

EAST AYRSHIRE SUPPORT TEAM

Visual Impairment (VI) TEAM Policy Statement

October 2020

Visual Impairment Team Policy Document

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Introduction

A Vision for Children and Young People in East Ayrshire

The vision expressed for all citizens of East Ayrshire in the Community Plan is that:

“East Ayrshire will be a place with strong, vibrant communities where everyone has a good quality of life and access to opportunities, choices and high-quality services, which are sustainable, accessible and meet people’s needs”.

Within that context:

“We want to ensure that each young child in East Ayrshire, including those who are not yet born have the best start in life.

Therefore our commitment to children and young people, their families and carers is to provide them with the support they need, when and where they need it in order to help them achieve their aspirations and potential”.

“Develop excellence in education and improve opportunities for all through Quality, Equality, Access and Partnership”.

Mission Statement

East Ayrshire’s Visual Impairment Team works in partnership with children/young people with a visual impairment, parents / carers, schools, NHS, RNIB and other agencies to ensure equality of opportunity through the process of inclusion.

Aims

Children and young people with visual impairment will receive an education that enables them to:

- *Achieve their full potential*
- *Have positive experiences of the sighted world*
- *Have equal access to information and communication*
- *Access their education in a mainstream school with their peers for the majority of their day*

Context and Background

East Ayrshire Council is committed to a policy of inclusion for children and young people who have a visual impairment. This ensures that they are valued as individuals and as members of their school and wider community. This is in line with ***The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (amended 2009).***

East Ayrshire Perspective

- East Ayrshire has a core aim of meeting its obligations regarding the planning and delivery of inclusive, effective teaching and learning and the assessment and review procedures which comply with Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)
- East Ayrshire recognises that an effective VI Team should be flexible and responsive to the needs of East Ayrshire's children and young people with a visual impairment and should encompass a holistic approach which encourages participation and engagement with families and the wider community.
- Children and young people with visual impairment have their needs met through East Ayrshire's multi-agency, staged-intervention approach
- EA recognises that children and young people with visual impairment can face a considerable challenge. The team works as part of a multi-agency approach to ensure appropriate adjustments are made in teaching a pupil with visual impairment to ensure a curriculum which is delivered in both non-visual and visual ways
- EA Council is committed to the removal of barriers to learning for all children and young people with visual impairment, promoting social inclusion and encouraging lifelong learning enabling them to achieve their potential and reach their goals

Legislation and Guidelines

East Ayrshire recognises that in education there have been significant legislative changes to the planning and delivery of services to young people and their families and is committed to ensuring that the following form part of our service delivery:

The Standards in Schools etc. Act (2000) placed duties on all education authorities to ensure that schools meet the needs of all their pupils, encourage them to achieve their full potential and raise educational standards.

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (amended 2009) introduced a new framework for children and young people who require additional support with their learning. Children and young people with visual impairment are included in this group if they require support additional to that which might normally be provided in a school to ensure they make good progress with their learning.

Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) (2012) states: As children and young people progress on their journey through life, some may have temporary difficulties, some may live with challenges and some may experience more complex issues. Sometimes they – and their families – are going to need help and support. No matter where they live or whatever their needs, children, young people and their families should always know where they can find help, what support might be available and whether that help is right for them.

The Getting it right for every child approach ensures that anyone providing that support puts the child or young person – and their family – at the centre.

Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended by the **Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001** states:

1. The responsible body for a school must take such steps as it is reasonable for it to have to take to ensure that;
 - a) in relation to the arrangements it makes for determining the admission of pupils to the school, disabled persons are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled; and
 - b) in relation to education and associated services provided for, or offered to, pupils at the school by it, disabled pupils are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with pupils who are not disabled.

In addition, **Disability Discrimination Act 2005** states that schools and educational authorities can discriminate in two ways.

1. Disability-related less favourable treatment

Discrimination can occur when a responsible body treats a disabled pupil (or prospective pupil) less favourably, for a reason relating to his or her disability, than someone who does not have a disability, without justification.

In some cases, the school may be able to justify treating a disabled pupil 'less favourably' if it can show that it was for a reason which is both material (specifically related to the case) and substantial (more than minor or trivial) to the particular case.

2. Failing to make a 'reasonable adjustment'

The second way in which discrimination can take place is where a responsible body fails to take reasonable steps to ensure that disabled pupils or prospective pupils are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with their non-disabled peers without justification.

The duty is an 'anticipatory' duty, which means that schools should not wait until a disabled pupil approaches them before making changes to the way in which they operate.

There is no obligation under the Act to make reasonable adjustments by providing any auxiliary aids and services or by making physical alterations to buildings. Auxiliary aids and services would usually be obtained through the SEN duties. Physical features (and the curriculum) are covered by the longer-term planning duties for LEAs and schools.

What is meant by a substantial disadvantage?

