

SECTION 8 UNMET SUPPORT NEEDS

Objective 8: To provide approximate figures of likely unmet need, both identified and unidentified.

Outcomes: An approximation for the numbers of pupils with literacy support needs who might benefit from alternative accessible formats but for whom such formats are not available.

Summary

- 1) Consideration of unmet literacy support needs should cover:
 - pupils for whom copyright exemption applies and whose print support needs are being addressed and in most cases met;
 - pupils for whom copyright exemption applies and whose print support needs are not being addressed or met;
 - pupils who are not exempt, and whose print support needs are not being addressed or met;
 - pupils who are not exempt, and whose print support needs are being met.
- 2) Most pupils in Scotland can access standard written materials and do not require alternative formats. These pupils are not copyright exempt.
- 3) Between 500 and 875 pupils with visual impairment as a main difficulty in learning may benefit from alternative formats and their needs are currently addressed, but not fully met, by VI transcription services and specialists. These pupils are copyright exempt.
- 4) Up to ten times as many, or 5,000 pupils, may benefit when we include those who have moderate, severe or profound learning difficulties and significant additional impairments or disorders. The formats produced currently are not appropriate for most of this larger group who are also exempt from copyright.
- 5) Most pupils for whom a support plan is in place (around 85% of this group or 30,000 pupils) are not exempt from copyright legislation: for example those with moderate learning difficulties or many with specific learning difficulties including dyslexia. Alternative formats requested frequently in questionnaires were the use of simplified language and text, use of symbols to aid understanding and a range of access methods.
- 6) More effective and efficient methods could be used to support pupils to improve literacy and reduce the use of human readers and scribes by up to 50% (Nisbet *et al*, 2006) and thus increase independence.
- 7) Other pupils with literacy support needs may also benefit from increased availability of, and wider access to, accessible formats.

Background to Section 8

In order to explore areas of unmet literacy support need in terms of pupils, curriculum and approaches, Section 8 draws on work from previous sections while anticipating some of the findings of subsequent sections. We refer to:

- Numbers of pupils with and without support plans who may benefit from materials in alternative formats (outlined in Section 3).
- Indications of support needs (described in Section 4).
- Curriculum materials that need to be adapted (detailed in Section 5).
- Availability of alternative formats, across schools, sectors, staff training, specialist services and managed services (Sections 6 and 7).
- Information on whether a support need can be met or has the potential to be met by existing techniques, using one accessible format to address the support needs of all or at least many users (discussed in Section 10).
- The effect of current copyright legislation, in particular copyright exemption, and whether it has an effect on the potential for support needs to be met (developed more fully in Section 12).

Rather than repeating findings from each of these sections we highlight key areas in terms of print support needs and how far they can be considered met. We explore in more detail which sort of print support needs are addressed and the extent to which they are met. We begin with a definition of 'unmet needs'. We then go on to consider what exactly we mean by unmet support needs.

Defining unmet support needs

Rather than the term 'unmet needs' we use the term 'unmet support needs'. Not only is the latter term more in keeping with the spirit of the emerging Scottish legislative framework but it also follows the letter of the ASL (Scotland) Act 2004 and associated code of practice.

Drawing on the findings reported in previous Sections, we have grouped pupils into four categories in terms of the magnitude of unmet support needs. Group 1 comprise those with relatively few unmet support needs; the unmet support needs of Group 2 are larger; while Groups 3 and Group 4 have the greatest unmet support needs.

- Group 1: Pupils who are not exempt from copyright, whose print support needs are being addressed.
- Group 2: Pupils for whom copyright exemption applies and whose print support needs are being addressed.
- Group 3: Pupils for whom copyright exemption applies and whose print support needs are not generally being addressed.
- Group 4: Pupils who are not exempt from copyright, whose print support needs are not generally being addressed.

The extent to which the literacy support needs of pupils are met is a continuum, and should be considered in relative rather than absolute terms. The pupils in the first and second groups, whose print support needs are generally addressed, have their support needs met more effectively than those in the third and fourth groups whose needs are not addressed. But the support needs of the first two

groups could be met more effectively (there is always room for improvement); similarly we cannot assert that pupils in groups three and four do not have some needs addressed and met. With these provisos, we believe that this categorisation provides a useful approach to considering unmet support needs.

1 Not exempt from copyright; print support needs are being addressed; few unmet support needs

By far the biggest group of pupils whose print support needs are addressed and in most cases met are of course those who do not have a support plan. They don't require one because they do follow a standard curriculum and can demonstrate their knowledge and understanding without additional support. This majority of school pupils in Scotland can generally access written learning resources and are not covered by copyright exemption. This is not to say that the literacy support needs of all pupils are always fully addressed and always met.

