duty to eliminate discrimination and harassment and promote equality of opportunity for those who have a 'protected characteristic'.

The nine protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender re-assignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000

The Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 establishes the right to education and places a duty on education authorities to ensure that the education they provide is directed towards the development of each child's personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.

Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 places duties on education authorities to identify, provide support for, and review the Additional Support Needs (ASN) of children and young people. This includes children and young people who are care experienced.

Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

This legislation puts key elements of the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) framework into statute.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024

This legislation incorporated the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into Scots Law and aims to ensure children's rights are respected and protected in Scotland. Additionally public authorities are legally required to respect and protect children's rights in the work that they do.

9. Definition of a Disability

Under the Equality Act 2010, a person is considered disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities. Substantial is defined as more than minor or trivial. Long term is defined as lasting more than 12 months.

The definition of disability can include what may be termed 'hidden' disabilities such as dyslexia, autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and speech and language impairments.

10. Additional Support Needs

Under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, a child or young person has ASN if they need extra support to benefit from education, whatever the reason.

ASN can arise from:

- A disability or health condition
- Learning difficulties
- Social, emotional or behavioural needs
- Family circumstances
- Being looked after by a local authority
- Bereavement, bullying or other temporary situations

The Overlap with Disability and ASN

Some children and young people may have both a disability and ASN, but the two terms do not mean the same thing. A child or young person has ASN when they need extra or different support to what is usually provided for children and young people of the same age in schools or ELC settings. ASN can arise for many different reasons, including learning needs, health and wellbeing, family circumstances, or life experiences. This means that not all children and young people with ASN have a disability. A child or young person does not need to have a disability to require additional support for learning. Support should be based on the individual needs of the child or young person and the barriers they may experience in accessing education.

11. Care Experienced – Keeping The Promise

What is The Promise?

The Promise is *“that all Scotland’s children and young people will grow up loved, safe and respected so they can realise their full potential.”*



Once The Promise was made, Scotland agreed to change how it cared for its children and young people.

All local authorities have committed to Keeping The Promise and have statutory responsibilities to support care experienced children and young people and promote their wellbeing. While coordination and delivery of The Promise is primarily led through Education and Children’s Services, its principles and commitments are relevant across all services that support children, young people, and families.

12. Engagement

Shetland Islands Council recognises that developing accessible, inclusive and equitable learning environments requires meaningful engagement with children and young people, families, staff and wider partners.

Voice of the Child

The views of children and young people are central to the development of inclusive learning environments. Schools and services will use a range of approaches to gather learner voice, ensuring that all children and young people have meaningful opportunities to share their views in ways that are appropriate, accessible and responsive to their individual needs.

Approaches may include:

- Questionnaires and surveys
- Focus groups
- Pupil councils
- Shetland Youth Voice group
- Visual and communication support
- Targeted consultation with children and young people with ASN
- Child-centred planning meetings

Attention will be given to understanding the barriers children and young people may experience in relation to:

- Participation
- Communication
- Learning and achievements
- Relationships and belonging
- Health and wellbeing
- Access to wider experiences and opportunities

Parent/Carer Engagement

Parents and carers play a vital role in supporting the wellbeing, learning and inclusion of children and young people. Shetland Islands Council is committed to working in partnership with families to understand individual needs, improve accessibility and identify and reduce barriers to participation.

A range of approaches may be used to engage with parents and carers, including:

- Questionnaires and surveys
- Consultation meetings
- School improvement consultations
- Accessibility discussions
- Opportunities to contribute to staged intervention planning

Feedback gathered through meaningful engagement with parents and carers will help inform improvements at both school and local authority levels.

13. Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC)

GIRFEC is Scotland's long standing, national commitment to provide all children, young people and their families with the right support at the right time, so that every child and young person can reach their full potential. It is both an approach and a framework and is universally available to all with targeted support for those who require it.



GIRFEC seeks to realise children's rights on a day-to-day basis. It is underpinned by the following key values and principles:

- Placing the child or young person and their family at the heart, and promoting choice, with full participation in decisions that affect them.
- Working together with families to enable a rights respecting, strengths based, inclusive approach.
- Understanding wellbeing as being about all areas of life including family, community and society.
- Valuing difference and ensuring everyone is treated fairly.
- Considering and addressing inequalities.
- Providing support for children, young people and families when they need it, until things get better, to help them to reach their full potential.
- Everyone working together in local areas and across Scotland to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.

In line with these principles, GIRFEC aims to enhance the wellbeing of all children and young people while providing a flexible and coordinated framework of support that adapts to individual needs. Support is available where it is needed and continues for as long as it is required.

This is delivered through three core components:

- A Named Person – a clear point of contact for children, young people and families who can provide advice and support and help connect them to wider services to ensure they receive the right help, at the right time, from the right people.
- A shared understanding of wellbeing – a holistic and consistent model for considering, assessing and supporting wellbeing across all aspects of a child's or young person's life.
- A co-ordinated approach to planning - a single, shared and rights-based approach to planning and coordinating support when more than one service is involved, led by a lead professional.

14. The Importance of Transitions in the Lives of Children and Young People

Shetland Island's Council recognises the significance of transition in the lives of children and young people. School education involves a series of key transitions that every child and young person will experience. These include:

- Starting ELC (pre-school).
- Moving into primary school.
- Progressing through different stages of primary and secondary school.
- Transitioning beyond school into adult life.

