

Books for All:

Accessible curriculum materials for pupils with additional support needs.

**Executive Summary of Report to:
Scottish Executive Education Department**

Paul D. Nisbet & Stuart Aitken

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The complete Books for All Report is available from

The Scottish Executive web site at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/06/05081600/0>

and

CALL's Books for All web site at:

<http://www.booksforall.org.uk>

Communication Aids for Language and Learning (CALL) Centre
University of Edinburgh
The Moray House School of Education
Paterson's Land, Holyrood Road
Edinburgh EH8 8AQ

www.callcentrescotland.org.uk

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Books for All project has investigated the need for and availability of learning resources in accessible forms for pupils in Scotland who have print disabilities¹.

The project has found that availability of books and other resources in Braille, Large Print and audio formats, for the relatively small number of blind and partially-sighted pupils, while not complete, is good, in comparison to the availability of accessible books for the much larger number of pupils with physical disabilities, specific learning difficulties, learning difficulties, or hearing impairment. These pupils may require, for example, adapted printed materials, digital versions that can be accessed by switch or read out by a computer, audio recordings, or signed multimedia resources.

Responsible bodies, including local authorities, national government and other relevant agencies, are obliged to consider the needs of all pupils with disabilities, and should therefore make provision of accessible learning resources and services for all pupils who have literacy support needs, not just those with a visual impairment. The project has reviewed two possible models for developing such provision, and is recommending one for consideration by the Scottish Executive, local authorities and other relevant agencies.

The proposed model aims to support local authorities address current inequalities of provision and to reduce existing duplication of effort and inefficiencies by developing mechanisms for sharing resources both within and between local authorities and other service providers.

1 Numbers of pupils with literacy support needs

1.1 Around 5% of pupils in Scotland (over 34,000) aged 5-18 have some form of support plan in place to help them access the curriculum². These pupils have additional support needs as a result of a disability or impairment³. Because they have difficulty accessing standard print and/or demonstrating their knowledge and understanding, many of this core group of pupils are likely to benefit from materials being made available in alternative formats, either in addition to or instead of standard text.

1.2 Within this 5%, those with a significant hearing impairment or a significant visual impairment are in the minority. Moderate learning difficulties (21.3%)

¹ "People with a print disability are those who cannot obtain access to information in a print format because they:

- are blind or vision impaired;
- have physical disabilities which limit their ability to hold or manipulate information in a printed form;
- have perceptual or other disabilities which limit their ability to follow a line of print or which affect their concentration;
- cannot comprehend information in a print format due to insufficient literacy or language skills."

Witcher, S. (2006) Report of the Disability Working Group. Scottish Executive. ISBN: 0-7559-5141-7. Available from <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/10/16092613/0>

² Scottish Executive Statistical Bulletin Education Series Edn/B1/2006/1 Feb 2006.

³ 'Additional Support needs' now includes but is not restricted to needs as a result of factors related to disability or health.

and specific learning difficulties (20.9%) are the most common reasons reported for having a support plan; while 3.8% of the 34,680 pupils have a significant physical or motor impairment, and 1.5% have a significant visual impairment as their main difficulty in learning.

- 1.3 7% (10,650 pupils) of all candidates who sat SQA examinations in 2006 used some form of assessment arrangement (extra time, reader, scribe, adapted paper in a different format, use of ICT, etc) because they had difficulty in reading the standard written paper or writing and recording their responses. Many of these pupils could benefit from using curriculum materials in accessible, alternative formats. Pupils with specific learning difficulties were the largest identifiable group (6,965 pupils; 65% of candidates who used assessment arrangements; 4.5% of all candidates), while those with visual impairment numbered 302 (3%).
- 1.4 In addition to the above, a variety of evidence points to other pupils potentially benefiting from materials being made available in alternative formats⁴. Including those with a support plan in place, around 15% of pupils have difficulty following a standard curriculum or demonstrating their knowledge and understanding. Only some of this group, however, are likely to benefit from access to materials in different formats.
- 1.5 Conclusion: Services established to produce, store and disseminate materials in accessible formats should address the needs of all pupils with literacy support needs, not just those with a visual impairment.

2 Materials required

- 2.1 Both primary and secondary schools require a (different) range of curriculum materials including reading books, textbooks, fiction, workbooks, commercial worksheets, teacher produced worksheets, SQA assessment materials and examination papers, etc. This is equivalent, approximately, to 375 books in each of the primary and secondary sectors.⁵ Materials span age, stage and subject matter, including examination and testing.
- 2.2 Substantial overlap occurs in requirements for materials: pupils in different schools in the same authority, and in different authorities often require similar materials.

3 Alternative formats

- 3.1 A range of curriculum materials in alternative formats is required for pupils who have difficulty: physically handling books and/or turning pages; reading; seeing print; understanding what is written; writing; spelling. There is a need

⁴ Evidence includes local authority returns on literacy figures on entry to S1; sample returns from mainstream schools; responses to two questionnaire formats; data from Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education (HMIE) on those not in employment, education or training (NEET) after leaving school.

