AN UPDATED LOOK AT DISABILITY PROVISION IN
ENGLISH PUBLIC LIBRARIES

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Structured Abstract

Background

The Equality Act was introduced in Great Britain on October 1, 2010, bringing together 116 pieces of legislation into one Act. The Equality Act (2010) relates to nine protected characteristics, of which disability is one. It was introduced to tackle discrimination and strengthen the law. A similar study was conducted in 2000 (McCaskill), following the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act (1995), and this study aimed to gather comparable data relating to the Equality Act (2010).

Aims

The aims of this study are to investigate the current level of disability provision in English libraries and to ascertain the level of disability awareness training provided to library staff in England. This study will also compare the Equality Act (2010) with the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) and McCaskill’s (2000) findings with the findings of this research. It concludes with recommendations on how to improve disability provision.

Methods

This study employs mixed methods to collect data from four case study libraries, located in different authorities in England. Qualitative data is collected through interviews with senior library staff and quantitative data is used to create statistical information. This study also uses Freedom of Information Requests to procure information on staff training.

Results

This study finds that disability provision is inconsistent across the case study libraries, as is the knowledge of senior library staff regarding the Equality Act 2010. Front-line staff are also identified as having poor awareness of the auxiliary aids and services available, highlighting a training need. Disability awareness training for library staff in England is extremely inconsistent and often poor.
Conclusions

This study concludes that the location, authority type and age of library building do not dictate the provision available in a library, although listed building status can create challenges. This study concludes that many of the issues identified in McCaskill’s 2000 study remain challenges to current disability provision, although observational data suggests that provision has improved since 2000.
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Abbreviations

AF – Adult Fiction
ANF – Adult Non-Fiction
CILIP – Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
CD – Compact Disc
DDA – Disability Discrimination Act
DED - Disability Equality Duty
DVD – Digital Versatile Disc
IFLA - International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
LISA - Library and Information Science Abstracts
LMS – Library Management System
LP – Large Print
OPAC – Online Public Access Catalogue
PN – People’s Network
RNIB – Royal National Institute for the Blind
SNONUL - Society of College, National and University Libraries
SS – Self service
VIP – Visually Impaired Persons
1 Introduction

1.1 Context

This study will investigate the level of disability provision in English public libraries. It was inspired by an article on an earlier study examining the response of English public libraries to the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act (McCaskill and Goulding, 2001). The current study will build on the findings of McCaskill’s dissertation research (2000), upon which the McCaskill and Goulding (2001) article is based, and will update the research in line with the introduction of the Equality Act in 2010. This study aims to identify the impact of the Equality Act 2010 upon the public library domain and will update the knowledge base in this area.

This study should find consistent levels of provision across different library sites and there should be no difference between different types of library authority. Every library should be operating in ways that do not disadvantage the disabled and quantitative data will be used to clarify whether this is the case.

1.2 The Original Study

This study follows on from the post-graduate dissertation research of Loughborough student Kirsty McCaskill in 2000, later summarized in a 2001 article with Anne Goulding (McCaskill & Goulding, 2001). McCaskill’s work examines how English public libraries responded to the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), which required public libraries to ensure that their service provision did not discriminate against those with disabilities (McCaskill, 2000:i). She conducted a literature review, carried out qualitative interviews with library staff and representatives of disability organizations, and examined disability provision in five case study libraries.
McCaskill concluded that compliance with the DDA and standards of servicing disabled people’s needs varied considerably between the case study libraries (McCaskill, 2000: i). She also concluded that the response of libraries to the legislation was narrowly focused on the needs of certain groups of disabled people and that libraries needed to be more flexible in the way they assess and service the needs of disabled people (McCaskill, 2000: i).

1.3 History of the Equality Act 2010

The majority of the Equality Act 2010 was introduced in Great Britain on 1st October 2010 (Directgov, 2011: n.p.). The Equality Act 2010 ‘brings together over 116 separate pieces of legislation into one single Act’ to protect individuals from unfair treatment and promote a fair and more equal society (Equality and Human Rights Commission, no date a: n.p.). It was designed to remove inconsistencies in provision and to help tackle discrimination and inequality (Government Equalities Office, 2010:2). The Equality Act 2010 relates to nine protected characteristics: age, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, and disability (Home Office, 2012: n.p.).

Further provisions of the Equality Act 2010, such as the general ‘public sector Equality Duty’ and the ‘Positive action: recruitment and promotion’ legislation, came into force in April 2011 (Equality and Human Rights Commission, c2011: n.p.). The public sector Equality Duty:

‘requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities’ (Equality and Human Rights Commission, no date b: n.p.).

A number of further provisions will no longer be introduced whilst others are scheduled for introduction at a later time.
The Equality Act 2010 provides legal rights for disabled people in the areas of employment, education, access to goods, services and facilities, buying and renting land or property, and functions of public bodies (Directgov, 2011:n.p.). This study will focus on the impact of the legislation on disability provision in public libraries, which are required under the act to provide equal access to their services.

1.4 Disability Defined

The Equality Act 2010 considers a person to have a disability if:

They have a ‘mental or physical impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities’ (Office for Disability Issues, 2011: n.p.).

The Equality Act 2010 also protects people with HIV, cancer or Multiple Sclerosis from the point of diagnosis, whilst specifically excluding some conditions, such as a tendency to start fires or addictions to non–prescribed substances (Directgov., 2011: n.p). The relevant provisions of the Act describing disability in depth are included as Appendix 1.

1.5 The Equality Act 2010: Provisions and Implications for Public Libraries

Service providers are required to make changes to improve services for disabled customers or potential customers, when the absence of such changes would result in a ‘substantial disadvantage’ for disabled persons (Government Equalities Office, 2010:6). Adjustments include changes to policy and the built environment, and the provision of auxiliary aids and services (Government Equalities Office, 2010:6).
Section 29 of the Equality Act 2010 relates to the provision of services, such as libraries. Below is the legislation most relevant to public library provision, which regulates the behaviour and provision of services to people with a disability:

- (1) A person (a “service-provider”) concerned with the provision of a service to the public or a section of the public (for payment or not) must not discriminate against a person requiring the service by not providing the person with the service.

- (2) A service-provider (A) must not, in providing the service, discriminate against a person (B)—
  (a) as to the terms on which A provides the service to B;
  (b) by terminating the provision of the service to B;
  (c) by subjecting B to any other detriment.

- (3) A service-provider must not, in relation to the provision of the service, harass—
  (a) a person requiring the service, or
  (b) a person to whom the service-provider provides the service.

- (4) A service-provider must not victimise a person requiring the service by not providing the person with the service.

- (5) A service-provider (A) must not, in providing the service, victimise a person (B)—
  (a) as to the terms on which A provides the service to B;
  (b) by terminating the provision of the service to B;
  (c) by subjecting B to any other detriment.

- (6) A person must not, in the exercise of a public function that is not the provision of a service to the public or a section of the public, do anything that constitutes discrimination, harassment or victimisation.
(7) A duty to make reasonable adjustments applies to—

(a) a service-provider (and see also section 55(7));
(b) a person who exercises a public function that is not the provision of a service to the public or a section of the public.

1.6 Differences from Disability Discrimination Act 1995

The Equality Act takes over much of the role of the DDA (1995), which sought to protect disabled individuals from discrimination. However, it does not replace the ‘UK-related parts of the DDA for civil servants working in Northern Ireland’, (Office for Disability Issues, 2011: n.p.) and there are important differences between the two pieces of legislation. The main differences are outlined below (Office for Disability Issues, 2011: n.p.)

- The DDA provided protection for disabled people from direct discrimination only in employment and related areas. The EA protects disabled people against direct discrimination in areas beyond the employment field (such as the supply of goods, facilities and services).

