

Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee



Reading
Borough Council

Working better with you

12 July 2023

Title	Children with SEND Accessibility Strategy 2023-2025
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Report author	Brian Grady
Lead councillor	Ruth McEwan, Lead Councillor for Education and Public Health
Corporate priority	Inclusive Economy
Recommendations	The Committee is asked to: 1. Approve the Children with SEND Accessibility Strategy 2023-2025

1. Executive summary

The strategy Children with SEND Accessibility Strategy 2023-2025 sets out how Brighter Futures for Children on behalf of Reading Borough Council complies with the legal requirement to ensure equality of access to education for Reading children with disabilities. The strategy details which parties are responsible for ensuring which provisions are in place, and provides guidance to schools as to how they can seek support from Brighter Futures for Children on behalf of Reading Borough Council in order to ensure that they are compliant.

2. Policy context

2.1. The Council's new Corporate Plan has established three themes for the years 2022/25. These themes are:

- Healthy Environment
- Thriving Communities
- Inclusive Economy

2.2. These themes are underpinned by "Our Foundations" explaining the ways we work at the Council:

- People first
- Digital transformation
- Building self-reliance
- Getting the best value
- Collaborating with others

2.3. Full details of the Council's Corporate Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the [Council's website](#). These priorities and the Corporate Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.

3. The proposal

3.1. For committee to note the updated Children with SEND Accessibility Strategy 2023-2025. This Strategy was last considered and noted at ACE Committee in July 2021. It has been updated to reflect the further developed Local Offer and to recognise the adoption of the Reading Area SEND Strategy 2022-2027, which was agreed by Reading Borough Council, Brighter Futures for Children and NHS Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire Integrated Care Board through Reading Health and Wellbeing Board in January 2022.

3.2. For further details see main report.

4. Contribution to strategic aims

4.1. This strategy contributes to both the 'Thriving Communities' and 'Inclusive Economy' strategic aims.

4.2. This strategy seeks to ensure that all children with disabilities are provided with meaningful equality of access to the full range of educational opportunities available to Reading children. Through this, this strategy seeks to reduce inequality within society.

4.3. As reported to Committee through the Annual School Standards report, presented alongside this report, our accessibility strategy contributes to our work with schools tackling a range of risks of disadvantage, removing physical and non-physical barriers for our children to engage in learning for example by ensuring our schools focus on developing inclusive curricula and inclusive learning.

4.4. Whilst this strategy relates to Reading Borough Council-maintained community schools, the Director of Education supports and challenges Academies and Multi Academy Trust schools to meet the same standards.

4.5. Delivery of this strategy is through the SEND strategy 2022-2027. Update on the strategy has been reported to HWBB and an update on progress on the strategy will also come to ACE Committee in October.

4.6. This strategy seeks to ensure that disability is removed as a barrier to engagement for our children by providing clear guidance to educational providers regarding the law, and also regarding what support is available to them from BfC to help ensure their environments are truly accessible to all children. This strategy seeks to prioritise the needs of children who have historically been marginalised within UK society.

5. Environmental and climate implications

5.1 It is not foreseen that there will be adverse environmental implications associated with this strategy. If all Reading schools were made fully accessible to children with disabilities, this could plausibly cause a reduction in CO₂ emissions as the use of taxis to transport children with SEND out of Reading to access more accessible provision could be reduced. In addition to this, if existing capacity in mainstream provision were made accessible to children with disabilities in Reading, this could obviate the need for the construction of new buildings.

6. Community engagement

6.1. Relevant Reading Borough Council service leads, schools, parents and carers, children and young people and NHS Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire Integrated Care Board have contributed to the development of the accessibility strategy through the development of the local area SEND Strategy 2022-2027.

7. Equality impact assessment

7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2. The Accessibility Strategy is expected to have a continued differential positive impact for people with the protected characteristic of a disability.

8. Other relevant considerations

8.1. No other relevant considerations have been identified regarding this report.

9. Legal implications

9.1. The requirement to have an accessibility strategy is set out in Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and specifically relates to pupils with a disability.

10. Financial implications

10.1. There is no direct financial impact of the Accessibility Strategy for Reading Borough Council. Capital investment to support schools to be inclusive is subject to the Capital finance governance and decision-making procedures of the Council, and is set out in the School Access Framework attached to the Strategy. Reading Borough Council capital spend on accessibility improvements is made through the Capital programme process reported to Policy Committee.

11. Timetable for implementation

11.1. This Strategy will be effective from 2023 until 2025.

12. Background papers

12.1. There are none.