

Summary

Accessibility plans as effective tools for inclusion in schools: Are they working?

About the DRILL Programme

DRILL (Disability Research on Independent Living and Learning) was an innovative 5 year, UK wide programme led by disabled people, for disabled people and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

Launched in 2015, the programme was managed by a partnership of Disability Action Northern Ireland, Disability Rights UK, Disability Wales and Inclusion Scotland.

The aim of the programme was to build better evidence about approaches which enable disabled people to achieve independent living. The findings from the projects it funded can be used to inform future provision across a wide range of policy areas, and give a greater voice to disabled people in decisions which affect them.

This is one of a series of summaries of the project supported by DRILL. Final reports, toolkits and summaries of all the projects are available from the DRILL website at www.drilluk.org.uk.

Overview of the project

This project looked at whether accessibility plans, a measure of the Equality Act 2010, are effective as drivers of inclusive education for disabled students.

Approach

The project carried out 12 focus groups across 7 English cities with disabled young people, parents of disabled young people and education professionals.

Semi-structured Interviews were also conducted with 5 disabled young people.

Two sets of digital questionnaires were also produced. The responses included 237 parents and 96 professionals.

Findings

Schools attended by the disabled young participants made little effort to publicise accessibility plans, although most professionals had some level of awareness of them.

Parents had great difficulty finding accessibility plans on school websites. It seemed that only professionals with direct involvement in their development knew how to access them.

Despite suggestions of co-production, no disabled young person or parents spoke of being involved in the development of accessibility plans.

Almost all participants agreed accessibility plans were ineffective in driving inclusive education unless their content was firmly embedded in school practice.

Disabled young participants with an ongoing need to receive information in an alternative format felt that this was not standard practice in their schools.

Most comments from the questionnaire revealed that parents received minimum information from their schools and had to actively search for details about their children's accessibility plans.

It was noted that practice varied greatly between schools, and information would usually be provided upon request.

Findings (continued)

Parents expressed a strong desire for their children to be able to access mainstream schools. They also felt it was essential that clear and transparent information about support was provided.

Lack of disability support within mainstream schools was a great concern for parents.

In general, education professionals were confident that their schools were equipped to admit disabled students.

Disabled young people did not receive appropriate support during school trips, and felt excluded in their school's social community.

School facilities were often not inclusive, especially in relation to students with mobility impairments.

Recommendations

The project outlined many recommendations, some of which are listed here. All recommendations are listed in the full report, which is linked below.

- Effective accessibility plans need to be understood, developed, implemented, monitored and reviewed to ensure they make a difference to disabled students' experiences
- A legal duty should be placed on OFSTED to routinely monitor the impact and implementation of accessibility plans. They should include their findings in school inspection reports.
- Teaching staff must structure their practices around a strong commitment to maximise all students' learning experiences
- Disabled students should have regular opportunities to give feedback and express their views on teaching practices
- All schools should be created, built and planned with disabled young people in mind
- Disabled people must be employed in positions of influence within schools and education policy-making platforms
- Opportunities should be created to improve communication between parents and professionals
- Schools must create more opportunities for disabled students to socialise with non-disabled children in accessible settings

Final report

[Accessibility plans as effective tools for inclusion in schools: Are they working?](#)

Please click on report name to read the full report.

Project partners

Alliance for Inclusive Education (ALLFIE)



University of Sheffield



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