
SECTION 4 LITERACY SUPPORT NEEDS

Objective 4: To ascertain the nature of these literacy support needs.

Outcome: Indicate underlying reasons why students have difficulties accessing printed school information, including: handling books and turning pages; reading; seeing print; understanding what is written; writing; spelling; other.

Summary

- 1) Pupils' capacity to access the curriculum and demonstrate their knowledge and understanding requires as a minimum abilities in reading, seeing, understanding, holding books and turning pages, finding words and phrases and in recording work e.g. through handwriting.
- 2) There is no clear relationship between impairment and type of literacy support need. Different impairments give rise to additional support needs in any one or more of the areas outlined in (1).
- 3) Different impairments affect each type of literacy support need in different ways and to a different degree. For example, around half of pupils with significant visual impairment have additional, often multiple impairments. The literacy support needs of those with multiple impairments may have much in common with pupils who have severe or profound learning difficulties.
- 4) Students require Assessment Arrangements in SQA external examinations primarily as a result of difficulties with reading (as opposed to seeing or understanding) papers and writing and recording answers. The most common methods of supporting these needs (apart from allowing extra time) are use of readers and scribes. There is considerable potential to reduce such reliance on human support through the use of question papers in accessible formats.
- 5) Considering literacy support needs in terms of different kinds of provision designed to meet these needs can be revealing. Of seven different approaches – sign language, signing systems, pictures & symbols, text to speech, adapted or large print, Braille and switch access – text to Braille and sign language are the least required formats. Yet Braille and Large Print are the most widely available type of alternative formats.
- 6) Text to speech, picture and symbol support, and text to adapted or large print, are formats required by the largest number of pupils with a range of impairments.

Background to Section 4

There is as yet no direct way of finding out the extent of additional support needs in Scotland. This is reasonable as the ASL Act only came into force in November 2005. At the time of writing the first set of published figures for ASN had just been published but did not cast light on what might constitute literacy support needs.

Although reasonable not to have ASN figures on literacy available it isn't all that helpful. We know that a support need isn't the same as an impairment but we don't yet know what the full range of support needs are. How then do we get from impairments, on which official annual returns are published and are up to date (though as we have seen may not be all that accurate), to support needs, for which there are as yet no official published data and therefore cannot be up to date? And how might this be expressed in terms of literacy?

Methods used

We used official figures on impairments to arrive at some understanding of ASN in several linked steps as follows. We:

- Identified a range of literacy support needs.
- Drew on information that was known about main impairments of pupils with Record of Needs and/or IEP to predict literacy support needs and provide approximate figures on ASN.
- Contacted Scottish Qualifications Authority to find out nature of requests made to them for alternative assessment arrangements.
- Contacted a small number of service providers who respond to requests from schools, or who proactively establish the need for, curriculum materials to be produced in alternative formats.
- Sent out questionnaires to a small number of schools asking them to estimate the likely uptake of curriculum materials available in different formats.
- Ascertained the literacy support needs of pupils leaving school but not in employment, education or training (so-called NEET group).

1. Identifying literacy support needs

The language of additional support needs introduces some interesting new dimensions to thinking. Instead of thinking only in a language of impairments it is necessary to begin to think about the additional support needs that arise from those impairments. This isn't particularly radical and is something that people in the 'disability movement' have been urging should happen for many years.

ASN can arise from a number of factors: social and economic, disability or health, family circumstances or from the learning environment itself. In school, addressing ASN might include for example having to:

- make adaptations to the timetable;
- ensure correct moving and assisting;
- support access to written information through pictures and/or symbols;

- provide text in large print or adapted print format;
- use sign language e.g. BSL;
- support communication using sign systems;
- convert text to speech;
- convert text to Braille.

If we focus only on ASN related to literacy we find there are a number of reasons why students may have difficulty in accessing printed school information. We have categorised them as follows in Table 4.1:

Difficulty	Example
Reading	The pupil has problems reading the text but is able to understand the content.
Seeing	The pupil has difficulty seeing the text but can understand the content.
Understanding	The pupil has difficulties in understanding or remembering the information contained in the text.
Finding text	The pupil has difficulty finding particular words or sections in the text
Holding books and turning the pages	The pupil has a physical difficulty and cannot hold the book, turn the pages or otherwise manipulate it.
Recording work	The pupil has difficulty writing or recording either as a result of a physical impairment, motor coordination issues resulting in slow or untidy handwriting, poor spelling, or difficulty in planning and organising work.

