

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEE25 SEPTEMBER 2025Report by Director of EducationDRAFT ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY 2025-28**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to update Elected Members on the approaches taken to improve accessibility for children and young people with additional support needs (ASN) in East Renfrewshire settings and schools, and to seek approval for the Accessibility Strategy 2025–2028.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. Education Committee is asked to:
 - a) note and comment on the progress made in advancing accessibility for learners with ASN in East Renfrewshire settings and schools;
 - b) approve the Accessibility Strategy 2025–2028; and,
 - c) ask the Director of Education to support all educational establishments to implement this strategy.

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
 - UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024
5. The strategy complements and is consistent with a range of existing Departmental guidance including:
 - Getting It Right For Every Child, East Renfrewshire 2025
 - Standard Circular 12: Inclusion
 - Standard Circular 48: Schools Excursions and Educational Visits

REPORT

6. This strategy sets out the vision that Education plan to achieve, the progress made to date and agreed actions to further improve accessibility. It aims to ensure those responsible for the delivery of education and ELC are aware of their legal duties and provides advice on how we 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
7. In East Renfrewshire, inclusion is understood within the broader vision of "*A Place to Grow*", our community wide commitment to ensuring that children and young people flourish, communities thrive, and everyone lives well.
8. Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences is the Education Department's vision statement. The statement signals the department's ambition for all children, young people and adults who use the education service.
9. Between 2018 – 2025 several actions were taken forward to improve accessibility for children and young people with additional support needs in East Renfrewshire Council schools and ELC settings including:
 - Establishment of a Specialist Provision Network to enable senior staff from specialist provisions to regularly meet to share expertise, collaborate and build skills and knowledge of staff;
 - Wider access to digital technology has been enabled for all, including disabled learners within East Renfrewshire education establishments;
 - Establishment of an Early Years Outreach Team to support inclusion for children in early years settings with social language and communication, sensory needs and dysregulated behaviours;
 - Planned refurbishments of schools and new builds, for example, recently opened joint campus Neilston Learning Campus, have considered access for pupils with disabilities.
 - Moving and Handling training has been provided for staff supporting children and young people with a physical disability;
 - Establishment of an additional primary specialist provision in Carolside Primary School in order to meet the needs of the increasing number of children with complex additional support needs;
 - A Youth Rights Association has been established to support the participation and involvement of children and young people. There are protected spaces within this group for children and young people with a disability;
 - The ASN sub-group of our children's services partnership has developed, in conjunction with Voluntary Action East Ren, a directory of different organisations and clubs that are available to support children and young people with a disability in East Renfrewshire; and,

- A post-school transition fair was delivered to provide information and advice to children, young people and those who support them with a focus on preparation for the post-school world.

CONSULTATION AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING

10. In formulating this Accessibility Strategy, East Renfrewshire Council Education Department has demonstrated its commitment to taking into account the views of the key stakeholders through the ASN Review and associated workstreams. This has included teachers, pupil support assistants, child development officers, Depute and Head Teachers, pupils, parent/carers and our Children's Services Partnership.

FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS

11. Any financial implications will be met from the Education Department's budget.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

12. An Equality, Fairness and Rights Impact Assessment has been undertaken and has found that the Accessibility Strategy is likely to have a positive impact on children, young people and their families.

CONCLUSION

13. A review of the Accessibility Strategy will be undertaken in June 2028 to evaluate progress over the full three years and to identify new actions for the following three years. Measurement of progress will be informed by feedback and evidence provided by ELC settings and schools, through relevant quality improvement activity and by information provided by children and young people with additional support needs, including disability, and their families. A report on the impact of delivery over the three years will be reported to East Renfrewshire Education Committee in session 2028-29.

RECOMMENDATION

14. Education Committee is asked to:
 - a) note and comment on the progress made in advancing accessibility for learners with ASN in East Renfrewshire settings and schools;
 - b) approve the Accessibility Strategy 2025–2028; and,
 - c) ask the Director of Education to support all educational establishments to implement this strategy.

Mark Ratter
Director of Education
25 September 2025

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Appendices
Appendix 1: Accessibility 2025-28

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**EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY
2025 – 2028**

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Introduction

This strategy provides direction for all involved in delivering education for pupils with disabilities within East Renfrewshire Council. It also sets out for pupils with a disability, members of their family, and people who advocate for them, the actions the Education Authority and schools are taking to improve accessibility to Early Learning and Childcare (ELC), education, and related activities.

The Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils Education Records) (Scotland) Act 2002 requires all Education Authorities to prepare and implement an Accessibility Strategy for all schools for which they are responsible showing how the Education Authority and schools plan to meet their duties under the Act.

