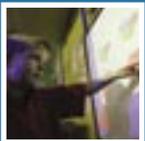


Focus on Inclusion

Promoting and Supporting Inclusive Practice in our Schools

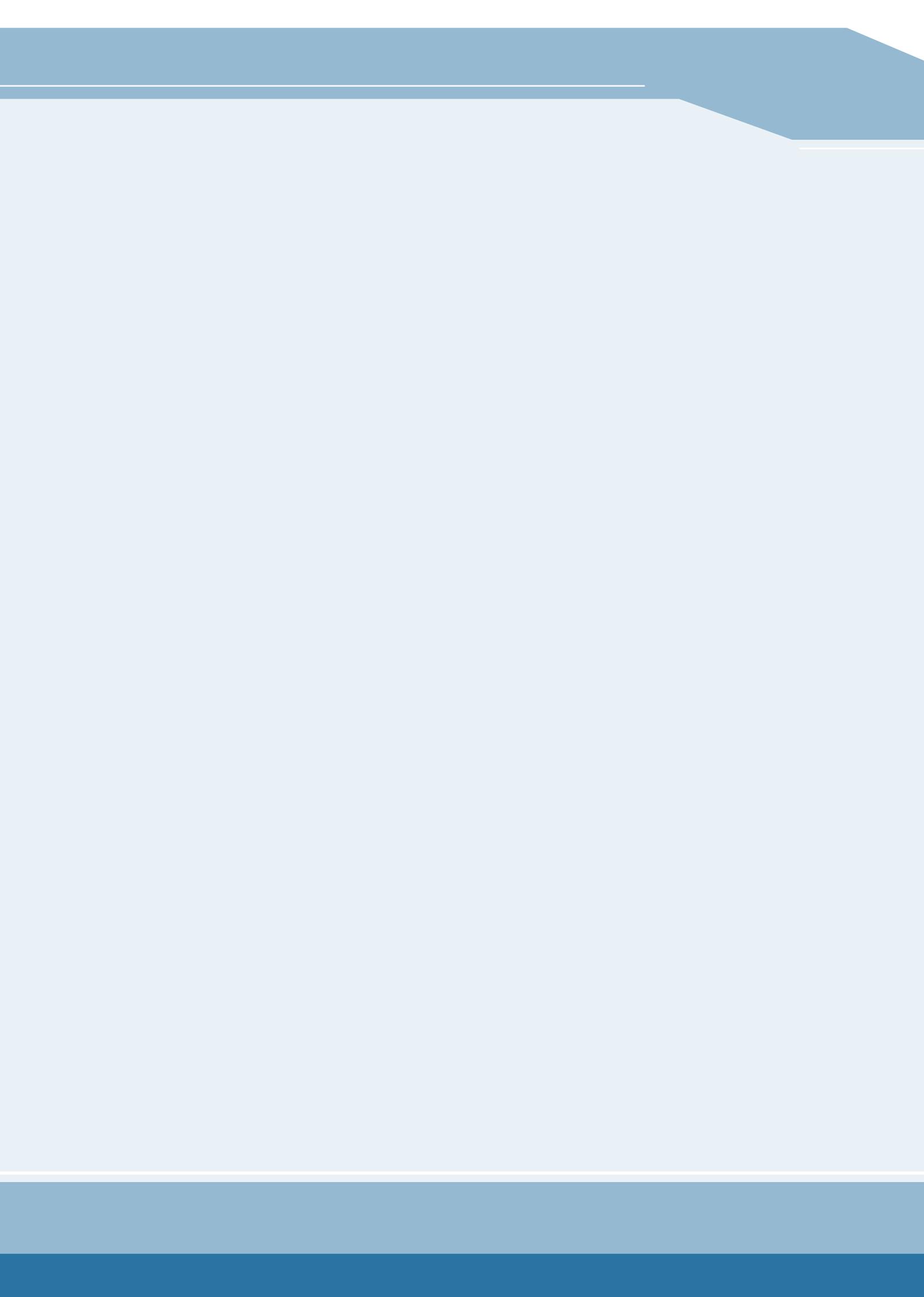


WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL DELIVERS OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL



West Lothian
Council

August 2006



Foreword

Education and Cultural Services is committed to the implementation of A Curriculum for Excellence and the development of services which support each young person to achieve their fullest potential.