Table 4.1: Support needs related to literacy.

While the list may not be comprehensive and it does not say what has to be done to address a particular ASN, it does offer a useful starting point. We can use it to revisit the data on main difficulty in learning. For ease of reference, figures on main difficulty in learning of pupils with a Record and/or IEP, first set out in Section 3 [see for example Table 3.1] are shown in Table 4.2.

SECTION 4

Total	34,577
Significant hearing impairment (HI)	624
Significant visual impairment (VI)	503
Significant physical or motor impairments (PI)	1,298
Significant language and speech disorder (SLI)	1,679
Autistic spectrum disorder (ASD)	3,484
Social, emotional, behavioural difficulties (SEB)	4,445
<i>Learning difficulties:</i>	
Moderate (MLD)	7,374
Severe (SLD)	1,192
Profound (PLD)	146
Specific – in language and/or mathematics (including dyslexia) (SpLD)	7,231
<i>Complex or multiple impairments:</i>	
Dual sensory impairment (DB)	72
Moderate learning difficulties & significant additional impairments or disorders (MLD+)	1,824
Severe learning difficulties & significant additional impairments or disorders	1,091
Profound learning difficulties & significant additional impairments or disorders	548
Other (Ot)	3,001
Not known / Not disclosed (N/K)	65

Table 4.2: Impairment as main difficulty in learning¹⁶

2. Using main difficulty in learning to predict ASN

We can combine the information from Table 4.2 with literacy support needs in Table 4.1 to arrive at an approximation for the type of ASN that would need to be addressed in the core 5% group of pupils with some form of identified additional support plan. For transparency we do that in four steps:

- Step 1, we present the main impairment outline information in rows, combined with type of literacy support need, in columns of Table 4.3.
- Step 2, we provide an overall impression of whether each main impairment is likely to be associated with each literacy support need, using shading of table cells. This step is depicted in Table 4.4.
- Step 3, Table 4.5 provides relative shadings in order to convey a weighting for the impact of each impairment on literacy support need.
- Step 4, we provide a simplified overview displaying pie charts of relative size.

¹⁶ Scottish Executive Statistical Bulletin Education Series Edn/B1/2006/1. Pupils in Scotland 2005. Table 1.7: Main difficulty in learning of pupils with a Record of Needs and/or an Individualised Educational Programme in primary, secondary and special schools, 2005.

Step 1: Main impairment and literacy support need

Table 4.3 shows each main impairment as individual rows together with the range of different literacy support needs displayed in columns. We now have a more direct way of finding out how impairments give rise to literacy support needs.

ASN Main Impairment	Read Text	See Text	Understand Text	Finding text	Hold books	Turn pages	Record Work e.g. writing
Significant hearing impairment							
Significant visual impairment							
Significant physical or motor impairments							
Significant language and speech disorder							
Autistic spectrum disorder							
Social, emotional and behavioural difficulties							
Learning difficulties:							
Moderate							
Severe							
Profound							
Specific language and/or maths (incl dyslexia)							
Complex or multiple impairments:							
Dual sensory impairment							
Moderate learning diffs & significant additional impairments /disorders							
Severe learning diffs & significant additional impairments / disorders							
Profound learning diffs & significant additional impairments / disorders							
Other							
Not known / Not disclosed							

Table 4.3: Main impairments combined with literacy support needs.

Table 4.3 is intended to give the impression that different impairments can be associated with a range of literacy support needs. What Table 4.3 does not show is which impairments are associated with which literacy support needs. We address this point next. This is presented solely in illustrative form in the table below by presence or absence of shading.

Step 2: Effect of impairment on literacy support needs

Shaded boxes in Table 4.4 indicate that each literacy support may or may not be associated with an individual impairment.

