

WORCESTERSHIRE
CHILDREN FIRST



Supporting children and young people who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

Draft specialist equipment in schools and educational settings

April 2021

Introduction

This policy is concerned with Children and Young People attending Worcestershire maintained schools and academies who have complex health and/or medical needs and as a consequence, require specialist equipment in order for them to:

- Access the school curriculum/environment to the maximum extent
- Manage health and personal care needs during the school day

The policy includes information about the responsibilities of schools, Worcestershire Children First (WCF), Worcestershire County Council (WCC), Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (HWCCG) and Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust (HWHCT) for the provision of specialist equipment (including assessment of need, funding, storage and maintenance). The policy is subject to sign off by HWHCT clinical policies group in respect to the responsibilities of health practitioners. The timescales for this sign off are given in the action plan at the end of the policy,

Throughout the policy the term 'schools' is used for convenience to include all mainstream and special schools including maintained schools, academies and independent schools, FE colleges and early years settings.

Specialist equipment refers to 'A piece of portable equipment which, having been assessed for by a relevant professional is required to avoid substantial disadvantage to a child with a complex disability. This equipment must be specialist or used for a specialist purpose i.e. relating to that child or young person's special educational need or disability and should facilitate access to the environment / facilities / curriculum.' The process relating to specialist equipment for children and young people with sensory impairments is included in the policy in Appendix 2 as arrangements for this group are managed by WCF's Sensory Impairment Team.

Arrangements for non-portable specialist equipment are given in Appendix 1 to this policy

It is intended that this policy will ensure transparent and consistent decision making and secure value for money in this area in the short term. It is recognised however that some aspects of the policy require review and wider engagement with settings, providers and parent carers to address a number of outstanding issues. The timescales for this review are included as an appendix to this document (Appendix 3). Governance of this review process will be through the SEND Improvement Board.

Statutory responsibilities

As part of their Accessibility Strategy, local authorities are required to set out what equipment or auxiliary aids schools and early years settings can be reasonably expected to provide from their own budget, and what is provided by the local authority.

Technical guidance for schools entitled 'Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Pupils' (EHRC, 2015) specifies the duties of schools from the Equality Act (2010):

From 1 September 2012 the reasonable adjustments duty for schools and education authorities includes a duty to provide auxiliary aids and services for disabled pupils.'

The duty is 'to take such steps as it is reasonable to have to take to avoid the substantial disadvantage to a disabled person caused by a provision, criterion or practice applied by or on behalf of a school, or by the absence of an auxiliary aid or service.

A school's duty to make reasonable adjustments is an anticipatory one owed to disabled pupils generally, and therefore schools need to think in advance about what disabled pupils might require and what adjustments might need to be made for them.

This statutory duty applies to all children and young people with a disability, regardless of whether or not they have an Education Health and Care Plan.

Under the statutory duties described in the Equality Act (2010) it is likely to be unlawful for a school to charge a pupil (or his parents) for making a reasonable adjustment in any circumstances, whatever the financial cost to the school and however the school is funded. The Equality Act duty applies to all schools in England and Wales irrespective of how they are funded. This includes Independent Schools and academies

Definitions

- **Disability:** The Equality Act 2010 states that 'a pupil has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a long term and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Physical or mental impairment includes sensory impairments such as those affecting sight or hearing.'
- **Substantial disadvantage** The Equality and Human Rights Commission defines this as being "anything more than minor or trivial. Whether or not a disabled pupil is at a substantial disadvantage or not will depend on the individual situation. The pupil must be at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with non-disabled pupils."
- **Augmentative and Additional Communication (AAC);** AAC covers a range of strategies, equipment, systems, methods and techniques used by children and young people who have speech, language and communication difficulties. These approaches may be unaided or aided and used to augment or provide alternative approaches that utilise visual, spoken or written mediums. It can include use of eyes, facial expression, gesture, signing, symbols, communication boards or books. AAC may incorporate the integration of different systems.

Identification of need

HWHCT Paediatric Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists will assess and advise on the specialist equipment required. This includes advising schools on equipment they need to provide to enable a child or young person to access education; the environment i.e. toileting facilities; dinner hall environment; to enable function and to promote independence as part of their holistic care in all environments. Where a child or young person attends a mainstream school, specialist teachers from the Physical Disability Outreach teams based at Regency High School and Chadsgrove School are also able to provide assessment and advice about equipment is needed and will seek the advice of a Paediatric Occupational Therapist and/or Physiotherapist as appropriate.