⁵ Figures reported by RNIB Scotland following analysis carried out on the curriculum materials used by primary and secondary pupils who are visually impaired.

for printed, audio and digital multimedia formats. Enlarged text on paper or on screen, text spoken out by the computer, as well as text with pictures and symbols are the formats that support the largest numbers of pupils. Thereafter, and in descending order of frequency: switch accessible digital formats, Braille and sign language are least frequently required formats to support literacy.

- 3.2 Formats that are accessible to some pupils with one type of impairment are not necessarily accessible to other pupils, even those with the same impairment. Each pupil's requirement for an alternative format may be highly individual and require in-depth knowledge of that pupil.⁶
- 3.3 ICT can contribute on a large scale to meet the range of support required through production of accessible formats. ICT offers economies, both at a local level e.g. in-school production of individualised worksheets, and at an authority or national level e.g. in production and storage of master electronic file versions of core books and other materials.
- 3.4 In order to produce the widest range of accessible formats the single most important step is to produce an intermediary electronic version, with structure, that can be edited reliably using Microsoft Word. All other accessible formats can be produced from such files.
- 3.5 The quickest and cheapest digital accessible format to produce is the widely used Adobe PDF because most publishers of the original materials can provide a digital version in PDF. Some PDF files can be accessed by some pupils but many files will require further adaptation or conversion before they can be used. PDF files can be converted to other formats, such as DOC and HTML. Some pupils require more specialised digital formats such as DAISY, switch accessible books or video with British Sign Language.

4 Benefits

- 4.1 The Curriculum for Excellence aspires to enable all people to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. Better, more efficient access to a wider range of accessible printed, audio and/or digital multimedia formats will help this process and enable pupils to work more independently. Readers and scribes represent substantial investment of school and authority resources and a smaller number of readers and scribes would be required if more pupils had curriculum resources in accessible formats.

5 Equity

- 5.1 The vast majority of alternative format learning resources currently available are in Braille, Large Print and audio formats for pupils with visual impairment. Compared to other print-disabled pupils, there is significantly

⁶ For example, the large print requirements of pupils in one service for pupils who are visually impaired varied from 14 point through to >48 point, some requiring further adaptations to line spacing, page colour and style of font.

- better availability of alternative formats for those with visual impairment, through local authority VI and sensory services, by national providers such as RNIB, and through over 100,000 titles from providers listed on Revealweb⁷, the online UK catalogue of Braille, Large Print, audio and electronic materials. Around half of pupils with significant visual impairment have additional, often multiple, impairments. Few of them are supported by the formats available on Revealweb or from commercial providers or produced by VI services in Scotland.
- 5.2 Copyright law is inequitable: the law permits materials to be adapted for pupils with visual or physical impairments, or a physical difficulty focussing or tracking with their eyes, but not for other pupils who have difficulty with printed material such as those with language, hearing, dyslexic or learning difficulties.
- 5.3 There are very few sources of accessible resources for print-disabled pupils who are not visually impaired. Commercial items that do exist are more expensive than conventional paper books or accessible versions available for visually impaired students.
- 5.4 Schools and individual staff do make materials in formats for pupils with physical, reading or understanding difficulties on a one-off basis but there are legal obstacles to sharing these resources. Currently there is no mechanism for cataloguing and distribution.
- 5.5 Out-of-copyright books are often available freely on the internet. In most cases they require further adaptation to be accessible. There is no provision in local authorities to do this.
- 5.6 RNIB Scotland have proposed establishing a National Transcription Consortium to provide accessible learning materials for blind and partially sighted pupils in Scotland. It could be argued that this already exists: Revealweb (<http://www.Revealweb.org.uk>) is the catalogue of materials, and suppliers listed on Revealweb such as H.M. Prisons and RNIB itself offer transcription services across the UK. RNIB Scotland have indicated that any materials produced by a Scottish Consortium would be available throughout the rest of the UK.
- 5.7 Local authority transcription services in Scotland have already produced a large bank of resources, none of which are listed on Revealweb. There is therefore scope for services to improve efficiency by using Revealweb or some other mechanism to share catalogues and resources.
- 5.8 However, because a) Revealweb providers can only support pupils who are copyright-exempt, b) copyright is a reserved matter for Westminster, and c) most Revealweb providers only support visually impaired people, it is not a satisfactory mechanism for addressing the literacy support needs of print-disabled pupils in Scotland.