Our aspiration for all children and young people is that they should be successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors within the context of an inclusive approach.

The process of inclusion requires commitment, creativity and flexibility to ensure that all children and young people have access to quality learning opportunities.

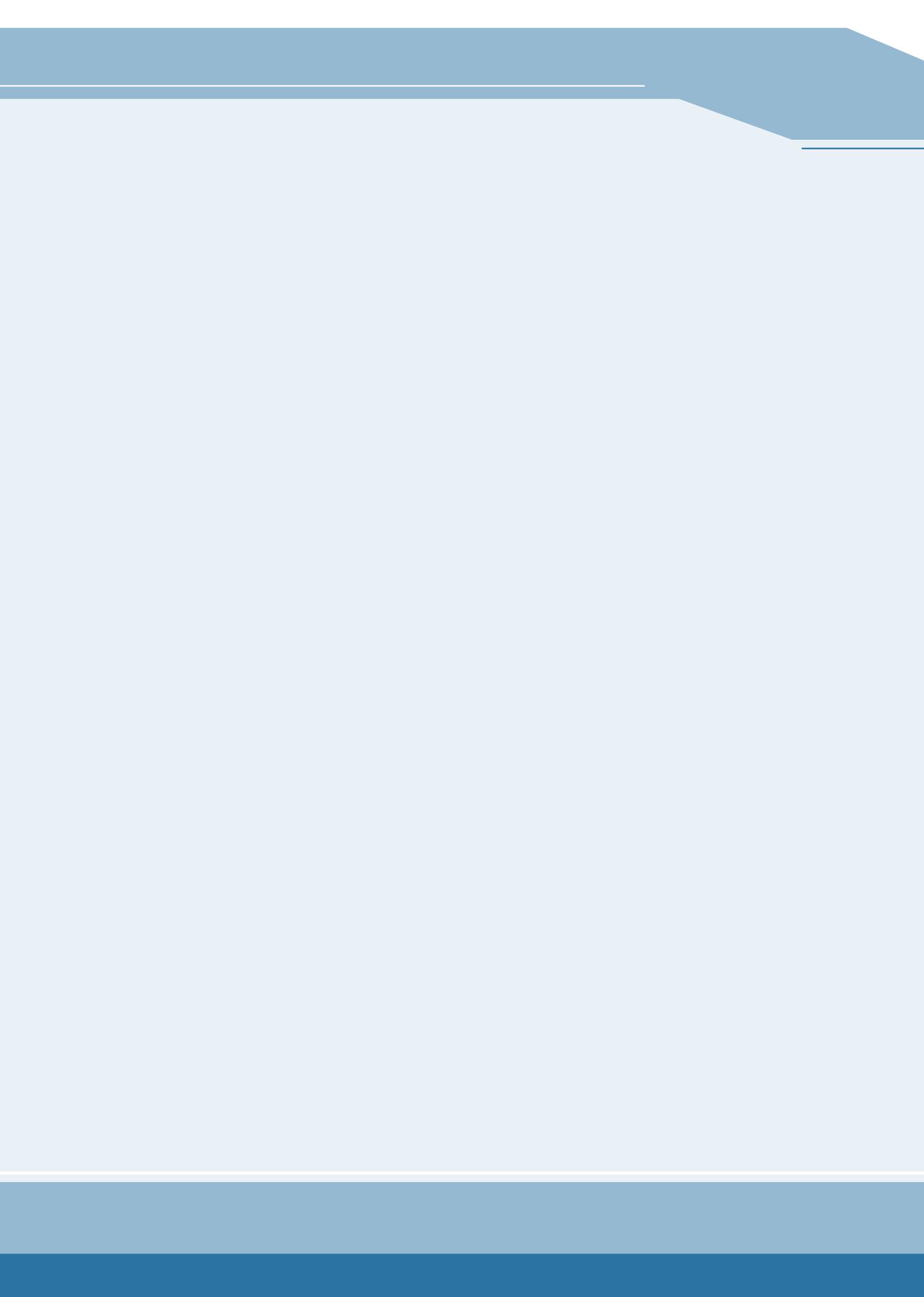
This document will help provide a shared understanding of inclusion and act as a vehicle within which practitioners can move forward in terms of developing an inclusive school community with partner agencies.