Children may also experience other types of transitions, such as changing schools or provision or moves into care.

As well as these bigger transitions, children and young people experience many smaller transitions as part of their daily life, for example from home to school, from one classroom environment or teacher to another. The impact of these transitions can vary but may be significant for those children and young people who experience barriers to the learning and/or have disabilities.

Regardless of the type of transition, all children and young people are entitled to support that helps them make the most of their learning and achieve positive, sustained destinations beyond school.

Transitions should be positive, well-timed experiences, where children, young people and their families feel informed, supported, and involved every step of the way. They should be discussed regularly as part of the GIRFEC process.

Education authorities should follow key principles of good practice whenever a child or young person with ASN is approaching a transition in their education. These include:

Early planning: The earlier planning begins, the smoother the transition. Early discussions should take place with the new school, college, or post school provider to help ensure a smooth transition.

Child-centred approach: The wishes of children and young people should be at the centre of any decisions made about their support.

Collaboration: There are effective arrangements in place to involve children, young people, families, education staff and appropriate agencies (health, social work, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) etc.) in designing transitions for those requiring additional support.

A named person or lead professional coordinates the process. Shared approaches agreed to record keeping and passing on of information.

Clear communication: Use language understood by all involved. Be mindful of different communication needs.

Continuity: Sound arrangements are in place for transferring information from one named person/lead professional to another to ensure continuity of plans (e.g., a Child's Plan, Co-ordinated Support Plan (CSP)). If the child or young person has a CSP discuss changes to the designated co-ordinator with the child or young person and their parents well in advance.

Monitor and review regularly: Plans should be flexible and updated as needed.

15. Staged Intervention

In alignment with GIRFEC, schools and early learning settings follow a staged approach to ensure learner needs are identified and met at the earliest possible stage. This ranges from universal in class support to intensive multi-agency planning.

A personalised Child's Plan within GIRFEC is a non-statutory plan which should be considered when those working with a child or young person and their family identify through an assessment using the wellbeing indicators that the child or young person needs a range of extra support beyond universal provision to be planned, delivered or co-ordinated.

Some children may also require a CSP which is a statutory plan for children and young people with complex or multiple support needs. For a CSP to be put in place those needs will likely continue for more than a year and require support from the education authority in the exercise of any of its other functions or from at least one other agency outside education (e.g. health, social work). In Shetland this sits within the GIRFEC framework and broader Child's Plan as part of staged intervention processes detailed below.

Work is ongoing locally to update both GIRFEC and Staged Intervention Guidance. Core components of staged intervention included in the Code of Practice, 2026 are as follows:

Stage 1 - Universal Support

- At this foundational level, educators implement inclusive teaching strategies and classroom adaptations to meet diverse learning needs.

Stage 2 - Additional Support

- When universal approaches are insufficient, further assessment is needed and targeted interventions are introduced. This may involve small group work, specialised teaching methods, or short-term programmes designed to address specific challenges.
- A named individual from within the school co-ordinates the approach. Interventions at an individual level may be recorded in a local Additional Support for Learning Plan, a Child's Plan or an individualised educational programme (IEP).

Stage 3 - Enhanced Support

- For children and young people with more complex needs, enhanced support includes individualised plans and may involve collaboration with external specialists such as educational psychologists or speech and language therapists.
- A named individual co-ordinates the approach. A Child's Plan or an IEP is expected to be in place.

Stage 4 - Intensive Support

- At this level, multi-agency collaboration is essential. Comprehensive, individualised programmes are developed, potentially involving health services, social work, and other relevant agencies to provide holistic support.
- A lead professional is responsible for co-ordinating the overall approach. A CSP will be considered and may be in place, if the criteria are met.

16. Inclusive Education: The Universal Offer

Curriculum for Excellence

A universal entitlement for all is fundamental to the philosophy of Curriculum for Excellence, where every child is entitled to a curriculum that meets their needs and provides support to achieve their full potential. It is designed to be flexible and adaptable to meet the needs of a diverse range of learner needs, from 2 -18.

Delivery of the Curriculum for Excellence in Shetland recognises the totality of experiences which are planned for children and young people through their education, wherever they are being educated. This totality includes the ethos and life of the school as a community, curriculum areas and subjects, interdisciplinary learning and opportunities for wider achievement.

17. Learning, Teaching and Assessment Standard

Shetland Islands Council is committed to achieving excellence and equity for all children and young people. High-quality learning, teaching and assessment are central to realising this ambition.

The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Standard establishes a shared understanding and common language around the key features of high-quality practice. It is intended to support professional dialogue, strengthen self-evaluation and inform continuous improvement. By promoting consistent, evidence informed practice across all settings, the standard aims to improve experiences and outcomes for all children and young people.

To reflect the contexts, separate Learning, Teaching and Assessment Standards have been developed for schools and early learning and childcare settings. Both standards are underpinned by the same shared principles and expectations. The standards can be accessed using the links below.

[Shetland Standard Learning, Teaching and Assessment - Schools](#)

[Shetland Standard Learning, Teaching and Assessment - Early Learning and Childcare](#)

18. The Ambition

ELC settings and schools promote an inclusive, strengths-based approach, using national guidance to inform practice. Staff working in early learning and childcare settings and schools demonstrate practice that is:

- Relational
- Developmentally appropriate
- Attachment based
- Trauma informed

These support every child to feel secure, valued and able to learn.