Funding of equipment

When working with Children and Young People with SEND it is essential for WCF, HWCCG, HWHCT and schools to demonstrate quality and productivity and to:

- Demonstrate improvements in outcomes for individual Children and Young People
- Show value for money

Value for money is not necessarily accepting the cheapest option but about delivering the best outcome for a given investment over time. Schools and services are expected to consider whether equipment bought can be used by other children wherever possible, to avoid unnecessary repeat purchases.

Mainstream Schools and EY settings

WCF fund Physical Disability Outreach Teams at Regency High School in Worcester and Chadsgrove School in Bromsgrove to develop and build the capacity of Worcestershire Schools and Early Years settings to fully include pupils with physical disabilities and deliver their entitlement in terms of curriculum access, physical access and personal care. Regency High School offers this service in the South of the county and Chadsgrove in the North (Bromsgrove, Alvechurch, Redditch, Kidderminster, Wythall and Rubery).

The Physical Disability Outreach teams loan specialist equipment to Mainstream Schools and Early Years (EY) settings to enable children and young people to access education. This includes support for recording and access to technology. In the latter scenario, following assessment, children are offered ICT hardware and/or software to support their access to classroom learning. Hardware such as an iPad and software such as CLICKER are issued to overcome physical issues being a barrier to learning.

Some of the equipment issued will have a dual role and will aid communication as well as recording (e.g. via switch work). Eye gaze technology will be issued only when it assists with recording, not as the child or young person's main means of communication.

Equipment issued by the Physical Disability Outreach Teams does not generally include voice output communication aids. These aids are assessed by the Speech and Language Therapy service and funded by health through the Access to Communication and Technology (ACT) Service in Birmingham.

<https://www.bhamcommunity.nhs.uk/patients-public/rehabilitation/act/>

Schools are expected to meet the costs under £15k of any outdoor ramps and rails in addition to maintenance of the site for a child with Physical Disabilities.

Details of the wider support offered by the two Physical Disability Outreach Teams and referral forms are available at the links below.

<https://regency.worcs.sch.uk/outreach/>

https://www.chadsgroveschool.org.uk/web/pd_outreach

For mobility and standing equipment, HWHCT Paediatric Physiotherapy Service assess need and provide a prescription identifying suitable equipment to meet these needs. Funding is then applied for through the CCG, and the equipment is supplied by Integrated Community Equipment Service (ICES) if the child has a Worcestershire GP. Physiotherapists will work with the family to identify where this equipment is best situated (e.g. home or school).

HWHCT Paediatric Physiotherapy Service also provide an orthotics service using Dacey's as their external provider for children and young people.

Contact details for the service are available at the following link:

<https://www.hacw.nhs.uk/services/service/physiotherapy-paediatric-88/>

HWHCT Paediatric Occupational Therapy Service assess needs and identify equipment required. Funding is then applied for via ICES through the social care budget for equipment used in the child or young person's home. Slings that are issued to families may also be used in school where convenient and by agreement between home, family and the service. Slings provided for home use will be maintained under LOLER guidelines by the ICES and will need to be available for this servicing with the hoist. If families choose not to hoist at home and a child is hoisted at school, slings will need to be purchased and maintained by school. Contact details for the Occupational Therapy service are available at the following link:

<https://www.hacw.nhs.uk/services/service/occupational-therapy-paediatric-89/>

Wheelchairs are assessed for by the HWHCT Worcestershire Wheelchair Service. Specialist clinicians within this service will assess for and provide a wheelchair in line with their service specification to allow a child or young person to have indoor mobility around their home. Powered wheelchairs may be considered when a child is unable to self-propel and has the potential to drive a powered wheelchair independently and safely. There is no lower age restriction. It should be noted that if the sole or primary reason for the request of a powered wheelchair is for use around a school/college, it will not be provided by the Worcestershire Wheelchair Service, (please refer to the wheelchair service specification for more detailed information).

Special schools

The cost of the majority of specialist equipment in Worcestershire Special schools needed for children and young people to access education is expected to be met from schools' budgets including place funding and Top Up Funding allocated to individual children and young people.

For mobility and standing equipment, HWHCT Paediatric Physiotherapy Service assess need and provide a prescription identifying suitable equipment to meet these needs. Funding is then applied for through the CCG, and the equipment is supplied by ICES (if the child has a Worcestershire GP). The physiotherapist would work with the family to identify where this equipment is best situated (e.g. home or school)

HWHCT Paediatric Physiotherapy Service also provide an orthotics service using Dacey's as their external provider for children and young people.