In providing a framework which identifies key principles and quality indicators, this paper builds directly on West Lothian Council's commitment to the evolution of a whole service approach within which policy and practice supports and responds to the full diversity of needs in our schools.

'Focus on Inclusion' also develops the approach to self-evaluation as set out in How Good is Our Schools, and within the Quality Management in Education framework published by the Scottish Executive. These documents, our own approach to Succeeding Together and the Integrated Community Schools Framework will enable all aspects of the service to meaningfully take forward inclusive approaches to assessing, planning, delivering and reviewing provision for all young people.

I am confident that the application of the principles and advice contained within Focus on Inclusion will make a positive difference to the development of equal opportunity and the continued evolution of quality education and children's services within West Lothian Council.

Gordon Ford
Director of Education & Cultural Services
June 2006



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1

Rationale

Traditionally, the Scottish education system has prided itself on promoting equality of education opportunity and inclusion in its broadest sense. The most effective schools have always valued each child as an individual and have sought to develop inclusive practice for a wide range of diverse needs. The way in which terms like 'inclusive education' have been defined over the years has led to the conclusion that a shared view of what inclusion means in practical terms is required if services are to be delivered effectively.

There is no single route towards inclusion that will suit all schools. The particular circumstances of schools and communities they serve will strongly influence the approach which is pursued within any particular establishment. This paper, therefore, does not seek to present a definitive picture but rather contribute to our shared understanding of how the concept of inclusive education can be applied in practice across schools in West Lothian Council, the outcomes of which will be

- the development of a needs based system of resource development
- all services are working together to integrate and co-ordinate support for children with additional needs
- all children are supported within their own community where possible
- a reduction in the number of children and young people excluded from school.

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1.1 Legislative Context

Scots Law has traditionally seen adults as having rights over children. This approach has influenced education law, and underpins much of the **Education (Scotland) Act 1980**. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by United Kingdom Government in December 1991, represents a considerable leap forward in respect of children's rights and subsequent UK and Scottish legislation.

Article 2 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) directs that:

'all states should adopt a policy of ensuring that the rights of children are upheld'

It emphasises that all rights apply to all children without exception. There is an obligation to protect children from any form of discrimination and to ensure that in all actions, the best interests of the child are given primary consideration.

Article 12 goes further and states that children should have the right to express an opinion and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting them.

The process of translating children's rights into effective change in children's lives is clearly dependent upon the ability to audit and amend existing legislation and practice in the light of the principles outlined within the Convention.

The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 has been the most important and influential piece of legislation affecting children since ratification of the Convention. It indicates that:

- The welfare of the child throughout his/her childhood should be of paramount concern in all actions affecting the child
- Due regard should be given to a child's view, subject to age and maturity – any child over twelve is considered to have sufficient age and maturity
- Due regard should be given to a child's religion, racial, cultural and linguistic background

Children also have a number of new rights including:

- The right to instruct a solicitor
- The right to have their views heard in court and children's hearings
- The right to attend children's hearings
- The right to sue those holding parental responsibilities

The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 places duties on local authorities to work corporately in assessing and meeting children's needs, and in ensuring a coherent and co-ordinated approach to developing a Children's Services Plan to meet the needs of all children within the authority.

The Human Rights Act (2000) also has fundamental implications for the development of policy and the delivery of services within the context of rights and entitlements of young people and their families. To deliver this agenda, there needs to be a clear commitment to work together with children, parents, agencies and the community to plan, deliver and review services for children in an integrated and coherent way.

Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act (2000) further defines the presumptive entitlement of every child to mainstream education and to be provided with a school education which is:

'directed to the development of their personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential'

Improving the inclusion of educating pupils with additional support needs is also a specific focus of National Priority 3. The implication being is that arrangements must be put in place to ensure that pupils with additional learning needs have equal access to a balanced curriculum and the same length of school week as their peers. Pupils with additional needs should also have the facilities they need to achieve their fullest potential. The council must demonstrate a clear commitment to ensuring that pupils with additional learning needs do not suffer from discrimination or disadvantage if their learning has been interrupted in any way by either illness or exclusion.

Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 amended Part 4 of the Disability Discrimination Act of 1995 and works together with the planning duties under the Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils Education Records) (Scotland) Act 2002.

