

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEETHURSDAY 22 AUGUST 2019Report by Director of EducationDRAFT ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY**PURPOSE**

1. To seek elected member approval for the draft Accessibility Strategy.

RECOMMENDATION

2. Education Committee is asked to approve the draft Accessibility Strategy and instruct the Director of Education to implement the associated action plan.

BACKGROUND

3. The Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) (Scotland) Act 2002 (The Act), requires responsible bodies to prepare and implement long term accessibility strategies to improve over time access to education for pupils and prospective pupils with disabilities.
4. The strategy takes into consideration a range of legislation which relates to school education and disability including:
 - Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000
 - The Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) (Scotland) Act 2002
 - The Education (Additional Support for Learning)(Scotland) Act 2004 (amended 2009) (the ASL Act)
 - The Equality Act 2010
 - The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
5. The strategy complements and is consistent with a range of existing Departmental guidance including:
 - Getting It Right For Every Child, East Renfrewshire 2017
 - Standard Circular 12: Inclusion
 - Standard Circular 48: Schools Excursions and Educational Visits

REPORT

6. The attached draft strategy has been written by officers from the Education Department, led by the Head of Education Service (Equality and Equity) and links clearly to our community plan:
 - East Renfrewshire residents are healthy and active and have the skills for life, learning and work.

7. This strategy provides advice on how East Renfrewshire Council will meet the accessibility planning duties as stated in the Education (Disability Strategies and pupils' Educational Records) (Scotland) Act 2002:
- Improve the physical environment of schools, to enable better access to education and associated services
 - Improve access to participating in the curriculum for all children and young people who have a disability or additional support need
 - Improve communication with children and young people who have a disability or additional support need in relation to the provision of information in appropriate alternative formats, taking account of any support need preferences expressed by them or their parents
8. Critical activities are set out and the impact of these will be monitored, evaluated and reported on an ongoing basis through the Education Department's Standards and Quality Report.

CONSULTATION

9. In formulating this Accessibility Strategy, East Renfrewshire Council Education Department has demonstrated its commitment to taking into account the views of the workforce. Staff from mainstream and secondary schools, Health & Safety and HSCP (Moving & Handling) contributed during this process.

FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS

10. The cost of implementing the Accessibility Strategy will be met through the Education Department's devolved budget.

RECOMMENDATION

11. Education Committee is asked to approve the draft Accessibility Strategy and instruct the Director of Education to implement the associated action plan.

Mhairi Shaw
Director of Education
22 August 2019

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Local Government Access to Information Act 1985

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Background papers
1. The Early Years Taskforce: Shared Vision and Priorities
2. Early Years Strategy
3. Parenting Strategy

Key Words
East Renfrewshire Council
Strategy
Accessibility
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Disability

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY

2019 – 2022

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Section 1 BACKGROUND

The Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) (Scotland) Act 2002 (The Act), requires responsible bodies to prepare and implement long term accessibility strategies to improve over time access to education for pupils and prospective pupils with disabilities. These duties came into force in October 2002.

The meaning of disability

'A person has a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities.'

Equality Act 2010

Terminology

The Act uses the term 'pupils with a disability' but, in line with the Equality and Human Rights commission (EHCR) this strategy uses the terminology disabled pupils or disabled learners.

Purpose of East Renfrewshire Council's Accessibility Strategy

This guidance provides advice on how East Renfrewshire Council will meet the accessibility planning duties as stated in the Education (Disability Strategies and pupils' Educational Records) (Scotland) Act 2002:

- Improve the physical environment of schools, to enable better access to education and associated services
- Improve access to participating in the curriculum for all children and young people who have a disability or additional support need
- Improve communication with children and young people who have a disability or additional support need in relation to the provision of information in appropriate alternative formats, taking account of any support need preferences expressed by them or their parents

This strategy should be considered alongside a range of legislation which relates to school education and disability including:

- Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000
- The Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) (Scotland) Act 2002

- The Education (Additional Support for Learning)(Scotland) Act 2004 (amended 2009) (the ASL Act)
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

The strategy complements and is consistent with a range of existing Departmental guidance including:

- Getting It Right For Every Child, East Renfrewshire 2017
- Standard Circular 12: Inclusion
- Standard Circular 48: Schools Excursions and Educational Visits

Developing our Accessibility Strategy

An Education Resource Group chaired by the Head of Education Services (Equalities and Equity) was established in 2017. The review of the previous Accessibility Strategy and development of the current strategy was delegated to this group.