- The EA introduced improved protection from discrimination that occurs because of something connected with a person’s disability. This form of discrimination can be justified if it can be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

- The EA introduced the principle of indirect discrimination for disability. Indirect discrimination occurs when something applies in the same way to everybody but has an effect which particularly disadvantages, for example, disabled people. Indirect discrimination may be justified if it can be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
- The EA applies one trigger point at which there is a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people. This trigger point is where a disabled person would be at a substantial disadvantage compared to non-disabled people if the adjustment was not made.

- The EA extends protection from harassment that is related to disability. Previously, explicit protection only applied in relation to work. The EA applies this protection to areas beyond work.

- The EA provides protection from direct disability discrimination and harassment where this is based on a person’s association with a disabled person, or on a false perception that the person is disabled.

- The EA contains a provision which limits the type of enquiries that a recruiting employer can make about disability and health when recruiting new staff. This provision will help prevent disabled candidates from being unfairly screened out at an early stage of the recruitment process.

Despite the similarities that remain between the DDA and the disability component of the Equality Act, the acts are unique and do not cover disability in the same way. The coverage of the Equality Act extends the protection of people with disabilities to cover indirect discrimination, and applies to fields outside employment.

It is the responsibility of library management to ensure that staff knowledge and awareness of staff has been updated to incorporate the changes introduced with the Equality Act. Staff must be aware of the trigger point at which action is required in order to prevent discrimination and breaking the law.
2 Aims and Objectives of this Research

This study aimed to examine the current level of disability provision in English public libraries, and in so doing, update the findings of research from 2000 which discussed the response of libraries to the implementation of the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act (McCaskill, 2000).

The research objectives of this study were:

- To summarize and contrast the provisions and requirements of Equality Act 2010 with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- To ascertain the level of disability awareness training provided to library staff in English library authorities
- To undertake interviews with senior management staff at four case study libraries to ascertain their knowledge and awareness of the Equality Act 2010
- To examine the current level of disability provision in English public libraries
- To explore the findings from the four case studies and compare them to the previous research by McCaskill (2000)
- To identify recommendations for best practice and further research in disability provision in public libraries
3 Literature Review

As in the original research on disability provision in public libraries (McCaskill, 2000), there remains a dearth of literature concerning the application of the legislation to public libraries. Although there are numerous papers on the DDA and on equivalent legislation in other countries, or in relation to academic libraries, papers which link the Equality Act to public libraries do not yet seem to have been published. Instead, much of the current literature appears to refer to the Disability Discrimination Act (1995, amended 2005). The prevalence of literature on the DDA may be a reflection on the relative youth of the Equality legislation, but it also suggests that the new legislation is not yet well-known and is being overshadowed by the DDA. The current economic recession may also be having an impact, as there is less funding available for research, publications, advertising and staff training, all of which could hinder the successful promotion of the new legislation.

An online search for references to the ‘Equality Act’ on the library and information science abstracts database (LISA), the website of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) and the website of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) did not produce any hits relating to the Act or its significance to the library service. A search on JISC for ‘equality act 2010’ produced 47 results, once the word ‘template’ was removed from the search criteria. Of these 47, only three were relevant to the search and of those, two contained out of date references to the DDA (1995) and the other only contained two references to the new Act. A search for ‘equality act 2010’ on the website of the Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL) also failed to produce any hits about the Act and many of its results contained references to legislation that has now been replaced by the 2010 Equality Act, such as the Race Relations Act 2000. Similar searches on subscription databases and the World Wide Web produce equally poor results for information on the Equality Act and libraries.
One institution that has embraced the Equality Act legislation is the British Library, who have successfully integrated it into their Equality and Diversity Policy. Their policy statement clearly outlines the new legislation and they are mindful to comply with the law. The British Library’s awareness and decision to embed the legislation into their own policy and procedures can be viewed as an example of best practice as their ‘Equality and Diversity policy provides a clear framework for translating’ their policy into practice (The British Library, no date).

A search for ‘disability’ and ‘library’ produced more fruitful search results than searches relating to libraries and the Equality Act. IFLA, ‘the leading international body representing the interests of library and information services and their users’ listed 17 hits in response to a search for ‘disability’. These include their ‘Manifesto for libraries serving persons with a print disability: final draft’ and a presentation on print disabilities, which contain a single passing reference to the Equality Act (IFLA, 2012). SCONUL has published a comprehensive document on ‘Access for library users with disabilities’ but this was published before the Equality Act, meaning all references to the DDA are no longer valid. However, it does contain valuable advice relating to disabilities and access, and includes information on a wide range of disabilities. The publication also contains a comprehensive resource list for finding out more information and contacting specialist organizations.

CILIP has a section on their website devoted to equality and diversity, which includes disability and information on sexual orientation issues, both of which are covered by the Equality Act. However, despite their promotion of the need to keep up to date with new policy and legislation, (CILIP, 2011a) the site continues to refer the DDA in place of the Equality Act when referring to legislation.

Although there is limited disability literature relating to public libraries (McCaskill, 2000; Linley, 2000, Kinnell, Yu and Creaser, 2000), the literature predominantly focuses on English academic libraries (for example, Howe, 2011) and libraries in countries which do not share our legislation, such as Australia (see Barker, 2011) and America (see Gorman, 1999). There also appears to be limited literature regarding users’ perception of British library provision (such as Eric Davies,
Wisdom and Creaser, 2001) which can be as important as the levels of provision, if people are unaware or misinformed about what is available for disabled users (McManus, 1994).

Limited literature has been identified as providing some suggestions for best practice and guidelines for disability provision. For example, Edwards (2003) highlights the excellent awareness of disability issues demonstrated by West Sussex public libraries in their provision of assistive technology for the disabled. Rutledge (2002:143) offers numerous recommendations for improved services for dyslexic public library users, and outlines the related challenges for libraries.
4 Methodology

4.1 Introduction

McCaskill’s study (2000), which inspired the current research, used a mixed method approach to investigate how libraries had responded to the introduction on the Disability Discrimination Act legislation. This study intended to replicate as much of McCaskill’s (2000) study and methodology as possible in order to produce comparable data. This study contains additional data to take into consideration changes in physical library environments, data collection developments and the broader coverage of the Equality Act legislation. As much as possible, the headings and structure of this study are a faithful replication of McCaskill’s study (2000) in order to aid comparison.

The data will be collected in a variety of ways, and the study will use both qualitative and quantitative data. ‘[M]ultiple data sources are helpful in understanding research’ and the strength of one method can offset the weakness of another (Creswell and Clark, 2010:17). Multiple sources of data provide more evidence than a single source of data and can provide a better overview of a research topic. The use of mixed methods will enable quantitative data to be analyzed alongside qualitative data, which will allow a better understanding of the current provision, and suggest reasons to explain the data.
4.2 Case Studies

4.2.1 Selecting the Libraries

In order to closely replicate the case-study criteria of McCaskill’s research (2000), the case study libraries will operate within separate council organizations, with no existing relationship to the researcher, in order to minimize bias. The central library of two different metropolitan boroughs, the principal library in one of the five districts of a county council, and the central library of a county council library were identified and invited to participate. Each library was required to be located in a different large English town or city, and for practical purposes, it was also necessary for each library to be accessible by public transport.

For a variety of reasons, it was decided that a London authority would not be included in the study, as was used in the original research (McCaskill, 2000). The London 2012 Olympics had an impact on travel, making travel impractical. Financial and logistical practicalities were also taken into consideration. It was hoped that a comparable location to a London Borough could be used in the current study but it was concluded that Greater London boroughs were unique and any comparison would be unrealistic.

The pre-existing criteria for each participating library meant that the sampling was not random but that the libraries were selected for their ability to display pre-defined traits and be conveniently accessible. Gray (2009:153) warns that although sampling selected for convenience may provide useful indicators of trends, it is to be treated with caution, and it may not be possible to generalize findings. He also warns that purposeful sampling, which can succeed in representing a true cross-section of society, may be subconsciously biased by the researcher, or missing a vital characteristic (Gray, 2009:152-153).
None of the libraries invited to participate in the research declined the invitation, which was very encouraging, and all members of staff were very supportive of the project. One librarian has already made changes following information highlighted during the interview and staff were generally keen to receive a copy of the findings in order to improve their service provision.