For the reasonable adjustment duty to apply, pupils (or prospective pupils) must be put at a substantial disadvantage. "Substantial disadvantage" is not defined in the Act but 'substantial' is likely to mean more than minor or trivial.

What is 'reasonable?'

The Act also does not define 'reasonableness' - this will depend on the circumstances of a particular case and ultimately be for the SEN and Disability Tribunal to decide.

The Equality Act (2010) makes it unlawful for the responsible body of a school to discriminate against, harass or victimise a pupil or potential pupil:

- In relation to admissions
- In the way it provides education for pupils
- In the way it provides pupils access to any benefit, facility or service
- By excluding a pupil or subjecting them to any other detriment

A Curriculum for Excellence aims to ensure that our children and young people are:

- Successful learners
- Confident individuals
- Effective contributors
- Responsible citizens

EAST VI Team

The VI Team is part of the East Ayrshire Support Team and works in partnership with children and young people with visual impairment, schools, parents/carers and other agencies in the community to promote equality and inclusion. The team is based at Grange Academy and is managed by the EAST Manager under the guidance of a Principal Teacher. There are three qualified teachers of visual impairment (QVTI's) that make up 2.3 FTE and one full time Classroom Assistant. The V.I. team is also supported by additional EAST C.A.'s working on a part-time basis.

Referrals to the team usually come from the NHS or via the Educational Psychologists. Educational establishments can also make referrals to the team, with parental permission.

The VI Team is peripatetic and supports and/or monitors children and young people with visual impairment across all educational settings. It also offers a service to pre-3 children and their families as required.

The VI Team are based in Grange Academy where there are facilities for the production of brailled materials. There is also a small satellite base in Loudoun Academy where braille may also be produced.

The teachers within the Team work across all areas of support. The Team has multi-agency links with social work and NHS.

Role of the VI Teacher

- The Team provides direct teaching, monitoring or consultation input as appropriate to meet the needs each individual pupil. A flexible approach is adopted to take account of changing levels of need within the pupil population. Teaching can be on a co-op, group or one to one basis
- VI teachers provide specific individual teaching for children and young people where this is required, either to extend the children and young people's VI skills, such as learning specific Braille codes, or supporting curriculum access across all stages. Support can be provided by CA for reinforcement/ consolidation and/or touch typing programmes. This can be in class or on an individual basis
- The Team assists school staff and educational establishments making provision for a visually impaired young person in their understanding and management of the visual difficulty. This is done on a needs led basis during school visits but is also provided formally via CPD by the Team which can be tailor made to schools taking into account specific children
- The Team advises on adaptations to materials, specialist resources or strategies necessary to support the young person. The teachers are heavily involved in researching the best approaches and resources for individual children
- The VI teachers prepare or assist in the preparation of teaching materials for pupils, including Braille text, and provide guidance to classroom assistants to do this within their own schools
- VI teachers provide advice and training on the use of appropriate technology to support pupils. This may involve research and liaison with external agencies and may include organising loans of equipment to trial with pupils before making recommendations to the authority and schools about potential purchasing
- The VI Team works collaboratively with many other agencies to provide coherent support for children and young people e.g. RNIB and Vibrant Communities throughout their school years and at all transition periods
- VI Teachers make referrals to Social Work Department and Rehabilitation Officers*, where appropriate. Through joint working VI team consolidate and reinforce taught mobility strategies
- The VI Team provides information and support to parents of the children and young people enabling access to other organisations that can also help. The VI teachers may be involved with extracurricular activities for children and families in collaboration with other agencies

The role of schools and Early Childhood Centre

Pupils

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere and environment through planning and making adaptations for children with a visual impairment
- Focus on helping the pupils settle and feel secure in the new environment
- Ensure communication with parents and carers is effective
- Ensure all children with a visual impairment have equal access to curriculum and school activities as their sighted peers
- Ensure all children with a visual impairment are challenged through appropriate support and scaffolding activities
- Ensure collaborative working with VI team and other agencies as appropriate to meet the needs of children with a visual impairment
- Ensure that systems are in place to ensure that VI pupils are provided with materials in the format they require at the same times as their sighted peers in order to meet the needs of the pupil under the legislation
- Be sensitive when or if selecting buddies and mentors

Parents/carers

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for parents/carers and ensure their contribution is valued
- Provide information about school routines
- Encourage and support parents in taking part in the school / ECC community

Assessment

The Team carries out functional visual assessment in educational settings in order to provide advice and strategies to staff to help support the pupil. Often a child's functional vision within school differs from clinical findings because of environmental factors such as visual distractions and other sensory stimulation. Following functional visual assessment all findings and recommendations along with the most recent clinical information is relayed to parents and key personnel in a concise and user-friendly report.

**(A qualified Mobility Officer works across the authority meeting the mobility and orientation needs of all children and young people. This includes resource preparation and Environmental Audits within each school to advise on any areas of risk and to suggest adaptations to the environment).*