Group membership:

Janice Collins, Head of Education Services (Equalities and Equity)
Clare Creighton, Quality Improvement Officer, (Additional Support Needs)
Nick Smiley, Principal Educational Psychologist
Rosemary Crossan, Head Teacher, St John's Primary School (Behaviour Outreach)
Annie McGauley, Depute Head Teacher, Carlibar Communication Centre
John Moffat, Principal Teacher, Williamwood High School (Support Service)
Sarah Clark, Head Teacher, Isobel Mair School
Rob Lawson, Head Teacher, Giffnock Primary School
Anthony Creighton, Depute Head Teacher, St Ninian's High School

In addition the following people contributed to the review and update of the strategy:

Joanne Flanagan, Health & Safety Advisor
Ruth Adams, Education Provision Manager
Patricia Martin, Moving & Handling Co-ordinator
David Gordon, Quality Improvement Officer, (Equalities)

Improve the physical environment of schools, to enable better access to education and associated services

Accommodation

The school estate in East Renfrewshire comprises of a range of properties, each with varying requirements to ensure they are as barrier free as possible. Some of the buildings date from the Victorian era and others are split level designs making adaptations difficult. Ongoing planning, investment and development has ensured that all schools and early years settings in East Renfrewshire are Disability and Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant and accessible for the children and young people currently in attendance.

We are responsive to individual needs and within available resources, we make school buildings as accessible as possible to the needs of all young people. In adapting our buildings we take into account physical access, use by young people with hearing/visual impairments and, in addition, more specific requirements that are made on an individual basis. These include the installation of ramps, high visibility handrails and staircases, sound systems, widened doorways, automatic doors, accessible toilets, showers and changing areas. Additional consideration is given to personal safety in certain settings, with controlled access for disabled learners.

Individual Personalised Evacuation Plans are in place for children and young people who require additional support during an emergency.

In the past few years East Renfrewshire Council has made a significant investment in its school estate. All building projects take account of the needs of disabled learners ensuring new and adapted buildings are fully accessible. As well as these major building works, every year the Council uses its capital programme to carry out modifications to existing schools to enable the buildings to be capable of delivering a modern curriculum for all pupils.

Almost all our nurseries and schools operate at full capacity, however creative management of space and human resources has allowed leaders to create quiet rooms, sensory rooms, play areas, nurture rooms, pupil support bases and other specific provision that meets the needs of disabled learners.

Regular meetings take place between the Quality Improvement Officer (Additional Support Needs) and Education Provision Manager to ensure that our buildings are fully inclusive and meet the specific needs of disabled learners. This is particularly key during important transition points for children and young people. Health and Safety Officers are also available to support during transition points, visiting establishments to ensure arrangements are in place prior to a disabled learner commencing their place. Close relationships with East Renfrewshire's Moving and Handling Co-ordinator, along with Physiotherapists and Occupational Health Professionals support this process.

A contract with Equipu is in place to ensure full access to specialist equipment and resources for all children and young people.

School Transport

East Renfrewshire Council continues to provide appropriate and accessible transport from home to school for children who:

- Attend an additional support needs school or service recommended by the Council
- Have been recommended for school transport for health reasons.

School Excursions / Extra Curricular Activities

When planning a school excursion / extra-curricular activity, all establishments undertake careful planning, making reasonable adjustments as appropriate, to ensure activities are accessible to all. Standard Circular 48 (School Excursions) provides detail on how schools can ensure disabled learners' needs are fully considered and accommodation is accessible. Our Health and Safety Officers carry out these checks prior to any residential centre being approved. Appendix 6 of SC 48 (Consideration for Young People with Additional Support Needs) provides further information to support school staff when planning excursions.

Priorities for Improvement

- Staff training will be provided to ensure that all Disability / ASN processes are known in relation to the physical environment and legislation.
- Audit premises and grounds in relation to the physical environment to inform the Council's Capital Programme.
- Respond to the increasing number of disabled learners with autism living in East Renfrewshire.

Improve access to participating in the curriculum for all children and young people who have a disability or additional support need

In East Renfrewshire Curriculum for Excellence is understood to mean the totality of experiences which are planned for children and young people, not just what happens in a classroom. Curriculum for Excellence provides a coherent, flexible and enriched curriculum from 3 to 18 which focuses on 4 contexts of learning:

- Curriculum areas and subjects
- Interdisciplinary learning
- Ethos and life of the school
- Opportunities for personal achievement

The curriculum has two stages: the broad general education (from the early years to the end of S3) and the senior phase (S4 to S6).