ASN Main Impairment	Read Text	See Text	Under- stand Text	Finding text	Hold books	Turn pages	Record Work e.g. writing
HI	■		■	■			■
VI	■	■	■	■			■
PI	■	■		■	■	■	■
SLI	■		■	■			■
ASD	■		■	■			■
SEB							
<i>Learning difficulties:</i>							
MLD	■		■				■
SLD	■		■	■			■
PLD	■		■	■			■
SpLD	■	■	■	■			■
<i>Complex or multiple impairments:</i>							
DB	■	■	■	■			■
MLD+	■		■	■			■
SLD+	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
PLD+	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Ot							
N/K							

Table 4.4: Effect of impairment on literacy support needs. The legend in column 1 refers as follows: Significant hearing impairment (HI); Significant visual impairment (VI); Significant physical or motor impairments (PI); Significant language and speech disorder (SLI); Autistic spectrum disorder (ASD); Social, emotional, behavioural difficulties (SEB); Learning difficulties of which Moderate (MLD), Severe (SLD), Profound (PLD), Specific – in language and/or mathematics (including dyslexia) (SpLD); Complex or multiple impairments of which Dual sensory impairment (DB), Moderate learning difficulties & significant additional impairments or disorders (MLD+), Severe learning difficulties & significant additional impairments or disorders, Profound learning difficulties & significant additional impairments or disorders; Other (Ot); Not known / Not disclosed (N/K).

The table shows that there is no one-to-one correspondence between impairment and ASN. An impairment may give rise to several areas of support needs, a particular support need may be associated with several impairments – and may be addressed in different ways. Understanding the table is perhaps helped by examples.

Example 1: a hearing impairment is likely to be associated with some level of difficulty in reading text, finding a particular word or phrase in the text, possibly in understanding text. A hearing impairment will not in itself be associated with any difficulty in seeing the text.

Example 2: Significant physical impairment is likely to be associated with difficulty finding text, holding books, turning pages and demonstrating knowledge and understanding i.e. writing or otherwise recording work. Of itself a physical impairment will not affect seeing text. (Of course many pupils with significant physical impairment will also have a sight impairment; we discuss this shortly.)

Knowing that certain impairments are associated with particular additional support needs goes some way towards identifying support needs that can in principle be met – or perhaps ‘known’ support needs would be a more accurate term. (Known support needs are not necessarily the same things as support needs that are being met.) However, this new framework omits two important pieces of information.

Just because an additional support need is associated with a particular impairment does not allow you to predict the extent of that support need. Nor will knowledge of impairments and associated support needs tell us how many pupils with that particular main impairment will have each of the possible support needs

An example will help to illustrate this difference. There are approximately 1,400 children and young people aged 0-18 years in Scotland who are reported to have significant visual impairment (Scottish Executive, 2006; Visual Impairment Scotland, 2003). Of this figure some (approximately 50%) will have additional often multiple impairments (Pavey, 2004). Those who do *not* have additional impairments are likely to have support needs in seeing text and finding text. Of the others - those with multiple impairments - support needs may be in reading text, understanding text, holding books and recording work. The literacy support needs of the latter may be better met by approaches that have more in common with those designed to address impairments other than visual impairment. We will return to this point in later sections.

Furthermore, there is more than one way to address each of the additional support needs noted in columns 2 to 8. We return to this point when we discuss alternative formats in Section 6 of the report.

Step 3: Weightings between impairment and literacy support need

In Table 4.5 we estimate a combination of the effect of the severity of the impairment, with the likely number of pupils with that impairment, on support need.

Table 4.5 introduces an element of weighting to give some idea of the effect a particular impairment has on broad characteristics of literacy. Weighting is considered in two ways: the likely effect of the impairment on a support need and an estimate of the numbers with that impairment who have that support need. The example from physical impairment, introduced in Step 3, is developed below.

SECTION 4

Some children have this difficulty (0 to 33%) and/or moderate effect

- Many children (34 – 66%) and/or moderate effect
- Most children (67 – 100%) and/or profound effect

ASN Main Impairment	Read Text	See Text	Understand Text	Find text	Hold books	Turn pages	Record Work e.g. writing
HI	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light
VI	Light	Dark	Light	Dark	Light	Light	Light
PI	Light	Light	Light	Light	Dark	Dark	Dark
SLI	Dark	Light	Dark	Dark	Light	Light	Dark
ASD	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light
SEB	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light
<i>Learning difficulties:</i>							
MLD	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light
SLD	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light
PLD	Dark	Light	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark
SpLD	Dark	Light	Dark	Dark	Light	Light	Dark
<i>Complex or multiple impairments:</i>							
DB	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Light	Light	Dark
MLD+	Dark	Light	Dark	Dark	Light	Light	Dark
SLD+	Dark	Light	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark
PLD+	Dark	Light	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark
Ot	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light
N/K	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light

Table 4.5: Weighting given to combined effect of severity of impairment and numbers affected on each literacy support need. The strength of shading signifies severity and number. Darker equals more severe and/or greater number.