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 covers the provision of all ELC and school education provided by the local authority both within and out with schools, including school activities, for disabled children and young people and those with other protected characteristics. This means that it covers education within:

- Settings such as ELC settings, schools, community centres and halls.
- After school clubs and activities provided within Council owned school premises, including those run or managed by external agencies.

Schools will ensure that accessibility is integral to the life and work of the school. This strategy sets out the vision that Education plan to achieve, the progress made to date and agreed actions to further improve accessibility. It aims to ensure those responsible for the delivery of education and ELC are aware of their legal duties and assists establishments by providing links to helpful checklists and guidance for ELC settings and Schools.

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

The Equality Act (2010) provides a legislative framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all and to deliver a simple, modern, and accessible framework of discrimination law which protects individuals from unfair treatment and promotes a fair and more equal society.

The definition of disability can include what may be termed 'hidden' disabilities such as dyslexia, autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and speech and language impairments. For some children and young people, they may have both a disability and an additional support need.

A child or young person is said to have 'additional support needs' if they need more or different support to what is normally provided in ELC or schools for children of the same age. As the definition of additional support is so broad and covers many reasons, it means that not all children and young people with additional support needs also have a disability. Therefore, a child or young person does not need to have a disability to require additional support for learning.

For a child or young person to be disabled, the impairment requires to be substantial and have an adverse effect; that is, more than minor or trivial. For example, a child may have asthma or diabetes, but the condition may not be severe enough to have a substantial impact on the child's ability to carry out everyday activities. In that case the child would not be disabled. An impairment has a substantial adverse effect on the ability of the person concerned, if but for these measures taken to correct it, the impairment would be likely to have that effect. For example, a person with significant hearing loss may be able to hear reasonably well with hearing aids but without them would have little functional hearing. That person would be disabled. However, a person with poor eyesight which is corrected by spectacles or contact lenses is not deemed to be disabled on account of the eyesight impairment (Equality Act, Schedule 1, paragraph 5).

The meaning of 'long term effects' is also covered in Schedule 1 of the Equality Act. An impairment is considered to have a long-term effect if:

1. It has lasted for at least 12 months, or
2. It is likely to last for at least 12 months, or
3. It is likely to last for the rest of the life of the person affected.

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.

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
- UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024

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

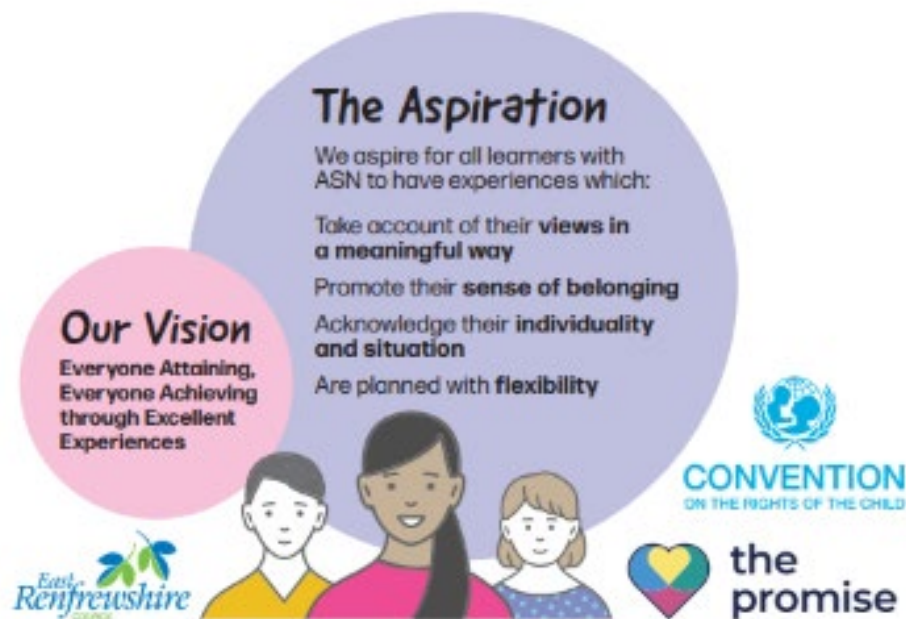
- Getting It Right For Every Child, East Renfrewshire 2025
- Standard Circular 12: Inclusion
- Standard Circular 48: Schools Excursions and Educational Visits

Our Vision

In East Renfrewshire, inclusion is understood within the broader vision of “*A Place to Grow*” our community wide commitment to ensuring that children and young people flourish, communities thrive, and everyone lives well.

Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences is the Education Department’s vision statement. The statement signals the department’s ambition for all children, young people and adults who use the education service

The vision and aspiration for learners with ASN in East Renfrewshire is:



What has already been achieved?

Between 2018 – 2025 several actions were taken forward to improve accessibility for children and young people with additional support needs in East Renfrewshire Council schools and ELC settings. In 2021/22, East Renfrewshire Council undertook a strategic review of our approach to meeting the needs of learners with additional support needs. As a result of this work, significant

progress has been made in improving experiences and outcomes. Achievements in relation to the three duties related to improving accessibility are outlined below.

DUTY 1: All pupils with disabilities are able to access a full curriculum which meets their education and life needs

- A network of ASN co-ordinators across all settings meet regularly to share good practice, build the skills and knowledge of staff, and improve the quality and consistency of approach across establishments.
- We have established a Specialist Provision Network to enable senior staff from specialist provisions to regularly meet to share expertise, collaborate and build skills and knowledge of staff. As a result of this, all staff from the 4 specialist provisions came together for the first time to share learning during an inset day in session 2024-25.
- Wider access to digital technology has been enabled for all, including disabled learners within East Renfrewshire education establishments.
- The PT Equity (Digital) has worked closely with Quality Improvement Manager Inclusion and CALL (Communication, Access, Literacy and Learning) Scotland to enhance our approaches to how we analyse and assess the needs of learners and identify appropriate hardware and software; maximising the learners' ability to communicate and / or access the curriculum.
- Guidance on access to additional assistive technology and CALL Scotland assessment advice and support has been issued to all educational settings.
- A local authority dyslexia identification guidance has been provided to all schools. This is as an assessment, identification and support toolkit that aligns closely to the Dyslexia Scotland's Addressing Dyslexia and the Dyslexia toolkit.
- The Circle Framework is being implemented across all primary schools to support accessibility and participation for all. An inclusive environment enables all learners at a universal level to be as independent as possible. It will be rolled out across Early Learning and Childcare settings and secondary schools in session 2025-26.
- Disabled pupils are supported in external Scottish Qualification Authority examinations and in internal assessments. Certain pupils 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.
- Multi-agency training on a range of themes related to ASN including autism spectrum condition to support practice has increased staff understanding and confidence. This has enabled staff to adapt the learning environment to increase access for all children.
- Establishment of an Early Years Outreach Team to support inclusion for children in early years settings with social language and communication, sensory needs and dysregulated behaviours.

DUTY 2: All pupils with disability are able to access education in a setting which supports their learning by meeting their physical needs

- Planned refurbishments of schools and new builds, for example, newly opened joint campus Neilston Learning Campus, have considered access for pupils with disabilities. A range of supporting services are fully consulted and involved in the planning.
- Adaptations to school buildings are taken forward to support individual physical disability needs where required. This may be supported by information from NHS Occupational Therapy service, facilities management and quality improvement team. Where appropriate this is completed in line with a child's transitions process prior to their entry to Primary or Secondary school.
- We have updated our Home to School Transport policy, with support for children and young people with a disability or additional support needs having been central to this update. This has also included a focus on the need to support independent travel where appropriate.
- Moving and Handling training has been provided for staff supporting children and young people with a physical disability. We are currently working with colleagues in HSCP to increase access to moving and handling support.
- Establishment of an additional primary specialist provision in Carolside Primary School in order to meet the needs of the increasing number of children with complex additional support needs.
- Creation of an enhanced nurture provision to provide intensive support for primary aged children who are unable to cope with a mainstream provision due to attachment and trauma.
- Relocation of Williamwood Communication and Support Service, within a different part of the school building in order to increase capacity.
- Significant capital investment in increasing the number of available places at Isobel Mair School, providing additional classroom areas.
- The Learn Well Service was established in September 2022, with the prime focus of engaging children and young people requiring specific support to attend school. In this academic session 60 young people were offered support from the Learn Well service. Responses to evaluations indicate 100% of parents / carers felt that their young person had benefitted from engaging with Learn Well over this session, and 100% of young people agreed that they have enjoyed working with Learn Well this year. Furthermore, 92% of parents / carers felt that there had been a benefit to the whole family. Overall, 100% of parents and carers agreed that the service provided by Learn Well has been effective. A significant capital investment was made by the Education Department to regenerate the former Braidbar janitor's house to home the Learn Well Service, providing a safe space for children and young people to support them on their journey to returning to mainstream settings.
- We have established an Early Years Outreach Service which supports the development of core social communication skills within the context of a child or young person's early learning and childcare setting. Almost 100 children have been supported since it was

established in session 23/24 and benefits have included increased confidence and skills of mainstream staff, improved outcomes for children and their families and a reduction in the number of children requiring specialist placements in P1.