The broad general education has five levels (early, first, second, third and fourth). The senior phase is designed to build on the experiences and outcomes of the broad general education, and to allow young people to take qualifications and courses that suit their abilities, interests and ambitions.

In order to provide access to this curriculum for all learners, education is provided in a variety of establishments and settings which are age and stage appropriate.

The needs of almost all learners are met within existing planning structures and are supported through highly effective learning and teaching. Our GIRFEC staged intervention processes, are implemented when the need for additional support is identified. This additional support can be provided from resources within the school setting or from other services. In exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary to consider a more specialist provision for an individual learner. The Education Resource Group considers all referrals and using robust assessment decides on the most appropriate provision.

In East Renfrewshire, learning environments include:

- Mainstream settings
- 1 Specialist Unit (early years and primary)
- 1 communication service (secondary)

- A sensory support service (Visual and Sensory Impairment)
- 3 outreach services (2 communication and 1 behaviour)
- 1 Special school

In addition opportunities are also provided by corporate resources, external agencies, HE establishments, FE colleges, training providers, employers and the voluntary sector.

A range of approaches, techniques and strategies are used to enable young people to access an appropriate curriculum. In some cases the curriculum itself is adapted and/or enhanced through *differentiation*. The differentiated curriculum leads to planning individual programmes of work, which are informed by the views of parents and pupils and by the assessments of teaching and support staff. Schools are committed to regularly reviewing the provision for disabled learners in light of the pace of advances in Digital Technology.

Many varied provisions are in place to provide a flexible curriculum to disabled pupils such as sensory experiences, work experience placements and the development of independent living skills.

The additionality which we have been able to provide in terms of aids and adaptations in response to recommendations by health professional colleagues has enhanced the curriculum. One significant development has been the advent of multi-sensory and soft play rooms in our schools to provide curricular experiences for many children. In addition equipment and software in these rooms is updated on a regular basis to provide best possible sensory experiences for children and young people, particularly those with ASD.

Disabled pupils are supported in external Scottish Qualification Authority examinations and in internal assessments. Certain pupils may require among other things, additional time, adapted texts, digital papers, use of IT, a scribe or reader and any other reasonable adjustment as agreed by the SQA.

The sensory support service monitor closely and provide additional aids for children with visual or hearing difficulties. Digital technology and sensory experiences are used to enhance their access to the curriculum. Awareness raising on the effects of visual and hearing impairment is a key focus for staff development. Our teachers of the deaf have experience and relevant qualifications to work with children with all levels of hearing loss, and also auditory processing. The team also have relevant qualifications to enable them to teach children with a visual impairment, including Cerebral Visual Impairment. A wide range of skills are taught to children including Braille.

Access to specialist ICT equipment, which can be used both at home and in school is available to pupils. Specialised software is also available to allow curricular access for many pupils. Our contract with *CALL Scotland* supports this process.

A major issue for the Council to address is the increasing numbers of children with communication disorders, Asperger's syndrome or autism and the inclusion of these children in mainstream schools. The number of part time placements from the Carlibar Communications Centre into mainstream schools will require to be supported by additional staff.

A Support for Learning Forum meets 4 times a year where managers involved in supporting learners needs meet to learn together, share practice and stay informed of developments and initiatives.

Our schools are exceptionally well supported by our Educational Psychology Team and other relevant professionals. Collaborative learning is encouraged between all to ensure the needs of disabled learners are met and they are fully included in their learning environment. In addition clear guidance is available, including:

- Dyslexia Guidance for Schools
- Dyscalculia Guidance for Schools
- Single Agency GIRFEC Guidance
- ASD Advisors Strategic Programme
- Mental Health Framework

The Equality Act 2010 requires schools to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled pupils are not at a substantial disadvantage. When deciding if a reasonable adjustment is necessary, schools need to consider potential impact on disabled pupils in terms of time and effort, inconvenience, indignity and discomfort, loss of opportunity and diminished progress. Reasonable adjustments are made by schools themselves and ensure that disabled learners are not disadvantaged in any area of the curriculum.