Example 1: Some pupils with a physical impairment (by no means all) are known to have difficulties associated with reading; particular kinds of words, phrases, sentences. These difficulties are often associated with cerebral palsy. For this relatively small group the effect can be severe, so the weighting is accorded light shading – a combination of small number with severe effect. Physical impairment will also result in many experiencing difficulty finding text, holding books, turning pages and recording work e.g. handwriting. Not only will many be affected but the effect on these support needs is likely to be severe for many. Therefore the combined weighting for severity and number has dark shading.

Example 2: What about pupils who are visually impaired? Certainly the effect of visual impairment on ability to see text and to find text is great. Visual impairment by itself does not affect understanding of text though around half will be affected in this way. Reading printed text is severely affected, though not text in certain other formats.

Step 4: Overview using pie charts of relative size.

In this final step we offer a way of thinking about how a particular impairment is associated with a particular support need, in terms of how that support need might be addressed. In doing so we anticipate some of the discussion that will be developed in later sections on what might be done to address particular support needs.

An example will help to illustrate the approach:

Pupils with a hearing impairment may have difficulty reading text, understanding text, finding text and with recording their work. A range of methods will be used to support the pupils. Depending on the pupil's other difficulties this may include full sign language support, limited sign support, text to speech, pictures and symbols support for words, text to adapted/large print or switch access support.

But pupils with a hearing impairment or who are Deaf are not the only ones who will be supported by some of these methods. For example, someone described as having a significant speech and language disorder may also be supported by text to speech and by pictures and symbols.

How might we present this information in a way that captures information about both the number of pupils supported in that way and at the same time indicates the type of main impairments involved? To do this we drew on the data available through the Statistical Bulletin (and described extensively in Section 3) and estimated the numbers of pupils likely to be supported through particular approaches.

Figure 4.1 illustrates the findings in the form of pie charts drawn to a relative scale. The bigger the pie the more pupils are supported by that form of provision. The colours depict (not seen on photocopied versions) particular main impairments.

Abbreviations used in Figure 4.1:

- Text-Speech: digital text read out by the computer;
- Pics Symb: printed or digital resources with pictures and symbols;
- Signsys: signing systems such as Makaton;
- Text-LP: large and adapted printed text materials;
- Switch access: switch-accessible digital multimedia resources;
- SignLang: Sign language such as BSL;
- Text-Braille: printed Braille 1 and 2 and Moon.

