



Education & Cultural Services

Policy: Accessibility Strategy

Author: Mary Rankine
Service: Education Development

Last Updated: July 2009

C O N T E N T S

1 Introduction 1

1.1 The Purpose 1

1.2 The Planning Cycle 1

1.3 The Scope of the Strategy: Who is covered? 1

1.4 A Summary of the Legislative Requirements 1

Standards in Scotland’s Schools etc Act (2000) 1

Additional Support for Learning Act (2004) 2

Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 2

The Education (Disability Strategies and Pupil Education Records) (Scotland) Act 2002 2

1.5 Links with other West Lothian policies and plans 3

Focus on Learning (2003) 3

For West Lothian’s Children (2004) 3

A Continuum of Support for children with Additional Learning Needs (2004) 3

2 Accessibility Strategy – Evaluation 2003-2005 / Action Plan 2006-2008 3

2.1 Summary Of Progress 2003-2005 3

1 Curricular Access 3

2 Access to the Physical Environment 4

3 Improving Communication and Information 5

2.2 Identification of priorities for development 2006-2008 5

3 The Strategy 2006-2008 5

3.1 Improving Curricular Access 5

Staff Development 6

Staffing 6

Resources and support 7

Extra-curricular 7

Inclusion Audit 7

3.2 Improving Physical Access to Schools 7

3.3 Improving Access to Information and Communication 8

Information in Alternative Formats 8

Strategic Parental Consultative Group 8

Pupil Forum 8

Communication of Written Information between Agencies 8

Information for Parents 8

4 Evaluating And Monitoring Arrangements 9

5 Resources 9

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Purpose

Under the terms of the Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) (Scotland) Act 2002, local authorities are required to produce a strategy and subsequent strategies to improve access to education for pupils with a disability. West Lothian Council produced its first strategy in 2003. Progress in implementing this first strategy must now be reviewed and the next strategy drafted.

1.2 The Planning Cycle

The Act requires Local Authorities to monitor and review progress and prepare further Accessibility Strategies. The first strategy could cover less than 3 years to allow for alignment with other planning cycles but subsequent strategies must cover a 3-year period.

The first West Lothian Accessibility Strategy covered the years 2003-2005. The second strategy will cover the period 2005-2008. In 2007 the strategy will be reviewed and areas for development identified for the next 3 years. It is important at that time to harmonise the Accessibility Strategy with the Integrated Children's Services planning process. The 2008-2011 Accessibility Strategy will be incorporated within the next Children's Services Plan.

1.3 The Scope of the Strategy: Who is covered?

The Act uses the same definition as that in the Disability Discrimination Act. This states that "*a person is disabled if he or she has a mental or physical impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day to day activities*".

West Lothian Council recognises that many children who do not meet this definition of disability face barriers to learning and the Accessibility Strategy therefore includes all children and young people with disability and with Additional Support Needs as defined in the Education Additional Support for Learning Act 2004.

1.4 A Summary of the Legislative Requirements

Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act (2000)

This Act requires education authorities to secure that the education provided is directed towards the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the child or young person to their fullest potential.

The Act further specifies that there is a presumptive entitlement to mainstream education unless certain very specific exceptions apply.

This Act provided the basis for the establishment of National Priorities for improving education. Improving the inclusion and equality of treatment of pupils with additional support needs is a specific focus of National Priority 3. This means that arrangements must be put in place to ensure that pupils with additional support needs have equal access to a balanced curriculum and the facilities and trained staff that they need to achieve their fullest potential and not suffer from discrimination or disadvantage.

Additional Support for Learning Act (2004)

This Act introduces a comprehensive new framework for supporting children and their families. The framework is based on the new concept of additional support needs. This term applies to children who require additional support, long or short term, in order to help them make the most of their school education.

Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001

This Act amended Part 4 of the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act and works together with the planning duties set out in the (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Education Records)(Scotland) Act 2002

It is unlawful to discriminate against disabled pupils or prospective disabled pupils in the provision of education and associated services and in respect of admission and exclusion.

There are 2 duties involved in ensuring that education providers do not discriminate against disabled pupils:

- Do not treat disabled pupils less favourably and
- Take reasonable steps to avoid putting disabled pupils at a substantial disadvantage. (This is known as the reasonable adjustment duty.)

The Education (Disability Strategies and Pupil Education Records) (Scotland) Act 2002

This is the Act that requires education authorities to prepare and implement **accessibility strategies** to improve over time access to education for pupils and prospective pupils with disabilities.

The Accessibility Strategy must cover 3 areas as follows:

1. Increase the extent to which pupils can access and participate in the curriculum
2. Improve the physical environment of schools to make them more accessible
3. Improve communication with pupils of school information and in particular providing information in alternative forms.