19. Whole School Inclusive Approaches

The presumption of mainstream is central to Shetland Islands Council's commitment to inclusion and to ensuring that all children and young people have their needs recognised, understood and supported. This includes children and young people with disabilities and/or additional support needs, who should be supported to learn, participate and thrive within their local schools and communities wherever appropriate.

Whole school inclusive approaches embed practices and ways of working in the everyday life of a school and ELC setting, creating an environment where children and young people with ASN and/or disabilities are supported to participate, learn and achieve. These approaches recognise that, while they are designed to respond to the needs of individual learners, the principles and practices embedded within them enhance experiences and outcomes for all.

A range of whole school approaches are being implemented across Shetland's Schools to support the needs of all learners including:

- Child Inclusion Research into Curriculum Learning and Education (CIRCLE)

- Nurturing, restorative and trauma informed approaches, as outlined in the Nurturing Relationships and Promoting Positive Behaviour Guidance
- Play based learning approaches
- Approaches to support dyslexia and literacy difficulties, as outlined in the identification and support of literacy difficulties guidance
- Practices and approaches that support neurodivergent learners
- Approaches that support effective communication, including total communication
- Support for transitions

Further details on these approaches are provided below.

CIRCLE

In Shetland, schools are expected to use the CIRCLE approach to support the development of inclusive practice and provide a consistent framework for identifying, understanding and responding to learners' needs. The approach guides the planning and implementation of appropriate supports, enabling all learners to participate, engage and achieve within an inclusive learning environment.



The CIRCLE Inclusive Classroom (CIC) scale aims to develop a classroom culture and learning environment where everyone feels valued and secure. Individual differences are respected and diversity is valued and normalised. It provides ratings on the physical environment, the social environment, structures and routines.

For those learners requiring further support the CIRCLE Participation Scale (CPS) is a tool to assess a child's participation in school life. It will help identify and record the learner's strengths, where support and strategies or further assessment should be targeted.

CIRCLE supports class teachers to ensure their classroom is set up in a way that is fully inclusive for all learners. It also helps teachers to identify and anticipate pupils' ASN and to plan practical strategies to support individual learners.

Play Based Learning

Play is a vital part of children's development, wellbeing and engagement. Through responsive, nurturing and meaningful play experiences, children develop knowledge and skills in ways that are motivating and inclusive. Consistent, developmentally appropriate play-based learning supports smooth and coherent transitions, ensuring children and young people experience consistency and progression in their learning.

Nurturing Approaches

Nurture is a core approach used across Shetland's schools and ELC settings to support the wellbeing of children and young people. It is recognised that everyone benefits from being understood, valued, cared for and supported to thrive.

Nurturing approaches forms a key element of local guidance on '*Nurturing Relationships and Promoting Positive Behaviour*'.

Inclusive Technology

Schools and ELC settings have access to a range of digital tools and resources designed to support learning, increase accessibility and enable all learners to participate fully in the curriculum.

These technologies can be used flexibly to support individual needs and promote independence, engagement and achievement.

The following tools are available to all children and young people:

- Clicker
- Microsoft Word and Word Online (available through Office 365 in Glow)
- Immersive Reader (available through the Edge browser)
- Text to speech
- Speech to text

Adopting Inclusive Practices - Ways of Working to Support Neurodivergent Learners

Shetland is committed to developing a neuro-affirming approach that recognises and values developmental differences through a strengths and rights-based approach. This focuses on understanding and responding to each child and young person's individual identity, strengths and needs, by providing appropriate support and adaptations that enable them to participate, learn and thrive, rather than seeking to change or 'fix' differences.

National Autism Implementation Team (NAIT) Key Messages:

- Prioritise the environment first
- Provide predictability
- Make learning meaningful
- Seek to understand distress
- Ensure adjustments are anticipatory
- Adopt a neuro-affirming approach
- Create welcoming, inclusive environments where every child and young person feels valued and that their needs have been anticipated
- Promote positive expectations and opportunities for success through inclusive practice and supportive environments

For more information see: [National Autism Implementation Team](#).

20. Additional Support

Using staged intervention as part of the GIRFEC framework, schools identify and support children and young people whose needs require support beyond what is available through universal provision. Some learners may require additional, enhanced or intensive levels of support. Where appropriate, individualised plans, including IEPs, CSPs and Child's Plans, are used to identify targets and desired outcomes, coordinate support and monitor and review progress.

Support may include adaptations to the curriculum, learning and teaching approaches, support strategies, learning environments, communication methods, specialist equipment and resources, as well as training and professional learning opportunities to build staff capacity.

Guidance on the Identification and Support of Literacy Difficulties and Dyslexia

Shetland Islands Council endeavours to ensure equitable and appropriate learning and teaching for children and young people with literacy difficulties including dyslexia.

Shetland Islands Council adopts the Scottish National Working Definition of Dyslexia and recommends the use of the Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit which provides a collaborative, holistic approach to meeting learners needs.

Further guidance and resources are available to support practice:

[What is Dyslexia? | Addressing Dyslexia Addressing Dyslexia Addressing Dyslexia Addressing Dyslexia](#)
[Dyslexia](#)
[A Technology Guide to Creating a Dyslexia Friendly Classroom](#)

Reasonable Adjustments / Assessment Arrangements

Class teachers work collaboratively with ASN specialist staff, children and young people, and their parents/carers to gather evidence over time and identify appropriate supports. This ensures that learners are familiar with the arrangements and resources available to them, including the use of digital examination papers where appropriate, in line with national guidance.