4.2.2 The Participating Libraries

The case study libraries were all of varying age and condition, in order to better represent the variety and range of public library buildings in England. The libraries were given the option of being anonymized or named.

The following libraries participated in the study:

➢ Northamptonshire Central Library

Northamptonshire Central Library is housed in a Grade II listed building which dates from 1910 (LibraryThing, no date: n.p.). The library’s ground floor fiction, shop, children’s area and cafe were refurbished in 2009, when self service was introduced (Demco Interior, 2011: n.p.). It is located in the central shopping area of Northampton and is the central library of the County Council.

➢ Library B

Library B chose not to be named in the study. It was opened in the early 1960s and houses several special collections. It was refurbished in late 2010 and is situated in the town’s central shopping area. It is the principal library in one of the five districts of a county council.
Newcastle City Library opened in June 2009 at a cost of 24 million pounds. It is built on the site of the old library and is located in Newcastle city centre. The library spans six floors, making it ‘one of the largest public libraries in the UK’ (e-architect, 2009: n.p.) with over 3,200 visitors a day (Newcastle City Council, 2012: n.p.). Newcastle City Library is the central library of Tyne and Wear Metropolitan Borough Council.

Sheffield Central Library

Sheffield Central Lending Library and Grave’s Art Gallery was opened in 1934 (BBC, 2012: n.p.) and houses a lending library, reference library, local studies library, art gallery and theatre. It is a listed building and retains many of its original features (British Listed Buildings, 2003). This study will largely focus its research on the lending section of the building. Sheffield Central library is the central library of South Yorkshire Metropolitan Borough Council.

These libraries compare to the original libraries, the identity of which became apparent only after the four libraries in this study were approached to participate. By coincidence, Northamptonshire Central Library participated in both the original research (McCaskill, 2000) and the current research. McCaskill’s 2000 study used Birmingham Central library, which could not be used this time around as it is currently being relocated to a new building, along with Leeds Central Library, Burnley Library and Ealing Library.
4.2.3 Collecting the Quantitative Data

Quantitative data were collected during visits to each library, regarding the facilities in each library, attempting to view from a disabled person’s point of view. ‘[C]ase studies can prove invaluable in adding understanding, extending experience and increasing conviction about a subject’ (Stake, 2000, cited in Gray, 2009:246), whilst making no attempt to manipulate behaviour (Gray, 2009:248). The availability of selected facilities was then recorded, using a scale to indicate the level at which the provision was provided. The scale will be taken from the original study (McCaskill, 2000:119), which allocated scaled points for each criterion. The scale can be found in the final observation scoring in Appendix 7.

The categories for each type of disability provision were based on the methodology from the original study (McCaskill, 2000) but were updated to take into account developments in the library field since the original study. Any irrelevant or redundant provisions were removed and provision relating to new developments, such as the introduction of self service machines and audio-visual unlocking devices, was included. The data was then correlated for each library, enabling a comparison between the different library sites, and the original data findings, to be carried out. The comparison is designed to illustrate to what extent disability provision has improved since McCaskill’s 2000 study.
4.3 Interviews

Interviews were conducted with staff to get their views on provision and knowledge of the Equality Act 2010. The interviews were semi-structured, and were carried out with library managers or equivalent members of senior staff. The interviews used a combination of open and fixed questions, as well as probes to illicit the fullest possible answers. ‘Semi-structured interviews allow researchers to develop in-depth accounts of experiences and perceptions with individuals’, and can produce rich empirical data (Cousin, 2008:71). Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to adapt and modify the interview questions, allowing them the opportunity to explore new and unexpected themes as they arose during the interview.

The interviews were conducted and recorded in all four case study libraries. The interview format and questions were piloted at one library, and an additional question was included in subsequent interviews. As per the original study (McCaskill and Goulding, 2001:196), the questions related to the librarians’ reaction to the legislation, disability policies and practices, the help available to people with disabilities, staff attitudes and training, the action undertaken in response to the legislation and the future plans for change in relation to legislation. Questions were asked in whatever order flowed best in relation to the conversation and some were omitted if they became redundant or were covered elsewhere in sufficient depth.

In addition to the interview questions based on the original study (McCaskill, 2000), the participants were asked about their knowledge and awareness of the latest legislation, how they feel it impacts on their library, and whether they regard all disabilities as equally provided for. These additional questions were included to follow up on the issue of perceived disability inequality, as highlighted in the literature (McManus, 1994; McCaskill and Goulding, 2001). These additional questions were designed to demonstrate how aware staff were about the legislation and what it requires of libraries and library staff.
Library B was used as the pilot library for the data collection and interviews. Front facing staff have the most contact with the public and it was interesting to note the discrepancies between the perceptions of senior staff with that of front-facing library staff. The interviews provided unexpected value as they took place in the staff areas of public libraries, enabling a comparison between public and staff areas of the buildings.

A copy of the interview questions can be found in Appendix 6.
4.4 Freedom of Information Requests

The Freedom of Information Act (2000) was used to request information on staff training from a broad range of authorities throughout England. The Freedom of Information Act gives the public the right to access official information held by public authorities, unless there are good reasons for it to remain confidential (Information Commissioner’s Office, no date: n.p.). Local government authorities have a legal responsibility to provide appropriate information, making this an effective method of data collection. Under the Act, public authorities must respond to every request ‘promptly and in any event not later than the twentieth working day following the date of receipt’ (Information Commissioners Office, 2011: n.p.).

The Freedom of Information Act was utilized to establish whether selected authorities had provided disability awareness training to its staff, and if so, what percentage of staff had undertaken the training, and whether it was updated following the introduction of the 2010 legislation. The data was requested from 75 authorities, selected at random from a complete list of English library authorities, representing fifty per cent of library authorities in England. The requests were used to provide national information on the extent of disability training in order to contextualize data from the case studies.

Despite the obvious advantages of being able to procure data from local authorities, this data collection method had its limitations, which became increasingly evident as the information was received. The request was not interpreted in the same way by each of the respondents and the depth and breadth of the information received varied between each authority. Although the requested data was held by every responding authority, at least to some extent, it became apparent that the differences would make the data difficult to compare and analyse.

The request made reference to the provision of ‘disability awareness training’ but this course title was only used by selected authorities, with many others covering the subject of disability awareness under the umbrella of equality and diversity training, and others providing training on specific disabilities in place of one general
awareness course. The confusion over what training information was required was compounded by the failure to limit the request to a specific time frame, which resulted in some authorities providing data for numerous years, creating potentially misleading figures when compared to authorities who provided data for this year only.

Authorities also struggled to provide accurate data on the level of course attendance. The responses revealed that some staff had been on multiple courses and that staff turnover was in flux, meaning the statistics were not always able to provide an accurate reflection of the current state of training. Several authorities were unable to provide data on staff attendance as they did not keep the relevant records.

An unexpected limitation of the data collection method is that not all authorities replied to the request, despite their legal obligation to do so. Two authorities failed to respond to the request at all, despite telephone confirmation that they had received it, and a significant proportion of the authorities did not reply within the twenty working days, resulting in less time to evaluate the data than expected.

A copy of the email requesting information under the Freedom of Information Act is included as Appendix 2 and a list of authorities that received a request is included as Appendix 8.
5 Case Study and Interview Results

This section contains the results of the case study observations, as well as findings from the interviews and conversations with senior and front-line staff. As in McCaskill’s research (2000), the findings will be discussed under the sub-headings used in the data collection process. The section will conclude with a discussion of the findings and their significance.