1.5 Links with other West Lothian policies and plans

West Lothian Council is committed to improving inclusive practice and equality of treatment for all children. This commitment to provide an inclusive education service of the highest quality to all pupils is demonstrated in the following policy papers and guidelines.

Focus on Learning (2003)

This is the key West Lothian Council policy. It sets out respective responsibilities and describes the levels of need and range of interventions which are available.

For West Lothian's Children (2004)

This policy promotes a more structured approach to joint agency working and better integrated delivery of services to children.

A Continuum of Support for children with Additional Learning Needs (2004)

This is the key policy in setting out a management framework for staged intervention.

2 ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY – EVALUATION 2003-2005 / ACTION PLAN 2006-2008

2.1 Summary Of Progress 2003-2005

West Lothian Council has made significant progress in improving access to its educational services in all 3 of the areas covered by the Accessibility Strategy as follows:

1 Curricular Access

Over the 2 years, 2003-2005, West Lothian Council has provided schools with increasing support and advice to enable them to be more accessible and inclusive.

The launch in 2003 of West Lothian Council's policy and practice document "Focus on Learning" set out the framework of support provision available to schools for pupils with additional support needs. In September 2004 this framework was strengthened with the introduction of the policy "Working Together A Continuum of Support for Children with Additional Support Needs in West Lothian." This paper sets out how the different levels of additional needs should be supported and managed at different stages.

A Development Officer was seconded to take forward aspects of the first Accessibility Strategy.

Short Life Working Groups, which included parents were set up to consider guidelines and training requirements.

Disability awareness raising courses were planned and offered to all schools. Capability Scotland and the Scottish Child Law Centre provided the training. The feedback from the courses was positive.

A thorough training needs analysis was undertaken across all schools to establish the professional development required to enable schools to be more accessible and to be better equipped to make provision for all children with Additional Support Needs.

An extensive, comprehensive training programme was produced. It covers a wide range of areas of Additional Support Needs and is offered to all staff in schools and to staff from other disciplines and agencies. The programme was introduced for session 2005-2006. Review and evaluation will be taken forward within the next strategy.

Work has been undertaken to improve the educational planning procedures for individual children. A standardised IEP format was produced. Work continues in this area.

Procedures were reviewed for identifying the levels of additional resources allocated to schools to support pupils with additional support needs and new arrangements put in place.

The transition process was reviewed and suggestions for improvement drafted. Guidelines will be issued to schools in 2006.

2 Access to the Physical Environment

The building programme to improve access to all schools has made greater progress than anticipated. Adaptation work has been undertaken at 11 of the 14 nurseries, at 51 of the 65 primary schools and at 7 of the 11 secondary schools. These schools are now more accessible to children with disabilities.

An access audit of all schools in West Lothian was completed in 2004 and priorities for further improvements listed. Work has been undertaken to address the most pressing priorities.

Access to transport for pupils with a physical disability has been improved. A list of approved contractors was drafted and circulated to all schools. This list will be re-issued during session 2005-2006.

To ensure the safety of all staff and pupils revised risk assessment procedures have been introduced to all schools and staff have undertaken training.

Manual handling training has been arranged and delivered.

Improvement has been made to the process of making provision for specialist equipment.

3 Improving Communication and Information

Pupil involvement in school decision making and planning was considered and mechanisms for pupil participation and consultation were developed and piloted in the St Kentigern's cluster. Representative pupil consultative arrangements were set up for Looked After Children in West Lothian.

Material was prepared to support children in attending their review meetings.

An audit was undertaken to establish which alternative formats of information are required by parents.

Training in communication strategies was held for school staff where pupils have hearing or visual impairment and awareness raising was offered to all schools in preparation for prospective pupils.

2.2 Identification of priorities for development 2006-2008

Priorities for future development were agreed by the Accessibility Strategy Planning Group. This followed:

- Evaluation of the success of the first strategy
- Assessment of achievement of goals and targets
- Feedback from users
- Consideration of training needs analysis
- Consideration of the access audit
- Collation and analysis of information from consulted groups and individuals

3 THE STRATEGY 2006-2008

3.1 Improving Curricular Access

The provision of further training and additional support material for schools continues to be seen as of key importance in achieving curricular accessibility.

Policy, advice and guidelines for schools

The core support policy paper, "Focus on Learning" will be reviewed and revised to take account of developing provision in west Lothian and the requirements of the Additional Support for Learning Act 2004. The policy paper, "Focus on Inclusion" will be launched and introduced to all schools. This paper will offer support and advice to schools to enable them to evaluate better and to improve the quality of their inclusive practice.