Also, we note here that pupils who do not necessarily require alternative formats may still wish to use them and may benefit from using them. With a population growing up and accustomed to using iPods and MP3 players and having access to a range of technologies, some may wish to use such approaches. This group is not the subject of this report. But in terms of capacity building it is important to recognise that some pupils will benefit by being able to access alternative formats as an element of choice.

2 Copyright exemption applies; print support needs are being addressed; some unmet support needs

Numbers and support needs

The primary group who have copyright dispensation, some form of support plan in place and whose print support needs are being addressed are those whose main difficulty with learning is visual impairment.

Note that while the literacy support needs of this group are addressed through the services outlined below and in Section 7, research (RNIB 2005; 2006) suggests that there are gaps in provision and that these pupils do not have their needs met as effectively as those in group 1. But compared to pupils in groups 3 and 4, the support needs of these pupils are being addressed and met far more effectively.

The Scottish Executive Statistical Bulletin indicates around 500 pupils with visual impairment as the main difficulty with learning, while RNIB Scotland suggest there are 875²⁸ pupils who require materials in alternative formats and there are around 1,100²⁹ pupils with a visual impairment in total. As we note in Section 3 and below, it is likely that the 500 pupils reported in the statistical bulletin have visual impairment as main, and only, impairment, while the other 600 (of the 1,100) are likely to have physical or learning difficulties as main impairment, and visual impairment as an additional difficulty.

²⁸ RNIB 2006, p.11 quotes transcription services serving 210 pupils as 24% of the total number, which gives 875.

²⁹ e.g. Visual Impairment Scotland, Review of Eyecare Services Final Report, 2006.

Pupils in group 2 are those with a visual impairment who can use Braille, large print and audio materials: they will usually have a visual impairment without additional difficulties and they number between 500 and 875. The other pupils with visual and additional impairments are less likely to be able to use materials in these formats and they fall into group 3 with pupils whose needs are not generally being addressed.

As seen in Section 4, Table 4.4 and Table 4.5, for group 2, support needs exist in reading, seeing, understanding text as well as in recording work.

Curriculum materials needed and accessible formats

The full range of materials is needed covering all ages, stages and subject areas in both primary and secondary sectors.

As shown in, for example, Figure 4.1 the formats produced to meet these support needs include large print of various sizes and enhancements, Braille, audio and text-to-speech.

Services local and national

There are many national and local providers of alternative accessible books and most use Revealweb (www.Revealweb.org.uk) to catalogue and share resources. Revealweb is described in more detail in Section 7 but in brief, the vast majority of the 146 providers, supplying over 100,000 titles, offer materials in Braille, Large Print and audio for visually impaired people.

Most local authorities in Scotland support a visual impairment service with teachers and often ancillary staff to produce and disseminate materials, while some authorities buy in this service through partnership agreements. While there are few advantages to low incidence disabilities, skilled and specialised staff do an excellent job in Scotland to support pupils. A Scottish teacher website set up by the support / special interest group provides a means of sharing information and resources.

Copyright exemption

To some extent progress in production and dissemination of materials for group 2 has been due to availability of copyright exemption as discussed in more detail in Section 12. Here we consider its application in terms of the support needs which it is designed to address, and in particular how far it meets these requirements.

The Copyright (Visually Impaired Persons) Act 2002 (VIP Act) provides a facility for copies to be made of printed works or provided in alternative formats suitable to individual requirements. The Act applies to people who fall within a definition of 'visually impaired' which in fact includes people with a physical impairment and who cannot hold books or turn pages, and people with a physical difficulty focussing or tracking with their eyes. As part of a strategic approach to providing for the literacy needs of visually impaired people, the VIP Act has transformed access to literacy for some. The Act was one element of an integrated approach to meet literacy requirements as shown in this statement by Stephen King of RNIB:

"In tackling access issues it was vital to take an integrated approach which simultaneously combines researching user needs; finding technical solutions; working on industry standards; and pushing for legislation.

"A technical solution on its own doesn't work, it's just a pilot. A standard on its own doesn't work: it needs legislation. And a regulatory framework on its own doesn't work, there needs to be a technical solution. So we need to take an integrated approach." [King, 2000]

Having established that, in relative terms, pupils with visual impairment as the main difficulty in learning are relatively well served in terms of support in literacy to access the curriculum and to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding, it is important to note that needs are by no means fully met.

3 Copyright exemption applies; print support needs are not addressed; significant unmet support needs

Although the VIP Act is described as an Act that supports people who are visually impaired, it applies not just to people who are visually impaired but also to many with significant physical impairments. People who cannot hold books or turn pages are also covered and we discuss these separately in relation to pupil education.

Pupils with a visual impairment and additional difficulties

Numbers and support needs

Of the 1,100 pupils (aged 5-18 years) with significant visual impairment in Scotland, half are estimated to have additional, often multiple, impairments. Many of this 50% of visually impaired pupils are unable to physically turn pages or hold books. They are likely also to have difficulty with reading, understanding, seeing and recording work.