Standing frames, walkers, chairs used for mobility between home and school and slings issued to families which are also used in schools are funded from health and social care budgets.

The wheelchair service has a repair service, Rosscare, which can be contacted for urgent repairs. All prescribed wheelchairs will have this contact details on the chair.

Arrangements for Children and Young People living out of area who attend Worcestershire schools

If a child or young person does not reside within Worcestershire the school should request funding for specialist equipment from the home local authority. Any disputes about funding arrangements should be taken up directly with this authority and cannot be resolved by Worcestershire Children First. Where schools experience repeated difficulties with other Local Authorities in agreeing funding and provision of specialist equipment this should be raised with Worcestershire Children First SEND casework or Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group for discussion with colleagues in these home authorities. Final decision making about arrangements for children in Worcestershire schools resident in other areas remains with the home authority however and any complaints about the approach taken should be directed accordingly.

When a child resides in Worcestershire and is registered with a Worcestershire GP but attends an educational setting outside of the county, specialist equipment prescribed by Occupational Therapists will be funded by the Local Authority where the school is located where as specialist equipment prescribed by Physiotherapists, funding will be sought through the CCG.

Maintenance of equipment

Parents, carers, school staff and therapists are expected to monitor Physiotherapy equipment and notify the Physiotherapy Team with any issues. The Physiotherapy team then liaise with the ICES and the equipment company to replace or repair.

If schools have damaged or lost equipment they will be charged for replacements.

The ICES will maintain slings prescribed to the child where these are issued to the home. Appropriate insurance for specialist equipment is expected to be in place at a cost to the school.

Cleaning of equipment used in schools should be carried out on a regular basis by school staff to maintain hygiene, infection control, safety and prolong the life of the equipment.

The wheelchair service has a repair service, Rosscare, which can be contacted for urgent repairs. All prescribed wheelchairs will have this contact details on the chair.

Mainstream schools

The Physical Disability Outreach Teams visit schools frequently to make sure equipment is being used correctly and that it remains appropriate. The teams undertake regular servicing

of high low chairs. It is school's responsibility to pay for servicing of hoists and lifts every 6 months and changing beds annually.

Special schools

Special schools are expected to maintain any specialist equipment they purchase (including that which is assessed as being needed by the occupational therapy service).

Storage of equipment

Mainstream and special schools are expected to store specialist equipment in their buildings. Equipment should be stored safely and securely to avoid damage and/or loss. Some settings have been able to fund and build specific areas within school to ensure easy access to equipment.

Transfer of equipment between schools

Schools may arrange for or offer specialist equipment which has been used by Children and Young People to be passed onto another school when children move on. This is good practice where specialist equipment has been adapted for children's individual needs. Some schools also loan equipment when children transfer to another setting, which is then returned when it is outgrown. Loans are also made by some special schools to the PD Outreach teams for use in mainstream schools, when this is not being used by a child.

In some cases schools arrange for specialist equipment which has not been assigned to a specific child to be passed on when children leave and/or pass equipment onto families for use in the home. This needs to be a clinical decision made in agreement with the provider of the equipment and the child's therapy team, with ongoing relevance of the equipment established. Any decision to loan or transfer equipment between schools must be clearly recorded by the purchaser of the equipment as they may be contacted by the company providing the equipment in the event of a product recall or safety notice.

Links

Equality Act (2010)

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Pupils: Equality and Human Rights Commission (2015):

https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/reasonable_adjustments_for_disabled_pupils_1.pdf

Appendix 1

Arrangements for non-portable specialist equipment

Worcestershire Children First will fund non-portable specialist equipment such as fixed hoists where needed in mainstream and special schools for new buildings from capital funding only if such works are agreed and funded via the capital programme. Schools will entirely fund such equipment if the project does not fall within the capital programme. This will ensure that new builds are compliant with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Where mainstream schools require fixed specialist equipment as part of adaptations to Bathroom Management Areas which exceed £15k in existing buildings these will also be funded from capital funding again, only if such works are agreed and funded via the capital programme. Schools will entirely fund such equipment if the project does not fall within the capital programme

Special schools are expected to fund improvements to fixed specialist equipment in order to remain compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

Once fixed specialist equipment has been installed, it is the responsibility of both mainstream and special schools to maintain this to a high standard.

Appendix 2

Specialist equipment for Children and Young People with sensory impairments

Where recommended by a WCF Specialist Impairment (SI) team Specialist Teacher, Educational Audiologist or Habilitation Specialist, the following arrangements will apply.