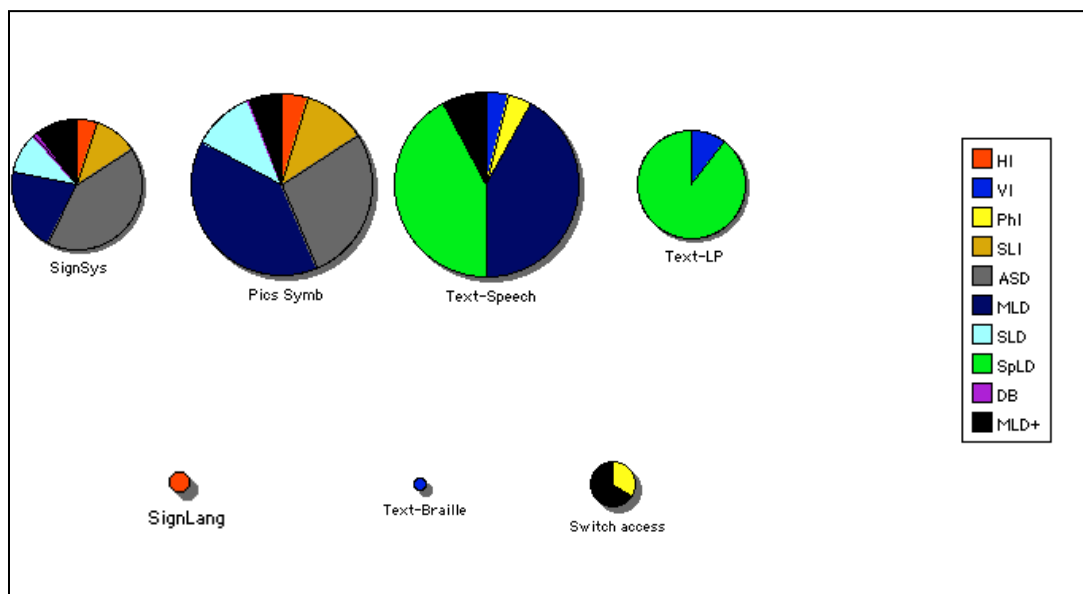


Figure 4.1: Relative weightings representing how a support need might be addressed

The relative size of the pie charts give an approximation for the number of pupils who might be assisted by one of the approaches mentioned. As can be seen text to Braille or sign language are the least required support formats, partly because each is associated with one particular relatively small incidence main impairment: hearing and visual impairments respectively.

In contrast, text-to-speech, picture and symbol support and text-to-large/adapted print are relatively important forms of support. Pupils with several different types of impairment are supported by these methods.

The slices in each pie represent the numbers of pupils with a particular main impairment who may have that particular ASN. Only visually impaired or blind children are likely to have a support need for text-to-Braille. However, pupils with a main impairment of specific learning difficulty, moderate learning difficulty, moderate learning difficulty plus physical impairment, as well as those who are visually impaired may have a support need in the form of text-to-speech. A close second in terms of support needs is access to pictures and symbols to support literacy. In terms of impairments this support need is represented by pupils described as having moderate learning difficulties, as well as many of those with autistic spectrum disorder, speech and language impairment, moderate learning difficulty plus physical impairment as well those who are hearing impaired.

It is worth reiterating that there is no one-to-one correspondence between impairment and ASN. An impairment may have several areas of support needs, while a particular ASN may be represented by several impairments.

Clearly there are many issues that this perspective will raise. But it does help to paint a very different type of picture about which ASN needs should be addressed and how. No amount of impairment analysis can hope to reveal this kind of information. Only an analysis that considers additional support needs can do so. As a result of the ASL (Scotland) Act the Scottish education system is particularly well placed to make significant progress: the legislative framework leads the way.

In order to provide some form of triangulation on information for support needs we also compared figures from the 2007 statistical bulletin (Scottish Executive, 2007). Following implementation of the ASL 2004 Act, SEED considered how additional support needs might be reported on and presented in annual returns and reported interim figures in 2007. Table 4.6 extracts sample information from the relevant tables in the 2007 Statistical Bulletin and presents returns for pupils under both the old system of reporting (column 2 in Table 4.6) and from the new system of reporting on additional support needs (column 3), allowing us to compare:

- numbers of pupils with a visual impairment (row 1);
- pupils with identified physical impairment (row 2 to 3);
- those likely to have physical impairment because it features as one of the significant additional impairments or disorders (rows 4 to 6).

	Table 1.7 Main difficulty	Table 1.9 Reason for support	Totals	Percentage ¹	Copyright Exempt? ²
Significant visual impairment	309	576	885	15.9%	√ ³
Physical or motor impairment	609	1,670	2,279	40.9%	√
Physical health problem		894	894	16.0%	√
MLD+ significant additional impairments or disorders	767		767	13.8%	√
SLD+ significant additional impairments or disorders	573		573	10.3%	√
PLD+ significant additional impairments or disorders	276		276	5.0%	√
			5,574	101.9%	

Table 4.6: Column 2 "Table 1.7" refers to Table 1.7 Main difficulty in learning of pupils with Additional Support Needs, by gender, 2006. Column 3 "Table 1.9" refers to Table 1.9 Reasons for support for pupils with Additional Support Needs, by gender. Both are to be found in Scottish Executive Statistical Bulletin Education Series Edn/B1/2007/1.

¹ Figures rounded to one decimal point, hence total greater than 100.

² Copyright exempt refers to exemption under the Copyright (Visually Impaired Persons) Act 2002. A tick refers to the fact that this group is likely to be exempt.

³ Refers to the fact that materials in accessible formats are produced for this group.