⁷ Note that not all titles listed on Revealweb are for children or education

6 Provision of accessible learning resources

- 6.1 The Books for All project has considered whether a model of service delivery for producing accessible formats should address only one small group of pupils. Or, whether it should address one or more of: those who are covered by copyright exemption but for whom materials are not made available in accessible formats; those who are not covered by copyright exemption but for whom a support plan is in place; those who are not exempt from copyright, do not have a support plan but do have literacy support needs.
- 6.2 The results and conclusions obtained through the project regarding the range of pupils with print disabilities, the learning materials required, current provision and unmet need were used to devise a set of criteria for considering models of service provision of accessible learning materials. These criteria are:
- Inclusion and equity – the service models should address literacy support needs of all print-disabled pupils in Scotland.
 - Range of Alternative Formats – materials are required in a range of alternative formats to meet the access needs of all pupils with print disabilities.
 - Support to local authorities to fulfil legal responsibilities - the model should support local authorities in carrying out duties under education and disability legislation.
 - Copyright - the model should address copyright inequity, by negotiating suitable licences with publishers and the Copyright Licensing Agency in order that all print-disabled pupils will have equal access to accessible materials in an appropriate format.
 - Feasibility and efficiency - implementation of the service model should be feasible, practical, cost effective and achievable within a reasonable time scale. It should reduce the current widespread duplication of effort whereby schools and local authorities across Scotland create accessible versions of the same materials.
 - Scalability - the model of provision should allow for future development and expansion to pupil groups who may not be covered by disability equality legislation, but who can still benefit from educational materials in alternative formats.
- 6.3 Two possible service models were considered: a model specifically designed to meet the criteria above (a ‘Scottish Accessible Learning Resources Network’); and a UK-wide model based upon recommendations contained in a report commissioned by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. The MLA model only addresses the needs of people with visual impairment and would require extension to meet the needs of other print disabled groups. A model based upon a ‘Scottish Accessible Learning Resources Network’ is therefore preferred.

- 6.4 Education authorities and corporate local authorities have a range of duties under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980; are obliged to provide adequate and efficient education for each pupil under the Additional Support for Learning (Scotland) Act, 2004; and have duties under the Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) (Scotland) Act 2002, SEN and Disability Act 2001 and corporate duties to promote equality for disabled people under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. The Scottish Accessible Learning Resources Network model is designed to stimulate and support local authorities to fulfil these duties. At the same time, the model addresses the requirements of schools and individual departments within schools as these have devolved budgets for purchasing curriculum materials.
- 6.5 The model of provision is designed to develop economies of scale at two levels: to ensure Best Value within local authority structures in order to meet existing support needs and to build capacity to meet the support needs of a wider group of pupils; secondly, there are opportunities to share practice, skills and materials between authorities and providers.
- 6.6 The Scottish Accessible Learning Resources Network would establish coordinated provision of accessible learning materials for approximately 5,500 pupils whose support needs arise from physical disability or visual impairment. It is likely that pupils with specific learning difficulties (up to an additional 7,000) will also benefit from accessible curriculum materials. In addition, we estimate that a majority of the other 22,000 pupils in Scotland who have an additional support plan in place (e.g. those with learning, speech and language or communication difficulties and hearing impairment) will also be helped by having improved access to accessible curriculum materials.

7 Implementation

7.1 The Scottish Accessible Learning Resources Network would:

- Offer advice, consultancy and staff development to local authorities, to develop coordinated structures and services for the provision of accessible learning materials.
- Liaise with relevant national bodies, local authorities and publishers associations in order to negotiate licences to create and provide learning materials in accessible formats for all print-disabled pupils.
- Develop mechanisms for local authority services to catalogue and share accessible resources.

7.2 One possibility would be to develop the Scottish Accessible Learning Resources Network in collaboration with three local authorities, to test and evaluate provision, and if the pilot is successful, to extend it across Scotland. An outline of development is given below:

- A Symposium or Conference to report findings of the Books for All project and propose and consult on ways forward. Such an event would build on

the Symposium on Accessible Digital Curriculum Resources that was funded by the Scottish Executive in 2006.

Phase 1

- Establish Scottish Accessible Learning Resources Network team.
- Meet with SEED and relevant bodies to agree and establish a development plan.
- Identify and liaise with three local authority partners with whom to develop the pilot network.
- Meet with publishers, publishers associations and the Copyright Licensing Agency to explore possible licensing schemes for providing accessible learning resources for print-disabled pupils who are not copyright exempt.
- Begin development of Accessible Learning Resources ‘toolkit’ with guidance and staff development resources.
- Develop mechanisms for cataloguing and sharing digital files within and between local authorities.

Phase 2

- Establish Accessible Learning Resources Networks in three local authorities.
- Establish CLA licence to enable accessible materials to be made for print-disabled pupils who are not copyright-exempt.
- Complete Accessible Learning Resources Toolkit and deliver in local authorities.
- Local authority networks begin collating, creating and providing access to bank of accessible resources.
- Establish procedures and mechanisms for sharing materials between local authorities.

Phase 3

- Continued roll-out of Accessible Learning Resources Networks in three local authorities.

Phase 4

- Continue process of cataloguing and sharing materials between local authorities.
- Conduct evaluation of impact of Accessible Learning Resources Networks on learning and teaching, for possible wider implementation.

“There needs to be an initiative at national or at least authority level which sets the standards for the requirements of accessible resources.”

Support for Learning teacher, mainstream secondary school