- Healthier Minds is our multi-agency approach to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our children and young people. In 2024-25 92 children, young people and families were supported by the Healthier Minds Team. 165 referred to our commissioned RAMH (Recovery Across Mental Health) Youth Counselling Service, 34 referred to Children First Family Wellbeing Service and 22 referred to Family First Service, who joined the screening hub in August 2024 with the expansion of the age range (8-18 years). 97% of the children and young people who received support from the Healthier Minds team reported improved outcomes.
- A contract with Equipu is in place to ensure full access to specialist equipment and resources for all children and young people.
- 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.
- Individual Personalised Evacuation Plans are in place for children and young people who require additional support during an emergency.
- 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.

DUTY 3: All pupils with disability and their families have access to the same level of information as their peers in a format which suits their needs.

- All settings and schools provide an accessible version of their School Improvement Plan and Standards and Quality Report.
- The Communications Team have updated guidance to support settings and schools to have a range of tools that support parents and carers to have access to information in an accessible form which is readily available.
- An authority wide working group, UNCRC Implementation Group, have developed a range of supports to families including those with children with a disability. This includes child friendly complaints processes, accessible communication and youth voice.

- A Youth Rights Association has been established to support the participation and involvement of children and young people. There are protected spaces within this group for children and young people with a disability.
- The ASN sub-group of our children's services partnership has developed, in conjunction with Voluntary Action East Ren, a directory of different organisations and clubs that are available to support children and young people with a disability in East Renfrewshire.
- Guidance and training have been provided to support staff to ensure the views of children and young people are considered. We have worked with My Rights My Say to develop training to ensure meaningful and effective collaboration with children and young people with additional support needs.
- A post-school transition fair was delivered to provide information and advice to children, young people and those who support them with a focus on preparation for the post-school world.
- The use of digital and non-digital recordings of children's learning and participation is available to families. This is of particular benefit for children who have difficulty communicating information about their learning and enables parents to have a greater understanding of their child's development and progress. There has been increased parental use of digital profiling tools across our settings and schools.
- Translation and interpretation services for children or parents with a disability are available as required.
- Many staff have undergone Makaton training and have become Makaton Champions within their schools.
- Our Sensory Support Service provide advice and support to schools and families on alternative formats to share information with disabled learners with sensory impairments.
- A refreshed English as and Additional Language (EAL) assessment framework has been developed to support establishments to assess children's levels of English language acquisition in a more holistic way. This is helping practitioners to identify when other support needs that may be disabilities are creating barriers to learning and achievement.
- Resources have also been developed to support establishments to engage and involve families whose first language is not English in meaningful ways that impact positively on how learning experiences are planned.
- The department's Social Justice Framework and Strategy 2023-26 underscores the need for an intersectional approach to equality, fairness and rights issues, including the need for meaningful engagement and involvement of people with lived experience of barriers to participation, to ensure our services meet their needs. High quality professional learning opportunities for education practitioners and leaders are provided throughout the year on a range of equality and diversity themes linked to the strategy.

Next Steps

Several actions are set out in the Driver Diagram below. To support implementation of the Action Plan Headteachers and Heads of Centres should:

- Ensure that all staff are aware of their general duties under The Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils Education Records) (Scotland) Act 2002 as follows:
 - Increase the extent to which pupils with disability can participate in the curriculum.
 - Improve the physical environment of schools to increase the extent to which pupils with disability can take advantage of education and associated services.
 - Improve communication with pupils with disability along with communicating to them information that is provided in writing for pupils who are not disabled, in appropriate alternative formats and taking account of any preferences expressed by them and their parents.
 - Support staff to recognise and take account of the needs of children and young people with a disability.
 - Identify the actions in the Driver Diagram relevant to their school or setting, include these in the improvement plan for their school or setting and implement accordingly.

Developing this Strategy

Development of the East Renfrewshire Education Department Accessibility Strategy has been led by Education Officers with responsibility for Equality and Equity in consultation with:

- Parents and Carers
- Children and Young People
- Headteachers and School Staff
- Central Education Officers
- ERC Children's Services Partnership

A review of the Accessibility Strategy will be undertaken in June 2028 to evaluate progress over the full three years and to identify new actions for the following three years. Measurement of progress will be informed by feedback and evidence provided by ELC settings and schools, through relevant quality improvement activity and by information provided by children and young people with additional support needs, including disability, and their families. A report on the impact of delivery over the three years will be reported to East Renfrewshire Education Committee in session 2028-29

East Renfrewshire Education Department Accessibility Strategy Driver Diagram 2025 – 2028