Pupils aged under 16

WCF Sensory Impairment (SI) Team purchases the following for *ALL children in ALL educational settings* and loans for use in the setting for as long as required:

- Long canes and hoops
- Symbol canes
- First Perkins Braille*
- Low Vision Aids (magnifiers) – until Health assessment has taken place at LVA clinic and then Health will fund a permanent LVA – the team will trigger an appointment
- Small items such as bell balls, some LP/Braille books,
- Independent living skills items such as talking scales – for short term use – if required long term we will encourage setting to purchase

The SI team purchases the following types of equipment for loan to *all children WITHOUT an EHCP*:

- RHAs*
- Soundfield amplification*
- Specialist technology such as connect and learn* – will encourage setting to purchase in long term but will not withdraw the equipment

The SI team supports settings to apply for Top Up Funding *for pupils WITH an EHCP* for all large equipment needs such as:

- RHAs*
- Soundfield system*
- Specialist Technology eg Brailnote, connect and learn*
- Perkins Braille* if more than one required or if the loaned item has been broken (please note – the SI team will loan an item while funding is sourced if we have one in stock)
- Large items such as laptop, Braille translation software, embossers

All pupils with EHCP will have had the opportunity to loan and trial equipment before a request to purchase is made from Top Up Funding. A specialist in the team will source, cost and provide info to SEND services and the educational setting at the appropriate time and will not withdraw any equipment in use until a permanent item is sourced.

Educational settings need to purchase:

- Consumables such as batteries for loaned equipment
- Braille paper
- Large print books etc
- Inprint 3 technology package to assist the development of language (where advised by the Hearing Impairment Team)

When an item costs over £100 (as marked with an asterisk above) is loaned to a setting, settings are asked to complete a loan agreement, whereby they will add to their school insurance policy in case of fire or theft. In the event of a loss then the setting is asked to make a replacement for long term use through their claim. The SI team will loan a replacement in the short term if there is one in stock in order for pupil to experience minimum disruption and maximum access.

Post 16

Students without an EHCP attending school settings will be supported as above.

Students with an EHCP in school settings should have the equipment purchased via the plan, funded by Top Up Funding as described above.

Equipment can be loaned to Further and Higher Education establishments where traded support is commissioned from the SI team to support the young person and to ensure that equipment is quality checked and maintained.

Maintenance

All repairs to equipment on loan are funded through the SI team.

Appendix 3

Proposed plan for reviewing current specialist equipment policy

The following proposed plan will be overseen and delivered by multi-agency colleagues from WCF (SEND and social care), HWCCG and HWHCT with representation from Families in Partnership and mainstream and school settings. Project management will be provided by WCF as part of SEND improvement work in the local area.

Issue	Proposal	Timeline
Current draft policy not yet signed off by HWHCT clinical policies group in respect to the responsibilities of health practitioners.	HWHCT clinical policies group to sign off current policy in respect to the responsibilities of health practitioners.	June 2021
Lack of detailed published information about arrangements for collaboration between PD Outreach teams and HWHCT providers	Finalise collaborative document (PD outreach and HWHCT) detailing arrangements for mainstream schools	June 2021
Lack of published written policy regarding funding of substantive changes to buildings in mainstream schools to meet requirements of Equalities Act	Publish policy: 'Reasonable Adjustments for building adaptations in mainstream schools for children with disabilities'	June 2021
Inconsistency in approach to governance, decision making and safety of passing on and loaning equipment between schools	Seek feedback on current policy and reach agreement on process with schools and health providers	November 2021
Facility for loan and trial of specialist equipment is only available to mainstream schools.	Review impact of extending current facility for mainstream schools to include special schools.	November 2021
Lack of clarity about difference between equipment which is needed for access to	Clarify difference between these two types of equipment in an appendix to this policy and establish a multiagency decision	November 2021

education and equipment which is for health and wellbeing.	making process for any equipment which falls outside of this guidance.	
Storage of specialist equipment in special schools is challenging due to a lack of space	Raise with Joint Commissioning Group for consideration during 2021-22 financial year	April 2022
Funding of specialist equipment in schools for individual pupils can exceed place and top up funding	Consider through Top Up funding review	April 2022
Concerns raised about arrangements in place for maintenance of Occupational Therapy equipment in special schools	Raise with Joint Commissioning Group for consideration during 2021-22 financial year	April 2022
Clarify assessors / providers and identify different services e.g. Integrated Community Equipment Service (ICES)	Update policy and provide full information about assessors and providers	April 2022