These Acts place new duties on local authorities in terms of discrimination. It is now against the law to discriminate in terms of:

- Admissions
- Education and associated services
- Exclusions

A person is deemed to be disabled if he or she has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial or long-term effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

There are 2 main duties that education authorities must apply with in terms of anti-discrimination. These are:

- (1) Not to treat disabled pupils less favourably
- (2) To take reasonable steps to avoid putting disabled pupils at a substantial disadvantage

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This effectively means that all schools must ensure that plans are in place to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met within the school community in terms of:

- Accessing the curriculum
- Physical access to the school
- Information from the school, presented in a meaningful way

In terms of the range of needs, schools have to meet, it is clear that reasonableness can be open to interpretation, and legal advice may be required in specific instances.

Count Us In – Achieving Inclusion in Scottish Schools (HMIE 2002) highlighted the nature of the challenge that faces schools and education authorities. The paper emphasised the need to continually evolve the school system away from a situation in which a small number of schools have to cope with a disproportionate degree of challenge, by ensuring the effective inclusion of pupils in ways which ensure that they are genuinely prospering in mainstream school, and not merely attending it.

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2002) places a duty on schools to prevent racial discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and promote good race relations. Each school must have a Race Equality Policy, the impact of which should be amended in particular in relation to attainment.

The Additional Support for Learning (Scotland) Act (2004) also describes the duties of education authorities in respect of ensuring the development of inclusion and integrated approaches to meeting the additional learning needs of children and young people.

The Act introduces a new concept of a Co-ordinated Support Plan. The Act also compels Authorities to introduce a free mediation service for parents of children with additional learning needs.

West Lothian Council Education and Cultural Services have already developed a multi-agency approach to meeting the needs of children with additional needs via the multi-agency support plan as managed by the Cluster Resource Group. Parent-to-Parent has also been contacted to provide not only a mediation service, but also a parent support service.

2

Social Inclusion

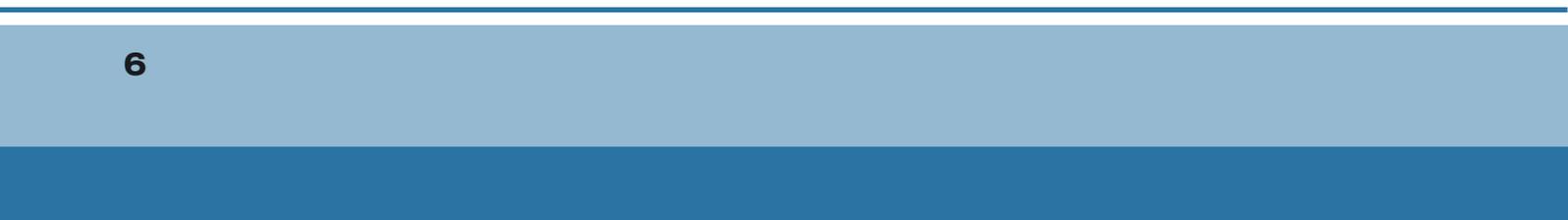
Social exclusion is a term applied to the complex set of linked factors centred around lack of opportunity and diminished life circumstances, which lead to low self esteem and an inability to participate in, or contribute meaningfully, to society.

Recognising the effects of social exclusion on children, young people and communities across the Council Authority has led to a commitment to promoting inclusiveness. By moving away from a child or family deficit model of provision, towards a more proactive approach West Lothian Council recognises that all children, young people and their families are entitled to be afforded equal opportunities to succeed.

It is vital to develop a shared understanding of symptoms and causes of social exclusion, and how these may be best prevented. An inclusive approach in our schools is one important building block which can ensure children are given the positive support required to achieve his/her full potential.

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3

Why does Inclusion matter?

The Scottish Executive has acknowledged that education is the key to both a strong economy and an inclusive society. It is important therefore that we ensure that young people gain educational experiences which harness and maximise their abilities and impact positively on them as young people, thereby making the prospect of lifelong learning and attainment the most important route into work and out of poverty and social exclusion. To achieve this goal will require a real commitment to developing more radical and proactive approaches which focus on the removal of obstacles to full participation in all aspects of education and learning.