5.1 Staff Awareness and Attitude

All interviewees were asked about their current understanding of the Equality Act 2010. Carl Dorney, Library Supervisor at Northamptonshire Central Library, and Mark Thurston, Facilities and Buildings Manager for Adult and Community Services at Newcastle upon Tyne, were both familiar with the Equality Act and what impact it could have on public libraries. However, the interviewees at Library B and Sheffield Central Library were unaware of the Act or its remit, suggesting that front-line staff at these branches also had a limited awareness of the Act and the protected characteristics to which it relates.

Senior library staff were also questioned about the attitude of their front-line staff towards disabled users. Carl Dorney felt that the attitude of staff varied according to the type of disability with which they were dealing:

‘For visually impaired, I think because most people have had some visual impairment training at some point, they’re quite confident because it’s actually a category we see quite a lot of. We’re used to helping people choosing talking books so we’re used to that. It’s the same a bit with the deaf awareness. We’re not too bad. But I know certainly with things like mental illnesses and disabilities we have little contact... I think it’s the mental disabilities that are more difficult to deal with because actually it takes you longer to sometimes... to notice... I would say it’s those ones that aren’t visible.’
Northamptonshire Central Library’s Manager felt that familiarity and training affected the attitude of his staff members, reinforcing the need for effective training in a range of disabilities in order to instil confidence. His comments also suggests that training alone is not enough, and that exposure and experience is also a vital part of improving the way front-line staff interact with borrowers with a disability.

Management at Newcastle City Library have worked hard to ensure all staff have received disability awareness training, some of which is of a practical nature. Mark Thurston explained that overall the staff at Newcastle City Library were very good at dealing with borrowers with a disability and that they ‘make it quite clear to our staff that we are a very inclusive and accessible service’ (Thurston, 2012).

Wendy Hudson (2012), Service Development Librarian at Sheffield Central Library, felt that staff were ‘generally comfortable and confident’ when assisting borrowers with a disability, despite their lack of relevant training. Sheffield Central Library service provide staff training on dealing with different types of borrower, including the elderly and the disabled, as an integral part of their induction process. However, due to budget constraints, Sheffield has not taken on any new staff in some time, and many of the current staff have not received this type of training. Wendy felt that the culture of the library meant that staff were as helpful as possible to all borrowers, regardless of whether or not they had a disability.

The Senior Librarian at Library B admitted that she did not spend enough time on the library floor to comment on how individuals behaved, but was able to provide information based on anecdotal evidence. She felt that staff supported the goal that libraries should be inclusive to all and were welcoming to everyone. Library B had a regular borrower with mental health problems, whose behaviour was sometimes challenging and could disturb other borrowers. The Senior Librarian felt his presence had had a positive impact on the way staff were able to deal with all types of borrower. She felt it had helped them to adapt and accept that some borrowers will have disabilities, and had helped them develop strategies for handling such situations. The exposure to a borrower with mental health problems had given staff
valuable experience and transferable confidence when dealing with other disabilities of a lesser or equal severity.

The collection of observational data involved some interaction with front-line staff, which inadvertently added an extra dimension to the research on staff awareness. Questions concerning the location, adaptability and availability of auxiliary aids and facilities highlighted the fact that many staff were unsure or unaware about the facilities they had available to help borrowers with a disability. Although all staff were extremely helpful and the customer service was excellent, staff often had to liaise with appropriate colleagues to resolve queries relating to disability provision.
5.2 Policies, Practices and Procedures

Figure 1: A graph showing the points value of each case study library for the category of policies, practices and procedures.

It is important that library policies do not discriminate against borrowers with a disability and that all procedures and practices are in line with the Equality Act 2010. Written joining forms can be challenging for numerous potential borrowers and can represent the first hurdle of library use. Those with limited movement may have trouble holding a pen or writing, and those with print disabilities may not be able to understand or view the form correctly. Written forms can also cause difficulties for those whose first language is not English and those with low literacy levels. The joining policies in place at Newcastle, Library B and Northamptonshire Central Library alleviate these problems as they no longer use written forms to join new members. Instead, the details of new borrowers are imputed directly onto the computer system by staff. All borrowers are treated in the same manner, whether or not they have a disability. The absence of paper forms also has a positive environmental and financial impact.

As shown in figure 1, Sheffield Central Library scored the lowest for this category, largely because they continue to use paper membership forms, although a telephone number is provided in case an alternative format is required by the potential borrower. An advantage of the form is that borrowers can disclose
whether they have a disability or visual impairment without verbally expressing this in the library, where other borrowers are likely to be around, but borrowers have to be willing to attempt the form in the first place.

All libraries have multiple membership categories, which entitle different types of borrower to different conditions of library use. For example, Northamptonshire Central Library does not charge borrowers with a visual impairment to reserve or borrow spoken word items, although they are subject to the same fines as other borrowers. Newcastle Library exempts borrowers with a visual impairment from the audio-book hire fee, whereas Sheffield Central Library does not charge any borrower to borrow or reserve spoken word items, meaning that visually impaired borrowers are treated in the same way as members of other borrower categories. Sheffield Central Library does not charge fines for borrowers who regard themselves to have a disability. Library B has the most user categories, with 27 in force from January 2010, enabling borrowers to have the borrowing rights that are most appropriate to their needs. For example, they have a variety of age-specific borrower categories for ‘Supported Access Concessions’, which offers extended loan periods and the removal of reservation fees and fines for children with disabilities, including dyslexia and mobility impairments.

Improvements in modern technology have substantially increased the options available to borrowers wishing to reserve or renew library items. Although date stamps are no longer used, the date stamp label in books has been retained by all the case study libraries, enabling borrowers to write the due date in the book themselves, at whatever size and format is most appropriate. All case study libraries provide a minimum of three different ways of renewing and reserving stock, including by telephone, online or with the help of a member of staff, providing a range of options to suit their borrowers.
5.3 Auxiliary Services

In addition to standard Microsoft accessibility features, Sheffield Central Library provide magnifier sheets and a scanning capability as auxiliary services for their borrowers. When questioned about Sheffield’s provision of auxiliary aids, Wendy Hudson confessed that although they had looked into purchasing equipment such as big keyboards and track balls, it had ultimately come down to financial constraints and the equipment had not been purchased. Library B and Northamptonshire Central Library provided a wider range of services and both stocked at least one keyboard with large keys and track ball mouse, for improved computer access for the visually impaired.

Newcastle City Library had a dedicated area for their visual impairment equipment, which included a keyboard, trackball mouse and electronic text magnifier, in addition to scanners. Library B had specialist software on their People’s Network computers, although front-line staff had not had training on the programme. Northamptonshire were unable to have specialist software on their computers as it was found to be incompatible after a systems upgrade, despite their efforts to
ensure they would be able to supply the programme. Newcastle City Library had software on the computer for the visually impaired and other selected PCs.

Special emergency lighting was only available at Newcastle City Library; their fire alarms are accompanied by lights and a spoken message confirming the activation of the fire alarm. The inclusion of a visual warning may not only be beneficial to those with hearing impairments, but can also be relevant to borrowers wearing sound excluding headphones, which could make them unaware of surrounding noises.

Each of the four libraries used a different Library Management System (LMS). The catalogues provided by the libraries were supported by Vubis, Galaxy, Talis and SirsiDynix Symphony. Each system was tested with two commonly misspelled words to assess its tolerance to incorrect spelling. Talis and Vubis, used by Northamptonshire and Library B respectively, dealt well with searches for ‘cercus’ and ‘computor’, with both suggesting the correct word to use instead. SirsiDynix Symphony, used by Sheffield Central Library, failed to suggest any alternative spellings or words, but instead offered the nearest word in its alphabetical database. Galaxy, used by Newcastle City Library, displayed no tolerance for the misspellings at all, producing no hits or suggestions for either of the words tested.