Curriculum materials needed and accessible formats

Deciding on which curriculum materials need to be made accessible for this group is not straightforward. A relatively small number will require the curriculum materials, textbooks, novels, worksheets etc. used to follow a standard curriculum. Because of cerebral visual impairment, however, most will require materials to be made in different accessible formats.

Many of this group will benefit from switch-accessible digital formats. None of these are made available by current VI transcription services. Such services are designed principally to meet the needs of pupils who are visually impaired without additional impairments.

In the same way, those that could obtain benefit from materials in symbol forms are also poorly served in terms of staff knowledge, availability of curricular materials and in appropriate accessible formats.

Services local and national

As mentioned, none of the local authority services that support visually impaired pupils produce materials in text formats for those who cannot hold books or turn pages. For example, one visual impairment service covering four authorities has

two full time employees who are fully engaged in producing materials for 30 out of 200+ pupils on its caseload. Some of 170+ pupils could benefit from audio formats produced, but many will have difficulty physically operating audio players.

Copyright exemption

To a large extent copyright exemption might as well not exist for pupils who have both visual impairment and significant physical impairment. Despite qualifying on two (and sometimes all three, i.e. not being able to turn their eyes or head, not seeing and not being able to hold a book or turn pages) criteria for exemption, materials are generally not available in a format that can be used by these pupils.

Pupils with physical impairment

Numbers and support needs

At a minimum there are 2.5 times as many pupils with significant physical impairment as main difficulty in learning and a support plan in place than there are pupils with significant visual impairment (see Table 4.2). Most of these pupils will have difficulty in either holding books and/or turning pages. In terms of numbers this group of pupils is far larger than the number of pupils with significant visual impairment alone. Neither the framework for service delivery, nor the system to notify that materials are available, nor the commercial, local authority, voluntary or other infrastructure to produce materials is effective for pupils with significant physical impairment and no visual impairment.

The ratio grows to 10 times as many when we include those with moderate, severe or profound learning difficulties and significant additional impairments or disorders.³⁰ This equates to around 5,000 pupils across Scotland. These pupils have copyright exemption and may benefit from materials provided in alternative formats.

Curriculum materials needed and formats available

None of the main formats currently produced to address the needs of those with significant visual impairment provides access for those pupils who cannot turn pages to access text. Clearly providing materials in Braille cannot help those who can't turn pages but nor do audio hardware solutions such as DAISY Digital Talking Book players as these are not provided with switch access. If you can't press the buttons to operate the device you cannot access the materials. Appropriate switch access methods are required.

Services local and national

National agencies that provide services principally to those with significant physical impairment are unaware that the VIP Act covers the pupils (as well as other service users) with whom they work. There are no local authority or national providers of materials specifically for this group of pupils.

³⁰ Pupils with significant physical or motor impairments (3.75%), plus pupils with moderate, severe or profound learning difficulties and significant additional impairments or disorders (5.28% + 3.16% + 1.58% = 10.02%). Total 13.77% of those with a reported main impairment and a support plan in place. This figure is 9.5 times as many as those with significant visual impairment (13.77% compared to 1.45%)

4 Not exempt from copyright; print support needs are not addressed; significant unmet support needs

This is by far the largest group. There are essentially two sub-groups which we will discuss separately: those with a main impairment with a support plan in place; those without a support plan but who do have literacy support needs.

Pupils with a support plan in place

Numbers and support needs

Here we discuss those with a reported main impairment and for whom some form of support plan is in place, either in the form of a Record of Needs (now defunct but the category for which most official statistics have been collected), or an IEP (which continues into the new framework introduced through the ASL (Scotland) Act).

With up to 5,000 covered by exemption (see (3) above), the group who are not exempt comprises a maximum of 85% of those with a reported main impairment and support plan in place i.e. around 30,000 pupils. However this figure is not helpful for planning purposes and requires further analysis of what is meant by support for literacy.

In terms of support needs noted in Table 4.5 there is huge variation in what would be the main area of literacy support required. For example, those with specific learning difficulty including dyslexia as their main area of difficulty are likely to require most support in, not surprisingly, reading, understanding and recording work. In contrast, those with severe or profound learning difficulties will likely wish to follow a highly differentiated curriculum in order to address literacy support needs in reading, understanding, and recording work.

Curriculum materials needed and formats available

Again there is huge variation. Those with specific learning difficulties will to a large extent aim to follow a standard curriculum. Alternative formats are not readily available. There is no systematised approach, development of materials is *ad hoc*, produced in marginal (often non-existent) time. There are no economies of scale, either at a local or national level, the scope of ICT as a production and dissemination tool is often reined in by managed networks designed to restrict access rather than to enhance service delivery.