*'Those leading Children's Services must ensure that all children have access to the universal services of health and education...
...This should particularly include those who have a disorganised lifestyle'*

(Bulloch Report 1999)

All children learn when they are motivated to learn and have opportunities to do so. However, the ability of children to thrive can be affected by many adverse influences which may include poverty, family instability, parental unemployment, child abuse, truancy, substance abuse etc. It is recognised that no one agency or discipline can single handedly overcome the effects of these influences. Services which form meaningful partnerships with parents, young people and community and support agencies are more able to meet the needs of young people by collaborating in the development of programmes to support them and their families.

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Equality of access to a quality education is fundamental to the development of a fair, just and inclusive society. West Lothian Council believes that all children and young people are entitled to equality of opportunity through access to a broad, balanced and appropriate curriculum.

For those children with additional needs, services which emphasise prevention and early intervention, enable young people to build competence, involvement and connection within the wider community, thereby preventing social exclusion.

Inclusion is therefore a shared responsibility. Education and Cultural Services and partner agencies are committed to joined-up approach to delivering services, as outlined in “For West Lothian’s Children” and “A Continuum of Support for Children with Additional Learning Needs” and via the Children’s Services Management Group which is the key strategic multi-agency group responsible for drafting and agreeing the Children’s Services Plan.

4

Inclusion – A West Lothian Perspective

Delivering appropriate provision for pupils with additional learning needs is central to the national commitment to inclusion and is underpinned by legislation. West Lothian Council believes that all children and young people are entitled to learn together. This will help develop a culture of acceptance within which all children have a presumptive entitlement to mainstream education and services provided to facilitate this goal.

While Head Teachers take lead responsibility in ensuring high quality education for pupils with additional learning needs in their school, each member of staff has a vital role to play in giving pupils support needed to achieve their potential in a social inclusion environment.

It is also recognised, however, that there are occasions whereby the needs of the child are so great as to require continued specialist provision outwith the mainstream.

Focus on Inclusion is designed to help schools in partnership with parents/carers, pupils and partner agencies to evaluate effectiveness of provision in improving educational outcomes and opportunities for pupils with additional learning needs.

Within this paper the quality indicators described from Page 19 will go some way to assist schools in taking forward an inclusive approach and are designed to assist schools to

- Recognise key strengths of provision
- Identify areas where good qualities are maintained and share more widely or where improvements are required
- Identify priorities for development
- Enable schools to report on standards and quality

Education and Cultural Services believes that inclusive practice supports children to recognise the value of the individual and appreciate and celebrate diversity in themselves and others. Our key commitment to an inclusive model is demonstrated in the following policy papers and guidelines and processes:

- **Children's Services Management Group**

This group is a key strategic group of service providers to children and young people. The Children's Services Management Group develops provision and processes and ensure a joined-up approach in terms of providing services and in building the capacity of a joined approach to meeting need.

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■ Focus on Learning (2003)

This is the key policy document for supporting learning within West Lothian Council. The paper outlines key responsibilities and levels of need and intervention.

■ For West Lothian's Children (August 2004)

This strategic policy takes forward the West Lothian Vision for developing an integrated approach to the delivery of services to children and young people, and is a direct outcome of the Bulloch report (For Scotland's Children) which sought to ensure joined-up service delivery

■ Integrated Community School Framework

Managed by Social Policy, this framework is a key component of the integration of assessment planning and delivery of services to children, young people and their families and in taking forward a joined up approach to locality planning.

■ A Continuum of Support for Children with Additional Learning Needs (October 2004)

This is the key policy, which outlines a management framework for staged intervention and the evolution of co-ordinated support plans within the context of the Cluster Resource Group and the Additional Support for Learning Act.

Accountability is built into this model, and senior officers from all Children's Services meet monthly to discuss cases referred and to quality assure provision at Cluster Resource Group level.

■ Accessibility Strategy

The Accessibility Strategy is a key strategy for supporting the needs of children with disabilities both within mainstream and a special context. The strategy outlines the responsibilities of key players in terms of supporting the learning of children with disabilities and ensuring that appropriate provision is put in place to ensure that children with disabilities are not discriminated against.

■ Passport to Inclusion

This approach ensures a joined-up assessment of the support needs for children with disabilities in transition between primary and secondary school.

Promoting and supporting inclusive practice is therefore the key to enabling all children and young people realise their potential in terms of achievement and overcome barriers to learning whilst increasing their awareness and understanding of diversity.