These groups were chosen to illustrate the point that copyright exemption (discussed in more detail in Section 12) which applies to 'visual impairment' actually covers both those with a visual impairment and those who have a physical difficulty holding books or turning pages.

In terms of impairments those with a significant physical or motor impairment or physical health problem are the ones most likely to have difficulty holding a book or turning pages. It would also include those with significant additional impairments or disorders accompanying moderate, severe or profound learning difficulties. Table 4.6 therefore includes each of these groups which gives rise to 5,574 pupils who, either because of visual impairment (receiving services or deemed to receive services from teacher of visual impairment pupils), or because of physical impairment are likely to be exempt from copyright under the copyright VIP act.

As we will see in Section 8 where we discuss unmet support needs, accessible formats are currently prepared only for those with a visual impairment; that is 885 out of 5,574 pupils; 15.9% of the total.

However, the exemption also covers pupils who have difficulty focusing or moving their eyes to the extent that would normally be acceptable for reading. Some have argued that this would cover pupils with 'visual dyslexia': for example, those who perceive the text to flicker or move, who have difficulty scanning accurately along the text and moving from line to line, and as a result, experience headaches and eyestrain when reading for any length of time, because these visual problems are often due to difficulties in focussing or tracking.

With this possible expansion of copyright exemption in mind (even if no change in the law were to take place), making provision for accessible formats on the basis of the support needs of 5,574 pupils would be restrictive. Not only pupils with a visual impairment, or significant physical or motor impairment or disorder (with or without learning difficulties) could be covered under copyright exemption but also an as yet undetermined number of those described as having specific learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia).

In Section 3 Table 3.1 we noted 7,231 pupils reported to have specific learning difficulties including dyslexia. The 2007 figures are similar report the same order of magnitude at 5,743 pupils (Tables 1.7 and 1.9).

Without further analysis these figures can only be estimates. The body of evidence on what constitutes a support need is still developing and the figures described above and in Tables 4.3 to 4.5 are derived from experience and from central government returns. That said, it is widely accepted that analysis of impairment has not got us very far to date in terms of predicting and planning to meet children's educational needs. A framework based on additional support needs, rather than on impairments, is one on which planning can more soundly be based, though support-need planning should always be tempered by understanding of the impairments giving rise to support needs.

3. Literacy support needs and SQA examinations

The SQA collects data regarding the underlying difficulty or impairment that gives rise to an additional support need and also the type of support that is requested in order to meet those needs. In 2006 there were requests for assessment arrangements on behalf of 10,650 pupils (7.22% of all candidates) for use in 43,291 examinations (5.91% of all entries) (SQA 2006). In most cases, more than one type of support is requested, and so there were 77,374 individual requests for different types of support (data provided by SQA to the Books for All project team).

The types of arrangements requested are given in Table 4.7 and discussed in more detail in Section 6 of this report.

Type of support requested	No of requests	Literacy support need				
		Reading	Seeing	Understanding	Handling	Writing
Extra Time	34,803	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reader	16,815	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Scribe	15,059		✓		✓	✓
Use of ICT	3,063	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
PA Referral	2,480					✓
Coloured Paper	1,327	✓	✓	✓		
Transcription with correction	1,190					✓
Calculator	892					✓
Enlarged Print	889	✓	✓			
Transcription without correction	678					✓
Question Paper signed to candidate	69	✓		✓		
Candidate Signs Responses	56					✓
Braille	28		✓			✓
Use of tape recorder for responses	25					✓

Table 4.7: Type of requests for Assessment Arrangements and support need

Extra time (34,803 requests)

Extra time was used in 84% (34,803 out of 43,291) of instances by students with a wide range of impairments. Extra time might be requested because the student is a slow reader, requires more time because they are using other support methods such as reader or scribe, or because they require more time to generate and write answers.

Reader (16,815 requests)

A Reader is the next most common type of support requested. A reader may be required because a candidate has difficulty seeing the text on the paper as a result of visual impairment or perceptual difficulties, because of a specific reading difficulty (for example due to poor phonological skills), or because of a difficulty in physically handling the paper.

Scribe (15,059 requests)

The third most common type of support requested is a scribe. Scribes may be used because a candidate is physically unable to hold a writing implement, or because he or she is unable to see in order to write, or because the candidate's handwriting or spelling is very poor. Scribes are used twice as much as all other methods to support students with writing.

