

# EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE : 14 SEPTEMBER 2004

## ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY

### Report by the Executive Director (Educational and Social Services)

#### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek approval for an updated accessibility strategy for schools.

#### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Education (Disabilities Strategies and Pupils' Records) (Scotland) Act was passed by the Scottish Parliament in March 2002. This Act requires each local authority to prepare and implement an accessibility strategy. National guidance was issued in order to help responsible bodies, including education authorities, meet the accessibility strategy requirements of the new act; which came into force in October 2002. Amended regulations specify that each local authority should have produced an accessibility strategy by 1 April 2003. The guidance also supports the changes put forward by the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001) which became effective from September 2002.
- 2.2 To meet the legal requirements an initial strategy was approved by Education Committee on 01 April 2003. The Scottish Executive approved an approach under which this first document would be replaced by a subsequent strategy covering 3 years. In this way it would better harmonise this strategy with other planning initiatives, notably the Children's Service Plan. Members will recall that a separate and complementary strategy covering post-16 provision for Community Learning and Development was approved by Committee on 25 May 2004.
- 2.3 The Strategy must cover 3 main areas for pupils with a disability, namely
- i) access to the curriculum;
  - ii) access to the physical environment of the school; and
  - iii) communication with pupils of school information and, in particular, providing information to pupils with disabilities in alternative formats within a reasonable timescale.

#### **3. THE STRATEGY**

- 3.1 A copy of the Accessibility Strategy is available in the Members' Information Point.
- 3.2 In order to produce this accessibility strategy the Educational and Social Services Department formed a working group. The group consisted of Head Teachers, a quality improvement officer (chair), personnel from the architects

and technical department, council access officer, early years officer and two parents of children with additional support needs. The work of this group was being complemented by a corporate group carrying out an authority-wide audit of council properties, in line with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements, which includes schools.

- 3.3** Consultation has taken place with the Disability Rights Commission, Head Teachers, parents, senior staff in all authority departments, school boards, pupil councils, Access Forums and young people whom themselves have an additional support need. The working group also, in addition, attended a national conference run by The Disability Rights Commission and the Scottish Executive on producing an accessibility strategy.
- 3.4** In late 2003 the Scottish Executive produced a summary of the first round of production of accessibility strategies. This included a number of very helpful suggestions and ideas on best practice. Wherever possible, these suggestions have been included in this new strategy.
- 3.5** The main changes that have been made to the strategy from the initial version are:
- a significant restructuring to make it easier to read;
  - removal of a number of technical terms and sections to simplify it for the reader;
  - incorporation of certain changes in the law on additional support needs and freedom of information;
  - references to recent complementary strategies on inclusion; and
  - an update related to public private partnership (PPP) proposals.
- 3.6** It is an expectation that the strategy will be widely available. This includes the preparation of a summary leaflet (attached at Appendix 1) and it being available in a variety of formats and community languages. Copies of the full strategy will be disseminated to all educational establishments and services where it will be accessible to all staff. Training will be provided on issues covered by the strategy.
- 3.7** A multi-disciplinary working group will be convened to take forward the action plan and to review progress.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1** There will be significant implications arising from this legislation in regards to the cost of bringing all schools in East Ayrshire up to DDA standards. These costs will be managed through existing capital allocations and the PPP project
- 4.2** The costs of producing the strategy and the associated summary leaflets will be met within the existing publications budget.

#### **5. LEGAL/POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1** This strategy will have clear implications for the Estates Management Plan.

**5.2** The production of the strategy has taken account of the Council's obligations under the race relations legislation.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**6.1** It is recommended Members:

- i) approve the Accessibility Strategy 2004 – 2007; and
- ii) otherwise note the contents of this report.

**John Mulgrew**  
**Executive Director (Educational and Social Services)**

GRS  
2 August 2004

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- i) Disability Discrimination Act (1995)
- ii) Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000
- iii) Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001
- iv) Education (Disability Strategies and Access Pupils Records) (Scotland) Act 2002
- v) Accessibility Strategy, Education Committee 01 April 2004
- vi) Post 16's Accessibility Strategy for Community Learning and Development , Education Committee, 25 May 2004

Members wishing further information should contact Graham Short, Head of Service: Quality Improvement, Tel: (01563) 576089.

### **IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER : GRAHAM SHORT**

Appendix 1 : Summary Information Leaflet

## WHAT PART CAN I PLAY?

There are some basic support strategies which may enhance access to educational needs and disabilities. For example, we can review access regularly and ensure that school materials, policies and practices do:-

- not discriminate against young people with disabilities and special educational needs
- use clear text (for example font Arial, size 12) and plain English in reports, letters and curriculum materials and align text to the left margin
- use contrasting colours when preparing worksheets
- always make direct eye-contact with young people with a disability
- involve young people in decisions related to services and provision of support for them
- ensure that materials and text books are placed at a suitable level in classrooms so that pupils with physical disabilities can access materials independently
- use examples from the schools code of practice to improve provision

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

## Contact:

East Ayrshire Council  
Dept of Educational and Social  
Services  
Council Headquarters  
London Road  
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KA3 7BU

Phone: (01563) 576089

## Accessibility Strategy Employee Guide



EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL  
DISABILITY GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this guide is to help all employees gain an awareness of the specific needs of people with a disability.

The term “disabled” relates to anyone who has a physical or mental impairment, which has an effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

## DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT 1995

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) is the result of many years of campaigning by people with disabilities for equality of access to employment and services.

As a consequence the Council became legally obliged to make “reasonable adjustments” to provide access to its services for people with disabilities. These “adjustments” have to be in place by the year 2004. A new law introduced in September 2002 widened the scope of the DDA to include all of the education services provided by local authorities. East Ayrshire designed an Accessibility Strategy to implement the adjustments.

## THE EDUCATION DISABILITIES STRATEGIES AND PUPILS' RECORDS ACT 2002

The Act stated that all local authorities needed to prepare and implement an Accessibility Strategy by 1 April 2003.

The strategy covers a period of three years and address three aspects of improvement:

- Access to the curriculum
- Access to the physical environment of schools
- Improving communication and the delivery of school and early years information

Strategies are available in alternative forms, for example, audio tape or braille, on request.

## THE ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY

The purpose of the Accessibility Strategy is to ensure that all providers of education take reasonable steps to amend policies, procedures, or practices which might discriminate against young people with disabilities and special educational needs. The law covers the way in which schools admit pupils, teach them and how they provide activities like school trips or after school clubs.

## WHAT SHOULD EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS BE DOING NOW TO IMPLEMENT THE ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY?

- Review Improvement Plans, policies, handbooks etc to ensure they reflect the duties of the Disability Discrimination Act and the Accessibility Strategy.
- Take account of guidance on transition arrangements for children and young people with a disability from each stage of education
- Participate in training sessions on disability and accessibility issues organised by East Ayrshire
- Provide information to the Education Authority on the establishment's implementation of the staged intervention approach

- Implement curriculum packages provided by East Ayrshire as appropriate
- Implement guidelines on the evacuation procedures for children and young people with a disability
- Provide information and advice for children and young people with a disability in an appropriate format
- Consult with all pupils including those with a disability about the services we provide in our establishments
- Be aware of the contents and implications of information leaflets on specific services we provide for young people with special educational needs and disabilities
- Review arrangements for school trips and outings, transport, study support, school plays and out of school care
- Make special arrangements for internal/external assessment as necessary
- Ensure all children can, so far as possible, be included in extra-curricular and out-of-school activities.