5

Key principles – taking forward an inclusive approach

West Lothian Council Education and Cultural Services believes that the following principles and beliefs are fundamental to the promotion of effective inclusive practice in planning and delivering services to children and young people in school;

5.1

Entitlement

All young people have a presumptive entitlement to mainstream education and provision of a range and level of services appropriate to their needs. Their views should also be taken into account in all matters affecting them.

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5.2

Recognising and Responding to Diversity

Social economic and cultural contexts as well as individual differences in learning will have an impact on needs and how these are to be best supported. Developing and sustaining a culture, which recognises and supports the achievement of all children and young people is a fundamental aspect of service delivery.

Wherever possible, young people will be included and supported within their own schools and communities. Joint planning and integrated delivery of appropriate support, advice and resources within cluster areas will be fundamental in achieving this aim. The Cluster Resource Group is key to the planning and co-ordination of multi-agency solutions to improving learning achievement and attainment of children and young people.

5.3

Early Intervention

Early Intervention is a pro-active approach to meeting needs, and is a process by which children and young people and parents are equipped with the skills and attributes needed to enable them to be successfully included.

All children and young people are entitled to have their needs assessed. This requires a focus on early identification and assessment of potential needs and a requirement to respond positively in meeting the diversity of need across our community. Education Services in partnership with Social Policy and Health Services has developed an Early Years Integrated Assessment approach committed to the effective assessment of development needs and the development of preventative and pro-active approaches for children vulnerable to exclusion in its widest sense. This commitment is based on the concept of minimum effective intervention to ensure that appropriate assessment and planned support arrangements are in place at the earliest possible opportunity.

5.4

Empowerment

Adults, children and young people should be empowered as partners in the development and delivery of Education Services. If this is achieved, there will be a shared responsibility for ensuring the development of a climate which supports flexible and creative responses to individual needs. Such an ethos will encourage young people and their parents to express their views and wishes in relation to matters which concern them, and ensure that these concerns are resolved within the development of an evolving integrated service. Education Services is in the process of developing a Parent Forum in order to ensure appropriate engagement of parents in the decision-making process and to include and empower parents as key partners. Pupil forums also ensure that the voices of children and young people is heard in the development of services for them.

5.5

Collective Responsibility

The principle of inclusivity extends to society as a whole. It should therefore be an issue for all staff across Education and Cultural Services and partner providers rather than the exclusive responsibility of a particular service group or individual.

West Lothian Council recognises the importance of partnership and mutual accountability in meeting the needs of young people and their families. Particularly in relation to the development of Co-ordinated Support Planning, there is a clear requirement to develop a shared understanding of professional standards, and procedures, and also to encourage and develop a shared local responsibility and commitment to educating and providing for all children.

5.6

Valuing Professional Development

Inclusiveness is an evolving concept. It requires both application of existing skills and the development of new ones. Staff within and across services will be at different stages of promoting and supporting inclusiveness. We must therefore recognise the diversity of our staff as learners, and encourage all aspects of the service to audit and plan to take forward an inclusive agenda. All staff need to feel supported through this process and have access to a range of advice and resources including opportunities to engage in both specific and multi-disciplinary training.

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5.7 Quality Improvement

Promoting and supporting an inclusive model of planning and delivery of services to young people and their families is a quality issue.

It is important therefore that appropriate indicators or pathways are included, developed and agreed in taking forward a framework for developing inclusive practice; and that these indicators are used as benchmarks in monitoring and evaluating quality within the planning process in terms of both input and outcome.

6

Principles into practice

As noted earlier, in recent years there has been much discussion about the promotion of an inclusive society within which the potential of each individual is fully developed. Sustained inclusiveness will depend on the realisation of the potential of all young people as active citizens in our schools and communities, within an inclusive society which strives to ensure that every citizen has the opportunity to develop their knowledge, skills and social competence to the fullest possible extent.

In recognising the key role of raising educational attainment in reducing social exclusion and hence promoting inclusion, West Lothian Council Education and Cultural Services has agreed a vision of inclusiveness whereby all those responsible for the delivery of services to young people and their families will be able to reflect and develop policy and practice with the needs of children, young people and their families at the centre.