Class teachers, ASN specialist staff and the school's Qualifications Scotland coordinator work closely together to ensure that assessment arrangements are identified, planned and implemented effectively, enabling learners to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in a fair and accessible way.

Advice and support for assessment planning is available through a range of services, including the Education Outreach Service (EOS), helping to ensure that individual needs are accurately identified and appropriately met.

While the term "special arrangements" is often associated with formal examinations, it is important to recognise that these adjustments form part of a broader approach to learning and assessment across the curriculum. Such arrangements are designed to promote equity, accessibility, and inclusion for all learners.

Parents/carers and young people are encouraged to contact the school to discuss reasonable adjustments or assessment arrangements. This will usually involve the class teacher, pupil support teacher, or ASN teacher.

Further information on assessment arrangements, including examples of the types of support that can be provided by schools, is available via:

[Assessment arrangements resources - Qualifications Scotland](#)
[Digital Assessments for Students with ASN](#)

[Information on Additional Support Needs and Assistive Technology](#)

[English as an Additional Language \(EAL\)](#)

For pupils and/or their families who have EAL and require access to translation or interpretation support see:

[Translation and Interpreting Support – Shetland Islands Council](#)
[Diversity and Inclusion – Shetland Islands Council](#)

[Children and Young People from Traveller Communities](#)

Shetland Islands Council follows the 2018 Guidance [Improving educational outcomes for children and young people from travelling cultures: guidance](#) and is committed to promoting equitable access to education for children and young people from travelling communities.

Shetland Islands Council works collaboratively with travelling families to support engagement with education, including access to school through enrolment or temporary enrolment arrangements where appropriate. Where children and young people are educated out with a school setting, families can be supported through links with the Education Support Officer (ESO) Inclusion with responsibility for home education.

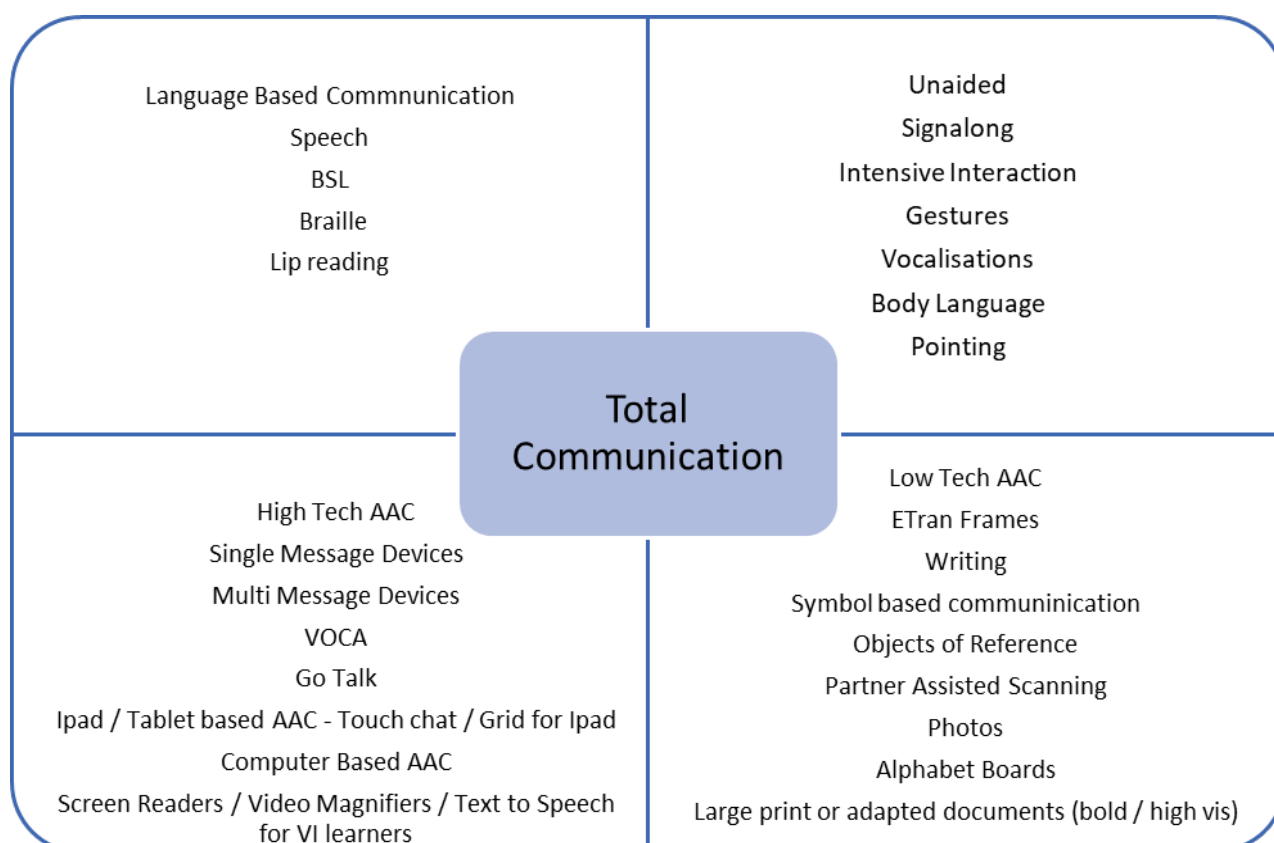
Shetland Islands Council is a member of the Scottish Traveller Education Programme (STEP) and the Traveller Education Network (TENET), providing access to specialist advice, guidance and resources to support inclusive practice.