Practical guidelines will be produced to assist with the planning of school and post school transitions and admissions. This will ensure that arrangements and adaptations are considered and are in place for individual children before they begin at their new school or post school placement.

To further improve accessibility and assist schools with their planning a Practical Guide to the Disability Discrimination Act will be produced along with examples of reasonable adjustments that have been made locally. This will be circulated to all schools at an early date.

Staff Development

The comprehensive training programme will be evaluated and the impact on teaching and learning monitored. The programme will continue to be developed and courses offered to support all school staff on a range of topics. The staff development programme will cover all aspects of Additional Support Needs and improving accessibility of schools and the curriculum in particular. Information giving courses will be provided on certain conditions.

A selection of courses will be provided to familiarise staff with a wider range of learning and teaching approaches.

Courses will be run each year on disability awareness raising and The Disability Discrimination Act.

Many of the courses will be made available to colleagues from other agencies such as health or social policy.

Consideration will be given to including the voluntary sector and parents in training opportunities.

Staffing

A well motivated, high quality support staff is crucial to ensure successful inclusion of many pupils.

Work continues in reviewing the conditions of service of support assistants. A consultant has been recruited and will take this development forward. To improve the career structure consideration is being given to drafting a generic job description for all child support workers. Different competence levels will be recognised within this.

To create a well-trained and qualified pool of support assistants a Professional Development Award will be introduced.

Resources and support

To ensure that all children receive the support they need from respective agencies to access the curriculum a Multi-agency Individualised Educational Plan will be developed for West Lothian. This will ensure consistency in the planning process and consistency with the Co-ordinated Support Plan.

Multi-agency planning and joint service delivery will be fostered through the establishment and effective operation of Cluster Resource Groups.

To maximise the capacity of mainstream to be accessible work will be undertaken with special schools to develop outreach support. This will allow for sharing of expertise and offer practical support for colleagues to widen and extend the range of skills and strategies available to them in mainstream schools including providing the elaborated curriculum.

Extra-curricular

Schools in West Lothian are now adept at making curricular adaptations and are skilled in a range of teaching approaches and strategies. Consideration now needs to be given to how schools can improve the accessibility of extra-curricular activities, including school excursions and after-school opportunities. Guidelines will be produced to assist schools with the planning of excursions. The range of after school opportunities will be identified and proposals made to improve accessibility.

Inclusion Audit

All schools will use the quality indicators from a Focus on Inclusion to audit the quality and level of inclusive practice at their school.

3.2 Improving Physical Access to Schools

The long-term aim of West Lothian Council is to ensure that all school provision will be fully accessible by 2015.

Information from the Access Audit will continue to be used to produce a programme of on-going improvement in the physical accessibility of schools. Since the audit was completed improvements to accessibility have been achieved through the capital programme and through extensive maintenance work. The first step will be to review the audit and establish the current accessibility position.

From the review of the audit an accessibility chart will be drafted. This will clearly set out in spreadsheet format the level of accessibility of each school. This spreadsheet will facilitate planning and the drafting of future access plans.

The level of accessibility in schools for children with hearing and visual impairments will be established. This information will be included on the spreadsheet.

All future major refurbishments and rebuilds will ensure full accessibility. Through a third Private Public Partnership Armadale Academy and Deans Community High School will be rebuilt by 2009. Major refurbishment is planned at Inveralmond, The James Young High School and St Kentigern's by 2009.

3.3 Improving Access to Information and Communication

Information in Alternative Formats

Information and Guidelines on good practice will be produced to advise schools on making written material and information accessible in alternative formats. A budget for this requires to be identified. An annual audit of need will be introduced.

Strategic Parental Consultative Group

A Strategic Parental Advisory/Consultative Group will be set up. This will facilitate communication between parents and the education authority.

Pupil Forum

The feasibility of establishing a Pupil Forum will be explored. This would provide an opportunity to better communicate with pupils and to ensure that better account is taken of their views.

Communication of Written Information between Agencies

The written communication of information between agencies such as education, health and social policy will be reviewed to ensure that it is readily available to support educational planning for children and young people and that any duplication is minimised.

Access Needs of Parents

Schools will take steps to identify and address any access needs of parents who have a disability which may affect physical access or parental involvement. This should be undertaken at the time of enrolment of the child. Parents should be encouraged to discuss any additional needs with the school.

Information for Parents

Information will be produced for parents on Additional Support Needs policies, procedures and provision and services.

4 EVALUATING AND MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

The Accessibility Strategy Steering Group will continue to meet on a quarterly basis to monitor and evaluate the progress. This will be reported to the Additional Support for Learning Team.

5 RESOURCES

Resources will be met from existing funding and will be taken forward as part of the Continuum of Support strategy.

Customers with Special Requirements