All libraries provided photocopying facilities. The photocopiers at Northamptonshire Central Library were provided with pictorial instructions on the machines, and were of a realistic height for access by wheelchair users. The photocopiers at Newcastle City Library were very tall and although the display screen was on a tilting display, with easily enlargeable text, it is questionable how accessible the photocopiers were for those in a wheelchair or of below average height. The photocopier available at Sheffield was tall and came with a tilting panel and instructions, unlike the one provided by Library B, which came with neither a tilting display nor instructions.

Newcastle City Library provide a hearing induction loop throughout the building and Northamptonshire have a portable system that can be used if the service is
required. There are no hearing loops available at Library B or Sheffield Central library.

5.4 Alternative Formats

Figure 3: A graph showing the points value of each case study library for the category of alternative formats.

Figure 3 shows that the scores for the availability of alternative formats were reasonably close between the four case study libraries, with Newcastle scoring highest. Newcastle City Library provides a wide range of audiovisual material in numerous world languages, and stocks both non-fiction and fiction items. Their large print selection had been strategically located in good natural light and placed near the visual impairment auxiliary aids and information. Audio books were available in MP3 and CD format (PLAYAWAY units) and contained fiction and non-fiction works, although the non-fiction choice was poor in comparison.

Although their fiction stock appeared sparse, Sheffield Central Library has a good selection of adult non-fiction audio-books in proportion to their overall stock. The stock was almost exclusively available in CD format, with the exception of a limited availability of cassette tapes. Their spoken word stock was clearly presented, as was their wide range of DVD and blu-ray titles, which included World DVDs, Bollywood, non-fiction and classics.
Sadly, the stock at Northamptonshire Central Library could not be regarded in the same orderly way as the illogicality of their audio-books shelving puts them at risk of being inaccessible to all borrowers. Northamptonshire provides audio-books in cassette tape and CD, which are shelved together, and MP3 PLAYAWAY units, which are shelved separately at the end, without suitable labelling. They also provide a selection of DVD and blu-ray stock, which includes some non-fiction and World DVD titles. Like Library B, Northamptonshire Central Library labelled some of their large print book stock with clear, bright letter labels to improve their accessibility for those with a visual impairment, although this labelling was not consistent at either library.

Library B provide audio-books in eBook format, and on CD and cassette tape. They have a good stock selection and their stock is arranged in a logical and practical way. Their DVD stock was limited to fiction titles in English and was displayed on a stand that wheelchair users may not be able to fully access, due to the height of the top shelf. The titles were not arranged in order, which could make titles more challenging to locate by borrowers.

Audio books can be extremely valuable to borrowers with a visual impairment. However, they are also a valuable source of information and entertainment for borrowers with low literacy levels, borrowers who listen to them whilst travelling and those who simply don’t enjoy the act of reading. It is important to provide a good range of audio books and large print books in order to appeal to all readers. In particular, it is important to stock adequate non-fiction titles, as this is the preferred reading genre of choice for many men (Marketing Charts, 2010: n.p.).

All case study libraries could procure Braille books from either other branches or a partner organization, but no Braille titles were stocked in the case study branches, and the available stock seemed to be limited to children’s titles.
5.5 OPAC Accessibility

Figure 4: A graph showing the points value of each case study library for the category of OPAC accessibility

The ability to search the library catalogue is fundamental when trying to locate library stock, and is even more important in large libraries. Library catalogues powered by different systems have significantly different interfaces, each of which affects their ease of use. As Figure 4 shows, Northamptonshire Central Library provided the most accessible catalogue for public use. Their catalogue, available for free on all PN machines, enabled borrowers to easily increase the font size, print the information or save it for later, whilst being presented in a clear manner.

Cluttered displays and complex vocabulary can render the interface inaccessible and difficult to use, especially for borrowers with a visual impairment or a print disability like dyslexia. Sheffield’s catalogue enabled the borrower to easily and intuitively refine their search, but used the American and English spelling of ‘catalogue’ to navigate around the site, which could be confusing. The font was reasonably small, and there was no obvious way to enlarge it, but the search page was clear and contained only relevant and essential data.

Figure 4 shows that none of the case study libraries were able to provide voice-activated or touch activated OPAC access, meaning users were required to be able to use a standard keyboard and read standard font in order to complete an
effective search without requesting help from a member of staff. The OPAC machine at Library B was placed on a tall free-standing unit, which forced users to remain standing in order to use it, and in doing so, discriminated against wheelchair users. Selecting furniture such as standing-height computer units removes the option of independent searching for some borrowers with disabilities.

Newcastle scored poorest for their catalogue, as the display design was unclear, and the search options split between two sides of the screen. The font was fairly small and the inability to enlarge the text or print the information could potentially prohibit a borrower from accessing information.
5.6 Layout and Signage

Figure 5: A graph showing the points value of each case study library for the category of layout and signage

Figure 5 shows that Newcastle City Library scored highest out of the case study libraries for their guidance and layout. Newcastle City Library, which has six floors, has excellent guiding and large, clear paper maps are available on the floor of entry. The library is strongly colour coded, and has even matched the furniture and shelving labels to the colour of each distinct section. These measures make navigation around the building easier and do not discriminate against those with a visual or print disability, or low literacy levels.

The move towards dynamic shelving, or the ‘bookstore model’, has seen libraries moving away from the traditional presentation of fiction books in alphabetical order, and non-fiction in Dewey decimal order, in preference of shelving by genre or theme. This approach to shelving was evident in all four case study libraries, which shelved several types of fiction by genre, in addition to their alphabetical general fiction stock.

Northamptonshire Central Library’s shelf signage included arrows to direct borrowers to the next section in the sequence, which is a simple and effective way of clarifying the shelving direction. However, not all of the signage at Northamptonshire Central Library accurately related to the shelf content, which
could easily confuse borrowers, and some stock wasn’t clearly labelled, meaning the promotion of some collections was poor.

Sheffield Central Library shelves its adult and non-fiction stock in the same area, which can make it difficult to locate specific stock. Much of the fiction can be found on freestanding ‘island’ shelving within ‘alcoves’ that are created by wall-mounted shelves containing non-fiction stock in Dewey order. The fiction signage is poor and many of the shelving units are not easily visible from the library entrance or the self service area, reinforcing the need for effective signage. The alphabetical letter dividers in the fiction sequence are unclear and somewhat dated, which could further hinder their accessibility to all borrowers, irrespective of whether or not they have a disability.

Figure 5 shows that Library B scored lowest for guidance and layout. Library B does not provide a library plan because their shelving has wheels, meaning the position of trolleys and the location of stock does not have to remain static. They compensate for their lack of library map or plan with very clear large signage on the walls above the stock, enabling borrowers to establish the general content of each section from a substantial distance away.

The lift facilities at Northamptonshire and Newcastle City Library provide selected audio information to users and feature tactile lift buttons at a practical height for a wheelchair user.

Library B had good tactile contrasts on the library floor, with carpeted areas around the PN machines, self service, the children’s section and the external doors. Northamptonshire Central Library ensured that a section of uneven floor was carpeted in a darker colour in order to increase its colour contrast and visual impact.
5.7 Physical Access

![Physical access chart](chart.png)

**Figure 6**: A graph showing the points value of each case study library for the category of physical access.

Figure 6 shows that Newcastle City Library scored highest for their physical access, gaining the maximum five points for every category but one. Although the score for Library B puts them third, it is worth noting that they do not have any public toilets or a lift; although they cannot score in either category, they would not be contravening the Act unless the absence of either facility put someone with a disability at a severe disadvantage compared to a borrower without a disability.