Please see the link below for further information:

[Included, Engaged and Involved Part 1: A Positive Approach to the Promotion and Management of Attendance in Scottish Schools](#)

[Total Communication](#)

The Sensory and Communication Service, working in partnership with Speech and Language Therapy and Educational Psychology draw on a 'Total Communication' approach which ensures children and young people who require augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) have access to the right range of communication supports, as outlined:



21. Enhanced Support and Intensive Support

The starting point for all children and young people in education in Scotland is the assumption that a child or young person will attend their local school. This is based on Scotland's inclusive approach which seeks to ensure that wherever possible children and young people, including those with ASN, thrive as part of their class, school and wider community.

Therefore, the foundation for support at the enhanced and intensive level is a whole school inclusive approach.

Shetland builds on the whole school inclusive approach by providing additional supports for children and young people who experience significant barriers to learning, development, require enhanced and/or intensive support. These supports are tailored to individual needs and may include:

- Enhanced staffing, with specialist skills, knowledge and experience
- Resources to meet ASN, including inclusive and accessible indoor and outdoor learning environments and curriculum
- Strong partnerships with families and community services

Prior to the update of the Learning Estates Strategy 2021-2031, there had been a commitment towards 'Enhanced Provision' for identified schools across the authority. In keeping with the publication of Supporting Children's Learning Code of Practice Statutory Guidance on the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, the Council will now ensure that *at least one school in each geographical cluster* reflects the Accessibility Design Brief.

We have two special units in Shetland which are based in Lerwick. Bells Brae Primary School and the Anderson High School. More information is available on the website via:

[Additional Support Needs Information – Shetland Islands Council](#)

Additional Support Needs Teacher (Intensive Support)

Intensive Support Teachers are cluster-based teachers whose role is to support schools in providing quality learning for children and young people with complex needs. This will be done through a professional, values-based practice, which is based upon the social model of disability. They work with school leaders to ensure that the team around the child are supported to identify and build upon the learner's gifts, capacities and skills. They carry out the five roles of the SfL Teacher:

- i. Consultation with colleagues, external agencies, parents etc.
- ii. Planning learning and teaching to aid overcoming learning barriers.
- iii. Identification and assessment of barriers to learning.
- iv. Partnership working with specialist services.
- v. Continuing professional development and sharing expertise.

Service Level Agreements/Contracts and Subscriptions

The Education and Learning Service holds certain Service Level Agreements (SLA) and subscriptions which support its function with regard to learning, teaching and inclusion. These include:

Speech and Language Therapy (S<) - [Speech and Language Therapy – NHS Shetland](#) Shetland Islands Council has a partnership agreement with S< which is currently under review. S< provides support to children and young people with speech, language, communication and swallowing. They provide advice and support to children and young people at the universal, targeted and individualised level and work, providing advice and support to staff and schools.

CALL Scotland - [CALL Scotland](#) - Shetland Islands Council has an SLA with CALL Scotland. This provides access to specialist assessment and support of pupils with complex additional support needs who require technology to access the curriculum and/or AAC. They also provide professional development to staff and access to information and websites, loans of equipment and use of a specialist library.

CALL Scotland also provides access to [Books for All](#). This helps the Council to fulfil duties under the Equality Act 2010 to provide information in an accessible format. Many "print-disabled" pupils can benefit from learning resources in alternative formats. For example:

- Students who have a *physical difficulty* with holding books or turning pages can access materials in a digital format on the computer or device.
- Students with *visual impairment, specific learning difficulties, dyslexia, or reading difficulties* can read material if it is printed in a larger/different font, on coloured paper or displayed on a screen. Pupils with reading difficulties can also have the text read out by the computer or by listening to audio books.

- Students with *learning difficulties* may benefit from simplified language, books printed in a simpler font or layout, from books with symbols or from audio sources.
- Students with *hearing impairment* may need simplified language, audio books or multimedia resources with signed video.

Guide Dogs Scotland - [Guide Dogs Scotland](#) | [Guide Dogs](#) Shetland Islands Council has in place an SLA with Guide Dogs Scotland, who provide a range of services to help children and young people live actively, independently and well with sight loss.

Scottish Online Lessons - [Online School Support](#) | [Primary & Secondary Lessons](#) Shetland Islands Council holds licences for these which are aligned with the Curriculum for Excellence and promote equity of learning, including access out with the classroom at a time and paces that suits them.

Widgit - [Widgit Online](#) The Educational Psychology Service (EPS) is running a trial of Widgit with 20 users able to access the resource. The purpose of this is to help strengthen the use of visual supports at all levels, from symbolising the environment at the universal level, to targeted/enhanced and intensive by creating individualised visual supports from timetables and schedules to social stories and communication boards.

Widgit also includes a dual language feature, which supports students with EAL.

22. Outreach/Peripatetic Services

Education Outreach Service

The Education Outreach Service (EOS) works in partnership with others to promote inclusion and improve outcomes for children and young people across Shetland. The service aims to promote a flexible approach to support inclusive practice and provision within Education and Children's Services, to enable all children to achieve their potential.