Priorities for Improvement

- Implement a CLPL Inclusion programme.
- Provide further opportunities for all staff to improve their understanding and working knowledge of strategies, supports and resources to support children with Autism in mainstream settings.
- Sensory Support Service will work collaboratively with mainstream settings to extend the skills and confidence of the workforce in meeting the needs of children with a hearing or visual impairment.

Improve communication with children and young people who have a disability or additional support need in relation to the provision of information in appropriate alternative formats, taking account of any support need preferences expressed by them or their parent

East Renfrewshire Council is committed to continually improving communication with all learners and their families. All information is available in a range of formats taking into account language spoken, cultural factors and literacy challenges. Our schools use a wide range of channels to communicate, including emails, text messaging, websites, apps and social media as well as regular review meetings involving children and their parents in order to gather and record views as part of our staged intervention process. We are mindful that communication methods do not disadvantage any users, and as such it is common practice to discuss and agree an approved format.

The Department employs Bilingual Support Assistants and they are often used to support communication with children, young people and parents. We also work in partnership with Resolve Scotland to support further our communication with parents by providing mediation services. In addition translation and interpretation services for children or parents with a disability are available when required.

Many staff have undergone Makaton training and have become Makaton Champions within their schools.

It is recognised that good use of ICT supports learners with additional support needs. There is evidence of excellent use being made of ICT across East Renfrewshire, including the use of multisensory technology. Partnership working with colleagues in the HSCP enables the best communication support for children and young people to be identified via the Scottish Centre of Technology for the Communication Impaired (SCTCI).

East Renfrewshire Council's has invested significantly in ICT hardware and software over the past few years, with all schools having access to a range of resources including:

- Desktops
- Laptops
- Tablets
- Chrome books
- VR Headsets
- Acti-vote pads
- Coding kits
- Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Devices

In addition, many establishments are making use of ICT equipment which supports disabled learners, this includes:

- Mobile touch technology
- Screen magnification
- Text to Speech Software
- Eye Gaze systems
- Induction loops, etc

All our schools have wireless networking available as well as some other venues across the Council such as libraries, health centres and Council buildings, which enables access to a further range of learning tools via. GLOW.

Our Sensory Support Service also provide advice and support to schools and families on alternative formats to share information with disabled learners with sensory impairments.

Priorities for Improvement

- Explore further digital solutions for disabled children who are not able to access the physical environment.
- Develop a policy on safe use (and lending) of equipment.
- Continue to explore and develop the range of formats that information is available in e.g. braille, digital formats, audit formats, symbol systems.
- Introduce a children and young people inclusion forum.

Section 5 CONSULTATION ON THE ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY

A draft of the accessibility strategy was shared with a range of stakeholders prior to final publication. These included:

- School staff
- Parent Councils
- HSCP Colleagues
- NHS (GGC)
- Third Sector partners
- Pupil Councils (Primary)
- Senior Pupil Forums
- Education Committee

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Section 7

Accessibility Driver Diagram (Action Plan)

Population Outcome

The outcome we want is:

East Renfrewshire residents are healthy and active and have the skills for life, learning and work.

Intermediate Outcome

We will know we are making good steps along the way WHEN:

Children and young people are healthy, active and included.

Children and young people raise their educational attainment and achievement and develop the skills they need.

Our contribution:

So what we need to achieve is:

Improve the physical environment of schools, to enable better access to education and associated services.

Improve access to participating in the curriculum for all children and young people who have a disability or additional support need.

Improve the physical environment of schools, to enable better access to education and associated services.

Critical Activities:

By.....

Ensuring that all Disability / ASN processes are known by staff in relation to the physical environment and legislation

Auditing premises and grounds in relation to the physical environment to inform the Council's Capital Programme.

Responding to the increasing number of disabled learners with autism living in East Renfrewshire.

Delivering an ongoing high quality Career Long Professional Learning Programme.

Providing further opportunities for all staff to improve their understanding and working knowledge of strategies, supports and resources to support children with Autism in mainstream settings.

Enabling the Sensory Support Service to work collaboratively with mainstream settings to extend the skills and confidence of the workforce in meeting the needs of children with a hearing or visual impairment.

Exploring further digital solutions for disabled children who are not able to access the physical environment.

Developing a policy on safe use (and lending) of equipment.

Exploring and developing the range of formats that information is available in e.g. braille, digital formats, audit formats, symbol systems.

Introducing a children and young people inclusion forum. 13

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