Northamptonshire library has a fireproof lift and Newcastle City Library have two glass lifts, which provide access to all floors. Sheffield’s 1934 public lift is impractical for use by wheelchair users, due to its small size and dual doors. Wendy Hudson explained how they provide building access for people who have difficulties with steps:

‘We have a service lift. In terms of access to the building obviously the front – the two front entrances – have both got steps involved. So just for people with a wheelchair – or struggling with prams at all – ‘cause that’s another area of course – children and prams - they come to the loading bay entrance, which is not ideal but it’s on Arundel Gate so it’s straight-in flat and there is a service lift, which is quite big, which will take that to all other floors, and the art gallery’ (Hudson, 2012).
The service lift is equipped with audio information and tactile lift buttons at a practical height. Sheffield Central Library does not have ramps and only one of its entrances is level with the ground. In contrast, all entrances at Newcastle City are level with the ground and provide easy access for all borrowers. Library B and Northamptonshire Central Library both have excellent ramps.

Figure 6 shows that every case study library scored well for the presence of handrails. While handrails were present at Northamptonshire Central Library, their provision was inconsistent and missing from the corners of the staircases. Both Sheffield and Northamptonshire Central Library provide a public toilet for disabled use.

Northamptonshire Central Library is fitted with automatic doors, despite its listed building status, as is Northampton and Newcastle City Library. Sheffield Central Library retains its original heavy wooden doors, which could be difficult to open for a variety of library users, especially those with a physical disability. Although all case study libraries had security sensors suitable for wheelchair access, only Northamptonshire and Sheffield Central Library had sensors wide enough to allow two wheelchairs to pass through the sensors at the same time.

The range of desk furniture available in Newcastle City Library is extremely varied and was designed to meet a variety of needs and preferences. All desks that housed a scanner are height adjustable and all tables could be used by wheelchair users. Much of their shelving contains either three or four shelves and reduces the risk of any borrower not being able to access stock. Top shelves are often used for front-facing book displays and bottom shelves have been intentionally set off the floor to reduce problems associated with bending and reaching low level shelving. Newcastle City Library also provide lower level counters for easier access by wheelchair users and young borrowers, as does Northamptonshire library. Newcastle City Library provides excellent toilet facilities in the building, with at least one non-gender specific disabled toilet on every floor, in additional to the adult changing facility and hoist.
Library B also has modern library furniture and the bookshelves are generally of a good height for access by all borrowers. The counters at Library B are all the same height, as is the case at Sheffield Central Library. Although Library B allows good space between their shelving isles, the space at one end of each isle is often inadequate to facilitate wheelchair manoeuvrability. Northamptonshire have arranged their static furniture in a practical way for wheelchair users but make manoeuvrability challenging through their awkward positioning of selected freestanding furniture. Northamptonshire Central Library provides a variety of tables, including three adjustable desks and breakfast bar style tables.

Sheffield Central Library has retained its original shelving fixtures, which can inhibit access in a number of ways. The wall-mounted shelving is tall, containing an average of five or six shelves. Although they do have a good minimum height, the stock on the upper shelves would be unreachable to a borrower in a wheelchair and they would need assistance to procure such stock. The arrangement of Sheffield’s shelving can also make it difficult to access all parts of the library as there are corners in each ‘alcove’ to navigate around in order to access the book stock. Sheffield provide a limited number of standard height tables and two adjustable tables in the computer suite.
5.8 Consultation

Caroline Moughton, Equal Opportunities and Diversity Coordinator at Oxford Brookes University, believes that libraries risk alienating their students if they assume their needs, rather than properly establishing their support requirements (CILIP, 2011b: n.p). The same is true of public libraries, who must ensure they are correctly understanding the needs of their borrowers. It is important that libraries consult with their borrowers prior to making changes to the service.

Newcastle City Library carried out extensive consultation to establish the needs and preferences of their borrowers prior to the opening of their new library. The consultation fed into the building design and the management continues to listen to library users and amend the service in accordance with feedback. Mark Thurston, Facilities Supervisor for Newcastle City Library, explained their consultation process when designing the new library:

‘We set up a series of working groups with staff, with so-called experts, and with general public, but also with specific groups. We had a group of people with learning difficulties; we had a group of people with a range of disabilities. The City Council has a disabled users’ group as well and we obviously used them. The company that built the building for us obviously did an assessment and consulted with the disabled, as did the architects who designed the building, so we ended up with three streams of information coming into the original design (Thurston, 2012).’

Library staff continue to work with the council’s disabled users group and consult with the public.

Northamptonshire Central Library also carry out regular consultation with a variety of users with disabilities. The consultation is viewed as a ‘big thing’ by Northamptonshire County Council, despite being a time consuming process. Carl Dorney (2012), Library Supervisor at Northamptonshire Central Library, explains that:

‘there is a whole consultation process that we have to follow. We do that quite regularly. Again, it’s a County Council policy but we follow it... we’ve got various focus groups. We also have staff with disabilities so if it’s a small
thing, you can run it by a member of staff or we have these groups like the Sound Reads groups [services for the visually impaired]. There are local disability networks and things like that: we work closely with partnerships so you know they’re let us use them as a sounding board for things and they’re usually quite vocal about getting back to us as well.’

Northamptonshire Central Library utilize their strong links with partnered organizations to improve the service offered to borrowers, and to ensure the service meets the needs of every user, as much as possible.

In contrast, Library B engages in limited consultation with the public. Although the county had demonstrated their ability to consult with disabled borrowers in the case of a recent new library build, consultation did not seem a priority when it related to more minor changes. In the case of the new build, the library worked with the county’s Equality and Diversity team, and had them:

‘inviting various disabled groups – or representatives of various different disabled groups - coming in and saying ‘how would you manage this/is this ok?’.... We consulted there, meaning we have got the ability to consult on the times when it’s particularly critical to consult’ (Librarian, 2012).

The limited consultation undertaken by Library B is particularly interesting when you consider that Library B regarded the biggest challenge to meeting the needs of disabled users as the inability to know what those needs are. The Senior Librarian was aware that the needs of disabled users were extremely diverse and professed that unless people with disabilities came into the library, it was hard to identify ways in which the service could be improved. Their links with disability organizations appear to be through the Equality and Diversity Team, suggesting they must rely on these indirect links to arrange consultation, or on feedback from existing library borrowers already using the library.

Sheffield Central Library does not consult specifically with people who have a disability. Wendy Hudson, Service Development Librarian at Sheffield Central library, explained that although they do not carry out specific consultation, they do carry out ‘periodic surveys’ which contain questions relating to disability in the
monitoring section. The survey is largely available online but paper copies are available in standard and large print, on request. People with disabilities – if they are able to – can complete the survey to provide library feedback. Although Sheffield Central library are restricted by their listed building status as to what changes they can make, this limited consultation means they are not capitalizing on the changes that are available to them.
5.9 Publicity and Promotion

Linked to consultation with borrowers, is the promotion of services to the public. During the interviews, senior library staff were asked about the measures they took to publicize their facilities and services to people with disabilities. Potential library borrowers need to know what is available to them and ensure the library offers an accessible and relevant service.

Newcastle City Library has worked hard to promote its services. Mark Thurston (2012) explained what they had done to promote their services:

‘We have a visual impairment group who we’ve worked quite hard to promote ourselves to. We also supply as much information as we can… All our information is on the Disability Go website because we see that as a key resource of information for a range of people. We thought that was maybe the best place to provide ourselves on. We’re also on the Changes Places website.’

In addition to the information available on external websites, the library also publicizes their facilities, with pictures, on their own web pages. The library also provides printed information relating to visual impairment, mental health support and services available through partnered organizations. Prior to the opening of their new library, Newcastle City Library took the unprecedented step of advertising the library on television. The promotion reached primetime regional television viewers, which would have included people with disabilities.