The EOS is made up of the following services:

- Inclusion and Engagement Support Service (previously the Additional Support Base and Home-Link).
- Pre-School Home Visiting Service.
- Sensory and Communication Service.

For more information about how to access the EOS please see: [Education Outreach Group \(ASN\) Request for Involvement](#).

Sensory and Communication Service

The Sensory and Communication Support Service is made up of Vision Service, Hearing Service and Communication Service including Intensive Interaction.

Vision Service

The Vision Service is staffed by two part-time teachers who are Qualified Teachers of Visual Impairment (QTVI). This means they have the mandatory specialist qualification that enables them to support pupils who have a visual impairment. In addition to this, the EOS has three Learning Support Workers (LSWs) who are qualified in Braille stages 1 and 2 and for the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) courses for Visual Impairment – ‘Facilitating Independence’ and ‘Partners in Learning’.

The Vision Service works with babies, children and young people up to the age of 19 with a visual impairment. It becomes involved following a referral by hospital specialists, a parent/carers, a school or partner agency. Ongoing involvement is based on individual need and is reviewed regularly.

The Vision Service provides support with the following:

- Carrying out a Functional Vision Assessment (FVA) of a child’s vision, how people use vision for everyday life, with recommendations of how the child’s needs can best be met.
- Providing resources on the sensory/experiential curriculum and deliver sessions for those with a visual impairment and additional difficulties.
- Working in partnership with teachers in settings where pupils have a visual impairment.
- Monitoring a pupil’s progress, provide reports and recommendations and contribute to a Child’s Plan and school review meetings.
- Information, practical help, advice and training.
- Support in the use of specialist resources, including technology, to promote independence and access to the curriculum.
- Advice and support regarding inclusion.
- Offer alternatives to using print.
- To teach Braille to identified pupils.
- Assist with special arrangements for exams.
- Contribute to the transition process.

Through an SLA with Guide Dogs Scotland, and in line with the UNCRC, all children and young people with a Visual Impairment are offered an assessment/input from a Mobility and Habilitation Specialist, who visits termly. A referral for this service comes directly from Vision Service. The input focuses on:

- Mobility training, daily living and life skills for pupils with visual impairment.
- Providing guidance on physical adjustments and improving access to the school environment, through Environmental Access Advice reports.

Hearing Support

The Hearing Support Service works with babies, children and young people from 0 – 19 years. It is staffed by a Teacher of Deaf, (currently in training), a Communication Support Worker, (currently training in British Sign Language (BSL)), and shared Learning Support Workers, (trained in Signalong). This service provides:

- Visits to settings to provide direct support for individual pupils with hearing loss and BSL input.
- Home visits and support at transition times.
- Links and work with Audiology departments in Lerwick, Aberdeen and Crosshouse Cochlear Implant Centre in Glasgow.
- Support in the use of specialist resources to promote independence and access to the curriculum.
- Training for settings, including on the use of Soundfield Systems, Deaf Awareness, supporting the use of hearing aids and cochlear implants and curricular advice.
- Links with British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (BATOD) and the Scottish Sensory Centre (SSC).

Intensive Interaction Service

The Intensive Interaction Service is an integral part of the Total Communication approach and is staffed by one full-time teacher, who has completed the Intensive Interaction Institute co-ordinators training and one LSW (trained to module 2). The Intensive Interaction Service works with children and young people from the age of 2-19 years. The service becomes involved following a referral by a school or partner agency.

Educational Psychology Service

The Educational Psychology Service (EPS) works in partnership with [Education Outreach Services](#) and others to promote inclusion and improve outcomes for children and young people across Shetland.

The service is made up of 2.5 full-time equivalent, Educational Psychologists (EP's), an Autism and Neurodiversity Teacher (part-time) and an Education Outreach Worker (part-time).

The service provides advice and support to children, families, schools and other agencies on all aspects of ASN, child development and learning and is available to children and young people from birth to 24 years and their families/carers.

The EPS consult with parents, carers, schools and partners and have a role in staff development and training across schools and partner agencies. The service also has a role in policy and planning within the Local Authority to support all children and young people to achieve their potential.

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/sh/siceps/>

For the role of EP's and more information please visit [Enquire](#).

School Counselling Service

The School Counselling Service (SCS) delivers one to one counselling to children and young people in schools and is also a resource to wider school communities, including parents, carers and staff.

One to one School Counselling is available to pupils aged 10 to 18 years:

- Sessions can be delivered online, in person or over the phone.
- Sessions normally take place weekly.
- Are accessed from a safe, confidential base.
- Counselling sessions usually continue throughout school holidays.