Services local and national

As mentioned root and branch development is required. Judging by responses to our questionnaires there is strong motivation to 'do something'.

Pupils without a support plan in place

Numbers and support needs

From various sources it is clear that by far the greatest number of pupils with literacy support needs do not have a support plan. The situation perhaps becomes most apparent on entry to S1. In terms of support needs the biggest difficulties appear to be in understanding the text and recording work. Reading may be in line with a younger child (Level B is roughly appropriate to a child age 9

years). The pupil is then functionally literate (depending on definition) but not able to address the demands of a secondary school curriculum.

Curriculum materials needed and formats available

There is a huge time implication and a lack of qualified staff to produce materials in suitable formats. As noted in questionnaire responses the lack of availability of learning materials in accessible formats has a large adverse effect on pupils' ability to access the curriculum. For instance in one school one member of staff has 2 hours per week allocated for creation of differentiated materials and resources in alternative formats. The majority of the work is done voluntarily at home, representing approximately an additional 5 hours per week.

Services local and national

Following CPD training most subject teachers can produce appropriate worksheet materials in acceptable format to meet the needs of this group of pupils. There is a huge backlog of resources that require to be adapted and produced. The support resources which are currently available from LT Scotland do not always comply with requirements on accessibility. The teachers producing this work have not had appropriate training on making accessible resources. The end result is the production of resources which are not always accessible.

Meeting print support needs more effectively

As we noted at the start of this section, print support needs for all four groups of pupils could be met more effectively; there is, or should always be, room for improvement. It is though worth considering two examples of areas in which support needs could be met more effectively.

Pupils with a visual impairment

Current transcription facilities do not meet demand in full for those with a visual impairment. The 2002 VIP Act provides a legislative framework but there remains a shortfall in meeting the demands for books, worksheets etc. to pupils who need them. Despite a number of commercial, local authority, voluntary and other services set up to deliver materials and service level agreements in place, there is often a time lag in supplying materials in the right format and of the right quality.

As we have seen though, this population is, compared to other print-disabled pupils, relatively well served. Any developments in service to address the needs of this one group must recognise that: most others covered by copyright exemption do not have their needs met; most with a support plan in place but not covered by copyright exemption do not have their needs met; and that by far the greatest number - those without either a support plan or copyright exemption - do not have their needs met.

VI transcription services only produce materials for a sub-set of visually impaired pupils who can read Braille, large print and understand audio. A substantial number of pupils with visual impairment have additional impairments and these pupils are more likely to benefit from other formats, such as switch-accessible digital resources, or materials with pictures and symbols.

Pupils with other impairments

Evidence from SQA - reading

Just because a pupil is supported to access the curriculum and/or can demonstrate his or her knowledge and understanding by one approach does not mean that this is the only or indeed the best method of doing so. It is possible that a different approach might be more effective, or offer better value or indeed offer some combination of both in terms of cost effectiveness and efficiency. There are at least two sources of evidence to support this conclusion, one drawing on evidence from SQA and another which is based on evidence from one secondary school who took part in a recent project on alternative arrangements for assessments.

As noted in Table 6.6, SQA report that, after extra time, the second most common method of support pupils use in exams is that of a human reader. This occurred in 16,815 instances in the 2006 diet of examinations; over seven times as many readers were used as the number of adapted papers provided. There are many advantages with using a reader, particularly in the pressured examination situation, but there are also issues concerning independence. An obvious question to ask, with regard to unmet support need, is how many pupils could instead use some form of accessible adapted paper or other technique independently, rather than a human reader?

A recent project undertaken by SQA to develop and trial digital question papers is of interest. In one school 48% of the pupils who had reading difficulties used a digital paper with text-reading software, while the other 52% used a human reader.

Evidence from SQA – writing

A similar finding was obtained with regard to writing. After extra time and a reader, the next most popular method was to use a scribe, used by pupils on 15,059 occasions in the SQA 2006 diet. If we discount the use of extra time, use of scribes constitutes 67% of the methods of writing support requested to SQA. If we further consider the percentage of requests where a pupil writes independently (i.e. using ICT, signing and a tape recorder), compared with receiving assistance from a member of staff (i.e. scribe, referral of the paper to the principal assessor, transcription) then we find that the pupil works independently of a member of staff in only 14% of instances.

Because the method of support used in examinations should correspond with the support used in class, we suggest that these statistics reflect unmet support need: if the statistics reflect classroom practice, then human support may be being used too readily and there is a need to consider other more independent methods.

Again, results of the digital papers project indicate the potential for materials to be delivered and answered using ICT. Eight schools took part in the project and the percentage of pupils using independent writing support methods (ICT, digital papers, tape recorder) varied from 17% to 85% of the pupils who required alternative assessments arrangements, with an average of 57%.