This contrasts sharply with Sheffield Central library, who do not carry out any specific advertisement of their services to the disabled. The library has links with the local branch of the RNIB and provides a reading group for people with a visual impairment, which stimulates some publicity for their services through this relationship. However, the library felt that it was merely a supplementary service to that provided by the RNIB and that it could not compete with the breadth and quality of their service. Consequently, it seems unlikely that the RNIB branch would be a particularly effective means of promoting the library’s facilities.
Northamptonshire Central Library publishes library information online and promotes the service through their outreach work. Carl Dorney (2012), Library Supervisor, explained how they went about this:

‘We’re split geographically into three areas. And we currently have a librarian in each area – which is termed a community librarian. They will go and talk to key groups. We’ve got an Over 50’s network who are visited regularly and of course we will promote to them stuff that we think’s going to be appropriate to them. And also we have a newsletter which they send to thousands of homes in the county. So we promote things like our housebound service… the fact the we have large print books, audio-books, those sort of things. We do that. We don’t really have a marketing budget so we don’t produce a lot of publicity so it’s kind of through outreach work and talking to people. So if somebody joins we have an analysis field on their borrower record so we ask them questions so we have their gender, ethnicity and whether they consider themselves to have a disability. And then we ask them which disability they you know… So obviously if someone had ticked visual impairment, we will go through that with them at that point… It is quite useful…’

Like Sheffield and Northamptonshire Central libraries, Library B no longer produces advertising in a paper format. When asked about publicity, the Senior Librarian at Library B explained that the website was now the most important way of providing information about the service to the public. Their webpage contains a photograph of the library, contact details, opening hours and services provided by each branch, in addition to a list of accessibly features for each library building. Although the data is only available online, the Librarian stressed that,

‘If they can’t [access the internet] they can always come in and we’d always print off the information or look it up over the phone’ (Librarian, 2012).
5.10 Self service Facilities

Figure 7: A graph showing the points value of each case study library for the category of self service accessibility.

The case study libraries used three different systems for self service. Sheffield and Library B use Intellident self service machines, Newcastle use Axiel (now part of Intellident) and Northamptonshire use machines provided by 3M, housed in bespoke casing. None of the systems were able to respond to speech access, nor were they able to enlarge the print. Sheffield central library has a visually impaired setting on their machines, which changes the contrast and colours of the screen.

Figure 7 shows that Northamptonshire Central Library received the highest points value for this category. They were the only library to provide a self issue machine at a lower level, designated for use by both the disabled and children. A member of staff is needed to unlock visual multimedia items, meaning unlocking devices are not required. Although the change slot for the machine is low, its positioning is more practical than the change feature in Intellident machines, which is extremely low to the ground and requires nimble fingers to remove coins from the small internal slot.
Figure 7 shows that Newcastle City Library scored lowest for the touch sensitivity of their machine. Their self service machines are the oldest out of the case study libraries and the touch sensitivity is poor compared to the newer models used elsewhere. However, Newcastle has plans to replace its machines with improved technology in the foreseeable future, which would also enable them to dispense change. The unlocking machines at Newcastle were placed at two different heights, one significantly lower than the other, in order to make them accessible to all.

Figure 7 shows that each case study library scored five points for their use of language, which was simple and easy to understand. The navigation of each type of machine was similar, although only the Intellident machines contained a book slot rather than a book pad to ‘read’ the books.
5.11 Miscellaneous Facilities

Figure 8: A graph showing the points value of each case study library for the category of miscellaneous facilities.

Figure 8 shows that Newcastle City Library and Northamptonshire Central Library were the only two libraries to have at least one member of staff with the ability to communicate in British Sign Language. The staff at Newcastle City Library were trained by the authority, whereas the staff member at Northamptonshire library learnt the skill independently.

No library provided signs welcoming assistance animals.
6 Freedom of Information Request Findings

As highlighted in the methodology (chapter 4) for the Freedom of Information requests, the final data varies considerably between each authority. As such, a graphical representation of the data would at best be without value, and at worst, would be misleading. Consequently, the findings will be discussed with reference to trends identified in the data and examples drawn from different authorities.

The data revealed that although the majority of library authorities provide some form of disability awareness training for their library staff, the level of attendance varies considerably between the authorities who were able to provide this data. Councils such as West Berkshire, South Gloucestershire, Rutland and Stockton have all provided disability awareness training to 100 per cent of their library staff. This contrasts with one authority, who did not want to be named, who only had 8 members of library staff who have undertaken any kind of disability awareness training. Another authority, who also wished to remain unnamed, had only sent one member of staff on their diversity and equality training, which included deaf and blind awareness training. Barnet Council admits that they do not currently provide any specific training on the matter.

Many of the library authorities who responded to the Freedom of Information request provide training to new library staff as part of their induction processes, often under the guise of equality and diversity training, or similar phrasing. Hampshire Council, for example, provide disability awareness to all new staff, as do Bath and North East Somerset Council, who also provide refresher training when required. Wokingham provide training as part of staff inductions, yet only 63 per cent of their library staff have undertaken the training, suggesting that it was introduced after 47 per cent of their staff had already been in post, highlighting a potential pitfall of this training approach.

Redbridge Council have adopted a holistic approach to staff training on disability awareness. Instead of providing specific training on the issue, they believe ‘that this
holistic approach is much more effective in embedding staff awareness of these issues’ (P. Flindall, personal communication, July 25 2012). The council is currently improving their provision for the visually impaired following customer feedback, suggesting a strong commitment to customer service.

Several councils have provided comprehensive and practical training for their library staff. Buckinghamshire Council, for instance, have provided training on hidden disability awareness as part of their broad training program. The ability to detect hidden disabilities would be particularly useful to front-line staff who are required to identify and cater for borrower needs. Another council who provide comprehensive training for their library staff is Kent Council, who provide equality briefings as part of their induction process, in addition to specific disability training. Kent Council runs disability awareness days, which cover living with dyslexia, hearing impairments and learning disabilities. They also provide training on visual impairments, access software for public computers, British Sign Language, mental health awareness and training in conflict management. Their courses have been attended by a significant number of their library staff, creating a highly skilled workforce. As part of their thorough disability training, Leeds Council provide training in both dementia and autism awareness, acknowledging disabilities which are often overlooked in preference for physical or visible disabilities.

Data from the Freedom of Information requests have also highlighted a trend to focus training on management staff, and save money by cascading the training down to front-line staff. For example, Rochdale Council have only provided disability awareness training to their two most senior members of library management staff. They undertook disability awareness e-learning training, before communicating key messages to frontline library staff. Wakefield Council have also restricted their training to members of the library management team, who underwent wider equality training.

A further theme apparent from the data is the utilization of online training programmes, e-learning modules and other flexible training methods. For example, Lambeth Council utilized their Intranet and Network ebulletin in order to update
staff knowledge, and Chester West and Cheshire Council employ e-learning packages to provide training, in addition to ‘Lunchtime talks’, which provide ‘an opportunity to gain a greater knowledge of a particular protected characteristic or equality related subject’ (R. Dixon, personal communication, Aug 16 2012).

However, not all training was online and some councils are still providing practical training to library staff, offering practical skill sessions relating to disabilities. For example, staff working for South Tyneside ‘receive focused in house training for supporting library use by people with specific disabilities, such as helping VIP users to access the VIP software on the pcs’ (L. Casselden, personal communication, August 8 2012). Sefton Council went even further and provided training to make staff more aware of the difficulties faced by people with a visual impairment. Staff were able to wear glasses that simulated various visual impairments and trained in the correct way to guide around a blind borrower.

The Freedom of Information requests also sought to ascertain whether disability awareness training had been updated to cover the introduction of the 2010 Equality Act. The majority of authorities had either updated their training or were in the process of doing so. Although this is encouraging in that it proves authorities are aware of the Act, it has been almost two years since its introduction in October 2010, yet authorities such as Peterborough and Bradford are still amending their training programmes to reflect the change. Some authorities, such as Southampton, have made no amendments to their training, in contrast to authorities like Leicester City and Kent, who have provided specific training on the Act.