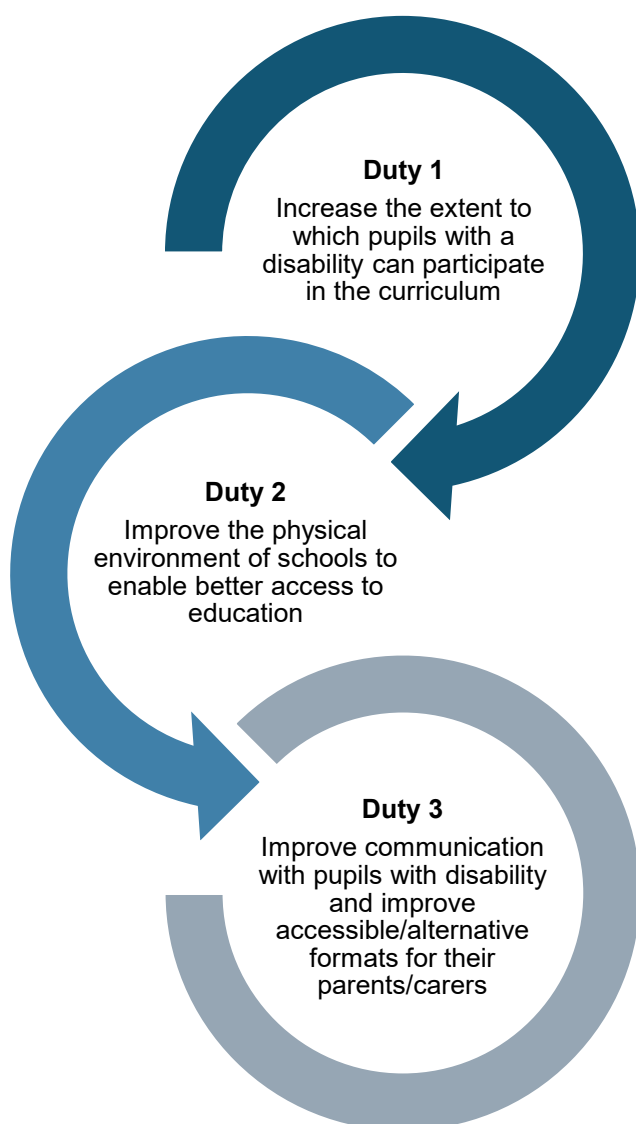
School Counsellors work with the team around each young person wherever they can to ensure that counselling is the best fit and offered at the right time. The service works in partnership with Education and other services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and the School Nursing Service to promote inclusion and improve outcomes for children and young people across Shetland.

Access to School Counselling should be part of a holistic approach to supporting mental health and emotional wellbeing and it is expected that school based strategies will be ongoing with any child or young person.

Each school is allocated a School Counsellor who works closely with them to help children and young people access the School Counselling Service. Schools have dedicated members of staff (Link workers - usually Pupil Support or Head Teacher) who normally requests counselling for a child/young person. Requests for counselling can also be made by parents/carers or by the young person themselves. For more information and how to access please see:

[School Counselling Service – Shetland Islands Council](#)

Shetland Islands Council
Accessibility Strategy
2026 - 2029



- 1.1 Children and young people have improved access to digital tools and assistive digital technology where required to support curricular access.
- 1.2 Staff have a greater understanding of their duties under relevant legislation and can apply this knowledge to improve access to the curriculum.
- 1.3 Children and young people with complex needs are supported by well trained staff with appropriate expertise and resources.
- 1.4 Access to the curriculum will be improved through effective planning and transition processes.

- 2.1 Children and young people learn in spaces which meet their needs.
- 2.2 Learning environments will have appropriate signage and visual supports to support access.
- 2.3 Educational establishments will use assessment information and data to ensure access to physical learning environments based on individual needs.
- 2.4 Physical barriers to access are reduced through robust transition planning processes.

- 3.1 Children and young people, parents and carers will benefit from clear communication which is written in plain English and available in different formats suitable to their needs.
- 3.2 Children and young people will be involved in decisions which affect them and have opportunities to express their views.
- 3.3 Strong partnerships across Allied Health Professionals and multi-agency partners will support children and young people.
- 3.4 Develop and raise awareness of translation services and accessibility of information.

Accessibility Action Plan 2026-2029

Duty 1: Increase the extent to which pupils with a disability can access the curriculum				
Outcome	Action	Timescales	Measures	Responsibility
1.1 Children and young people have improved access to digital tools and assistive digital technology where required to support curricular access.	Ensure the Education and Learning Digital Strategy includes a plan to increase access to accessibility tools and assistive digital technology.	2026 - 2028	Education and Learning Digital Strategy. Qualifications Scotland (QS) results / alternative arrangements using digital tools.	ESO Digital QIOs QIM
1.2 Staff have a greater understanding of their duties under relevant legislation and can apply this knowledge to improve access to the curriculum.	Develop and deliver a programme of professional learning. Informed level training (accessibility) available on iLearn. Ensure that relevant staff engage in the Curriculum Improvement Cycle with an inclusion lens.	2026 - 2028	Staff confidence and practice improved. iLearn created and available. Uptake of professional learning opportunities. Ongoing evaluation of training.	QIO Inclusion QIOs VSHT/EOS/EPS Workforce Development School staff QIM

1.3 Children and young people with complex needs are supported by well trained staff with appropriate expertise and resources.	ASN Intensive Support Teachers are in place, and a network has been established. Trial of POTERIS. Trial of Trellis. Appoint a Virtual School Headteacher (to oversee the Education Outreach Service and Intensive Support Network as part of remit).	2026 – 2027	Professional learning programme developed for Intensive Support Teachers. Network for Intensive Support Teachers established. Trial complete and findings shared. Virtual School Headteacher appointed.	Inclusion Team LTA Team School staff EOS & EPS CEO QIM QIO Inclusion
1.4 Access to the curriculum will be improved through effective planning and transition processes.	Update Admissions Policy. Update post school transitions operational guidance to accompany post school transitions policy.	2026 – 2027	Admissions policy updated. Operational guidance complete.	QIO Inclusion Inclusion team Transitions – short life working group

