

## PLR consultation

Response from Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)

[http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/consultations/PLR\\_non-printbooks\\_consultation.rtf](http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/consultations/PLR_non-printbooks_consultation.rtf)

### 1. General comments

We welcome the invitation to respond to this consultation.

Three million people in the UK are currently denied the right to read simply because they have a sight problem or print reading disability. Research commissioned by RNIB shows that a shocking 96 per cent of books are not available in large print, audio or braille.

Therefore, RNIB welcomes any measures that can alleviate this "book famine". We also support the rights of authors, publishers and other rights holders to fair remuneration. We are confident that the amount of books accessible to print disabled people can be increased whilst respecting the business of rights holders and authors.

Any measure which can encourage the growth in the audio book and e-book lending sector is likely to go some way towards increasing the number of accessible books available to people with a reading disability. In this light, RNIB supports the proposed expansion of the PLR Scheme.

We note with some concern that the consultation questions focus almost entirely on the possible benefit to rights holders, authors and libraries. We feel strongly that the decision whether to extend the PLR Scheme should also take into account the perspective of users, in particular the needs of people with sight problems or other print disabilities.

RNIB is a member of Share the Vision and has been closely engaged with the formulation of Share the Vision's response to this consultation. We fully support the points made in the response of Share the Vision and endorse its recommendations. We confine our detailed response to summary points, below.

## **2. Consultation questions**

2.1 We welcome the recognition of the rights of narrators who make a significant contribution to the creative work.

2.2 We support the expansion of the Scheme to non print books, in the expectation that this will help to make more books accessible to people who are unable to read print.

2.3 We recognise the unprecedented opportunities presented by new technologies and suggest that non print books should be defined in such a way as to embrace new as yet unknown media and technologies.

2.4 The definition of non print books should certainly include

- audio (delivered by a variety of media, such as, but not confined to, CD, memory stick or download)
- e-books (capable of being read as text or text-to-speech)
- braille

2.5 In particular we support the extension of the Scheme to cover braille because it would be anomalous to cover new forms of non print books but not existing forms of non print books. As Share the Vision has pointed out, it would be highly symbolic to extend the Scheme to braille in recognition of the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Disability Equality Duty and the bicentenary of Louis Braille.

2.6 We support Share the Vision's proposal that the Scheme should be extended to cover voluntary sector libraries that lend books in non print formats to members of the general public who are print disabled. RNIB's National Library Service would be pleased to participate in detailed discussions about the practicalities.

## **About us**

As the largest organisation of blind and partially sighted people in the UK, RNIB is pleased to have the opportunity to respond to this consultation.

We are a membership organisation with over 10,000 members who are blind, partially sighted or the friends and family of people with sight loss. 80 per cent of our Trustees and Assembly Members are blind or partially sighted. We encourage members to be involved in our work and regularly consult with them on government policy and their ideas for change.

As a campaigning organisation of blind and partially sighted people, we fight for the rights of people with sight loss in each of the UK's countries. Our priorities are to:

- Stop people losing their sight unnecessarily
- Support independent living for blind and partially sighted people
- Create a society that is inclusive of blind and partially sighted people's interests and needs.

We also provide expert knowledge to business and the public sector through consultancy on improving the accessibility of the built environment, technology, products and services.

Our National Library Service provides 47,000 blind and partially sighted readers in the UK with one of the world's largest lending libraries of accessible books, second only to the Library of Congress.

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