Use of ICT (3,063 requests)

ICT is most commonly used by candidates who have support needs with writing and recording and in most cases this involves the student using a word processor. ICT is not often used to help children to read the paper although in 2006 a small number of candidates did use digital question papers in the course of a CALL Centre/SQA pilot trial.

Referral of the paper to the Principal Assessor (2,480 requests)

Candidates who have substantial difficulty with written communication may have some of their examination scripts referred to the principal assessor. This accommodation may be used by candidates who have difficulty with the mechanical aspects of writing and recording (e.g. handwriting) but also candidates who may have idiosyncratic use of language for example as a result of a hearing impairment.

Coloured paper (1,327 requests)

Approximately two thirds of requests for coloured paper were for question papers to be printed on white paper, in most cases to improve contrast. The remainder were requests to print papers on other shades - usually for students with a particular colour sensitivity. 52% were on behalf of students with a specific learning difficulty; 40% of requests for coloured papers were for students with a visual impairment.

Transcription with correction of spelling and punctuation (1,190 requests)

This arrangement is intended for candidates who have writing and recording difficulties, including difficulties with spelling and punctuation, and who cannot use ICT effectively. The majority of requests (85%) for transcription with correction are on behalf of pupils with specific learning difficulties.

Enlarged Print (889 requests)

Most requests (72%) for large print are on behalf of candidates with a visual impairment, with 15% requested for pupils with specific learning difficulties.

Transcription without correction (678 requests)

This arrangement is intended for candidates who have writing and recording difficulties and who cannot use ICT effectively. It is most commonly used by candidates with handwriting difficulties as a result of dyspraxia, for example.

Question Paper signed to candidate (69 requests)

There were 62 requests for the question paper to be signed to a candidate with a hearing impairment (out of a total of 721 requests for support for students with hearing impairment) and one request for a candidate with dyslexia (it is likely that the same candidate had both dyslexia and a hearing impairment).

Candidate Signs Responses (56 requests)

All candidates who signed responses had a hearing impairment.

Braille (28 requests)

There were 28 requests for Braille papers. All requests were on behalf of pupils with a visual impairment, as one would expect.

Use of tape recorder for responses (25 requests)

Hearing impaired pupils used tape recorders to record responses in 21 instances, while recorders were used by pupils with autistic or physical difficulties in another 4 instances.

Summary

The largest identifiable group of students with literacy support needs sitting SQA examinations are those who have difficulty with reading the question paper and who need extra time, a human reader, or the paper in an accessible format. Most candidates who need support with reading have specific learning difficulties or dyslexia. The smallest requested method of reading support is provision of Braille papers, with 28 out of 19,100 requests (not including extra time) for reading support. Braille papers represent 1.5% of adapted papers provided by SQA (SQA, 2006).

The second largest identifiable support need is for students who have difficulty writing and recording, and the most common support used is extra time followed by a scribe. Again, candidates with specific learning difficulties are the largest single group of candidates who require writing support. Evidence from the recent CALL/SQA project (Nisbet et. al. 2006) which trialled digital question papers suggests that more students could work independently of human support if the question papers were made available in a digital accessible format.

4. Evidence from service providers on range of literacy support needs

Not surprisingly, VI services reported that the pupils they support had most difficulty with seeing the text. This affected understanding text and finding text. When presented in alternative format such as audio, large print or Braille, then pupils could read it – at least those who were receiving a service could read the text in alternative format.

Evidence from those providing services to pupils with specific learning difficulties indicated that difficulties were experienced in reading, understanding, finding text, and recording or demonstrating their knowledge and understanding.

5. Results from questionnaires on nature of literacy support needs

The most common reports from questionnaire returns (available in Appendix 1 and 2) were of difficulties in reading, understanding, finding text and of recording work. Some were associated with visual difficulties but most respondents reported

this support need to be secondary to others (other than, of course, those working with pupils with significant visual impairment).

This is an important finding. It indicates that many pupils could physically 'read' materials but that they had difficulty understanding or remembering the content.

6. Literacy support needs of those not in employment, education or training (so-called NEET group)

This is a relatively unexplored area though to its credit the Scottish Executive is actively exploring how best to raise attainment in this group. Some evidence points to attainment in reading as a significant resilience factor for looked-after and accommodated children.