	CIRCLE to inform curriculum planning and delivery.	Ongoing/Review 2028	Quality Indicators within <i>How Good is Our School?</i> CIRCLE on School Improvement Plans and impact evidenced in Standards and Quality Reports.	QI Team
			CIRCLE Audit/impact survey.	EPS EOS
			Evidence through School Improvements Visits (SIVs) / associated data.	QI/QIO Inclusion EPS
	SCERTS to inform curriculum planning and delivery as required.	Ongoing/Review 2028	SCERTS Practitioner Network established. Audit of progress/impact.	EPS QIO Inclusion ESO
	ASN staff are using Milestones to support progress.	Ongoing/Review 2027	Evidence collated via SIVs and attainment meetings.	QIO Inclusion
	Respond to the Support for Learning (SfL) Review findings.	2026 -2028	Reports to Project Board.	SfL Project Board and Project Team
Yearly Progress & Next Steps				

Duty 2: Improve the physical environment of schools to enable better access to education and associated settings				
Outcome	Action	Timescales	Measures	Responsibility
2.1 Children and young people learn in spaces which meet their needs.	Implementation of CIRCLE in all schools.	Ongoing/Review June 2028	CIRCLE on School Improvement Plans and impact evidenced in Standards and Quality Reports (SQR). CIRCLE Audit/impact survey. Evidence through SIVs and associated data.	Inclusion Team EOS/EPS CIRCLE Trainers School staff
	Continue to develop the Learning Estates steering group meetings as the programme of works progresses.	2026 – 2029		Executive Manager – Learning Estates and steering group members
2.2 Physical barriers to access are reduced through robust transition planning processes.	Ensure building upgrades and adaptations are timely and	Ongoing	Updated Accessibility Design Brief	Executive Manager – Learning Estates

2.3 Learning environments will have appropriate signage and visual supports to enhance accessibility. 2.4 Educational establishments will use assessment information and data to ensure access to physical learning environments based on individual needs.	responsive to changing needs.			
	Review of signage in all schools.	2026 – 2028	Review completed and actions identified	Learning Estate Officers EOS
	Trial of Widgit.	2026 – 2027	Trial complete and findings shared	Principal Educational Psychologist
	GIRFEC review to consider child's planning processes informing access to learning environments.	Ongoing	CIRCLE Data Risk Based Performance Management actions complete. Evidence from SIVs School Improvement Plans	
	Ensure that <i>at least one school in each geographical cluster</i> will reflect the Accessibility Design Brief.	Ongoing	Progress update/reporting processes	Executive Manager Learning Estate
	Respond to the SfL Review findings.	2026 – 2027		SfL Review Project Board & Project Team
Yearly Progress & Next Steps				

Duty 3: Improved communication with pupils with a disability and improving accessible/alternative formats for their parents/carers				
Outcome	Action	Timescales	Measures	Responsibility
3.1 Children and young people, parents and carers will benefit from clear communication which is written in plain English and available in different formats suitable to their needs.	Respond to the SfL Review findings.	June 2028	Communication formats assessed and meeting required standards of accessibility.	SfL Project Managers Inclusion Team QIM QI Team
	Explore emerging platforms, including Microsoft AI tools.			
3.2 Children and young people will be involved in decisions which affect them and have opportunities to express their views.	Local GIRFEC refocus – Project Manager appointed and GIRFEC refresh.	2026 – 2028		Inclusion Team ESO Digital EOS
3.3 Strong partnerships across Allied Health Professionals and multi-agency partners will support children and young people.	Review the partnership agreement with S<	2026 – 2029	Partnership agreement in place and shared with relevant partners.	Director Programme Manager - Fairer Futures
	Continue to work closely with partner agencies to develop shared understanding and practice.			GIRFEC Strategy Group S< EPS

3.4 Develop and raise awareness of translation services and accessibility of information e.g. alternative formats/languages.	Explore emerging platforms, including Microsoft AI tools.	2026 – 2027/Ongoing		ESO Digital Inclusion Team EOS
Yearly Progress & Next Steps				

Glossary

ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
ASN	Additional Support Needs
AAC	Alternative and Augmentative Communication
BSL	British Sign Language
BATOD	British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People
BSL	British Sign Language
CAMHS	Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CIRCLE	Child Inclusion Research Into Curriculum Learning and Education
CICS	CIRCLE Inclusive Classroom Scale
CPS	CIRCLE Participation Scale
CSP	Co-ordinated Support Plan
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ELC	Early Learning and Childcare
EOS	Education Outreach Service
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
EPs	Educational Psychologists
ESO	Education Support Officer
FVA	Functional Vision Assessment
GIRFEC	Getting it Right for Every Child
IEP	Individualised Education Plan
LSW	Learning Support Worker
NAIT	National Autism Implementation Team
RNIB	Royal National Institute for the Blind
SCS	School Counselling Service
SIP	School Improvement Plan
S<	Speech and Language Therapy
SQR	Standards and Quality Report
SSC	Scottish Sensory Centre
STEP	Scottish Traveller Education Programme
SfL	Support for Learning
TENET	Traveller Education Network
QToD	Qualified Teacher of the Deaf
QTVI	Qualified Teacher of Visual Impairment
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
VI	Visual Impairment
VOCA	Voice Output Communication Aid