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To achieve this outcome, Education and Cultural Services will strive to ensure that:

- every young person has access to high quality learning provision, within a supportive environment, which enables them to achieve their goals and make real measurable progress, and ensures that they are actively engaged in decisions which affect them as young people,
- families/parents/carers are supported as primary educators of their children. Each parent should feel that he/she is a valued partner in the education of their child. Education and Cultural Services can help to achieve this by engaging parents and by developing a welcoming and accessible ethos by which parents can contribute to a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities within the context of lifelong learning,
- staff in our school/centres can, and do, make a substantial impact in raising standards by nurturing an environment which promotes effective learning for all. In taking forward the inclusion agenda, schools/centres will need to engage, enable, encourage and support the development of our inclusive approaches,
- partner agencies are recognised as key players in the development of planned, differentiated support to meet the diversity of learning and support needs within schools.



7

Moving forward

Within the context of taking forward the National Priorities, a Curriculum for Excellence and the Executive's Vision for Young People, Education and Cultural Services has ensured that inclusiveness is a key feature of the service plan and that the achievement of specific targets will be reviewed regularly. It is therefore expected that improvement plans at all levels of the service will similarly reflect the commitment to this vision. Schools/centres, support services and individual members of staff will be required to 'take a closer look' at aspects of policy and practice and ensure that services are developed and delivered in ways which reflect the commitment to inclusiveness outlined in this paper.

7.1

For Education and Cultural Services, the commitment to inclusion will include:

- ensuring a shared understanding and commitment to the principles of inclusiveness,
- commitment to effective partnerships with other services,
- supporting the development of integrated practice and delivery across children's services,
- the development of a strategic approach to support for learning and positive behaviour management,
- evolving working practice in line with current research,
- creating opportunities for lifelong learning for all citizens,
- developing with partner agencies programmes of joint staff development,
- co-operating with, and involving, parents and young people in decision making,
- ensuring that budgetary decisions impact positively on delivery and are based on inclusive principles that reflect the diversity of need across community and community,
- monitoring quality of practice and provision,
- securing best value in terms of continuous improvement.

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7.2

For schools and support services, the commitment to inclusion will involve:

- embedding inclusiveness in improvement planning,
- ensuring that management approaches embed inclusive practice,
- including all staff in the pursuit of an inclusive model of planning, delivery and review of services,
- building an ethos and culture of inclusiveness within which the diversity of needs are met,
- working flexibly and creatively to meet the educational needs of children and young people,
- developing local partnerships for the benefit of children and young people,
- directing resources appropriately,
- extending staff development to increase awareness and develop expertise in supporting additional learning need,
- developing a culture of consultation and collaboration between staff, parents and young people,
- a solution focused approach to meeting need with partner agencies as appropriate.

7.3

For Individuals working within schools/ centres and support services, the commitment to inclusive practice include:

- focused planning to meet the range of educational needs of children,
- supporting a climate of high aspiration for all,
- securing a commitment to pro-active management,
- developing positive relationships with young people and their families,
- focusing on overcoming barriers to inclusion,
- an openness to working partnerships on behalf of children,
- differentiating responses to diversity of needs,
- working flexibly and creatively to meet the educational needs to young people and their families,
- commitment to appropriate staff development and review,
- evolving working practice in line with research and guidelines.

8

indicators to promote and support inclusive practice

Indicators have been designed to provide a route between key principles and the development of appropriate policy and practice to promote inclusion.

These indicators follow the practical model of self evaluation developed and described within 'How Good is Our School?', and provide a focus for development and improvement across all aspects of the service.

Five indicators are defined:

- Leadership and Management
- Ethos
- Effective learning and teaching
- Behaviour management and support
- Sustaining inclusiveness – Participation and Collaboration

These indicators describe features of good practice which may be adapted and elaborated to suit each school/service as a focus for reflection and discussion .

The main benefit of using the indicators will be to provide a focus for reflection and discussion in answering the three questions that lie at the heart of the quality improvement agenda:

- How are we doing?
- How do we know how we are doing?
- What are we going to do now?

To that end, the indicators provide a practical, flexible and realistic approach to supporting self evaluation and hence the continued development of inclusive practice.

The important point to emphasise is the fact that the process of self evaluation in itself should adopt the key principles of inclusiveness and engage with all staff and service users.

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9 Ideas for action

What should I/we stop doing?

What should I/we continue to do?

What should I/we start doing?

Sources of help:

For further information please contact

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