In summary, the Freedom of Information findings suggest that some form of training related to disability is provided in almost every authority who responded to the request. The findings also suggest that the training is inconsistent across different authorities, both in terms of the type and amount of training provided, and the way in which it is executed. The findings indicate that some authorities consider disability awareness to be a crucial training need in its own right, whereas others view disability as simply another category under the broad diversity and equality umbrella.
The number of library staff who have attended relevant disability training varies widely between authorities, with some sending a single member of staff on behalf of the library service, and some authorities providing mandatory training for all staff. These inconsistencies suggest that the service provided by each authority will also vary depending on the training the staff have received, how many staff attended, and whether the training is refreshed and kept up to date. Highly trained staff will be more knowledgeable and confident in their skills and will be more aware of what can be done to help borrowers with disabilities.
Figure 9: A graph showing the cumulative total for all categories of observational data, by library.

Figure 9 shows that Newcastle City Library was awarded the highest points value in the observational data categories, scoring particularly well in the physical access category. Northamptonshire Central library also scored well, particularly in relation to access and their OPAC accessibility. The score of Library B was adversely affected by the absence of any lift facilities. However, they provided a good range of auxiliary services and were particularly strong in the category for their policies, practices and procedures. Sheffield Central Library were awarded the lowest points value overall, and did not score well in the categories of physical access; auxiliary aids and services; and policies, practices and procedures.

The observational data collection highlighted weaknesses in staff training, not in relation to disability or to borrowers, but to their own facilities and aids. A positive and unintentional outcome of the data collection was the impact it had on staff knowledge and awareness; many staff commented that they had learnt information that may come in useful when assisting a disabled borrower in the future.
With the exception of Sheffield Central Library, all case study libraries provided specialist aids to provide computer access for people with disabilities. Funds had been spent purchasing the equipment, yet Newcastle City Library was the only library to keep the equipment in plain sight and readily available for use. Staff at Northamptonshire Central Library were unsure whether they still had the equipment available and staff at Library B were unsure where it was now located. Although it was technically available in both libraries, it was not available with the same ease as the standard keyboards, and its absence could easily create a substantial disadvantage to a visually impaired borrower.

Newcastle City Library and Northamptonshire Central Library both scored exceptionally well in the category of physical access. This is unsurprising in a library as new as Newcastle’s City Library, but is perhaps more unexpected for a listed building like Northamptonshire Central Library. Both libraries have succeeded in providing a welcoming, unique and physically accessible library to all members of the public. The scores for this category suggest that the age of a library building is not the determining factor for providing good physical access. Northamptonshire Central Library has proved that even listed buildings can provide excellent access.

Newcastle City Library demonstrated some excellent consultation practice and Northamptonshire Central Library has also worked hard to consult with their borrowers, and to consider their needs when proposing and implementing changes. However, the consultation at Library B and Sheffield Central Library was poor, suggesting that effective consultation is inconsistent across library authorities. The interview with the Senior Librarian at Library B suggests that it may even be inconsistent across individual authorities. Despite the authority’s ability to carry out consultation at another library, the consultation at Library B was poor.

The interviews revealed that websites are used as an important source of publicity, as it is considered to be an effective and inexpensive means of promoting library services. However, 20 per cent of British households are still without an internet connection (Office of National Statistics, 2012a: table one), representing 5.2 million households (Office for national Statistics, 2012a, table two). Of these, 3 per cent
cited ‘a physical or seniority disability’ to be the reason why they had no internet access. Although internet access is available in public libraries, people with a disability represent a staggering 44.7 per cent of those who have never been online (Office for Nation Statistics, 2012b: table 1b, Q2) suggesting that people with disabilities are not using the access provided by libraries. Consequently, this online form of publicity is failing to reach a significant number of people, especially those in the lowest income brackets, who are least likely to have internet access at home (Office of National Statistics, 2012c: table 5a, Q2).

Libraries strive to be inclusive and diverse environments, and accessible to all. However, the failure to promote their access and facilities may deter people with disabilities from visiting the library, and unintentionally exclude some borrower groups. Newcastle City Library and Northamptonshire Central Library demonstrate best practice in their practice of using several different methods of publicity and promotion, in order to target a wider audience. Their promotion is also proactive, reaching out to people who may not currently be a library user. In contrast, Library B relied on people accessing their web pages, or contacting the library, for information about their services.

Regardless of which medium is used for promotion, it is vital that publicity material is up to date and accurate. The dissemination of inaccurate information is not only unprofessional but it can also be misleading and frustrating for borrowers. At the time of data collection, neither Northamptonshire Central Library nor Library B was able to provide the complete list of aids advertised on their respective websites. Library B had not updated its website when its hearing loop was removed during their renovation, and Northamptonshire Central library did not stock the sun lamp advertised on their website. Sheffield Central Library provides limited information online and does not engage in proactive promotion of their service for people with disabilities, highlighting several areas for improvement.
8 Comparison with McCaskill’s Study (2000)

This study used an amended version of McCaskill’s observational criteria (2000: 115-119) in the data collection process. In order to produce comparable data, only criterion used in both studies was used to produce figures 10 - 15. It shows that the majority of libraries have improved their provision for people with disabilities since the original study (McCaskill, 2000).

![A comparison of observational findings between McCaskill (2000) and the present study](chart.png)

Figure 10: A graph to show the observational data totals for McCaskill’s study (2000), in comparison to data collected for the current study.

In McCaskill’s study (2000), Burnley library scored the most points in the observational categories, largely due to its outstanding provision of auxiliary aids and services. In the present study, both Newcastle City Library and Northamptonshire Central Library scored higher than Burnley library in 2000 (McCaskill). Newcastle City Library were awarded the highest points value overall.
for the observational categories, scoring particularly strongly in the physical access criteria.

With the exception of a county council with five divisions, libraries in all authority types scored higher than they did in the previous study (McCaskill, 2000), suggesting that provision has generally improved. The library scoring the highest value of points belonged to the same category of library authority as the library which scored the lowest. A breakdown of library performance by type of authority is given below:

Comparison between libraries: ‘The principal library in one of the five districts of a County Council'

![Comparison between libraries](image)

Figure 11: A graph to show the observational data for a principal library in one of the five districts of a County Council.

Figure 11 shows that for this category of library authority, provision for borrowers with a disability has not improved since the original research was conducted (McCaskill, 2000), although it should be noted that Burnley’s original score was considerably higher than that of the other case study libraries in 2000.

Burnley Library demonstrated an excellent provision of auxiliary aids and services; although Library B had a good range of aids available, it was unable to compete with the equipment available at Burnley Library and its score reflects this. However,
provision was found to be superior in several areas at Library B, and the overall performance was not dissimilar.

Figure 12: A graph to show the observational data for a principal library in a county council.

Northamptonshire Central Library was the only library to participate in both the original (McCaskill, 2000) and current study. Figure 12 shows that for this category of library authority, provision for borrowers with a disability improved considerably since the original research was conducted (McCaskill, 2000).

The only category not to have improved since the original study (McCaskill, 2000) is the provision of auxiliary aids and services. The library has replaced its public computers since 2000 and unfortunately the new system no longer supports assistive access software. The library also no longer has its text telephone service, which would have reduced the number of points scored in this category.

Physical access has improved significantly since the original study (McCaskill, 2000). The library has twice been refurbished since 2000 and has replaced a significant proportion of its shelving and furniture. The biggest improvement at
Northamptonshire Central Library was seen in the accessibility of their library catalogue. The library has changed the way in which their catalogue is accessed, making it considerably more flexible, adaptable, and suitable for the needs of borrowers with disabilities.

Figure 13: A graph to show the observational data for a central library of a metropolitan borough council

Figure 13 shows that Leeds Central Library scored poorly in a number of areas, especially in the alternative formats category, OPAC accessibility and their policies, practices and procedures. In contrast, Sheffield Central Library scored extremely well for their alternative formats and moderately in other areas.

Leeds Central library was built in 1884 and is a grade II* listed building. Both Sheffield Central Library and Leeds Central library scored poorly for their physical access; this is likely to be a reflection of the age of the buildings and the lack of disability awareness at the time of their design and construction.

The biggest improvement between the provision of Leeds Central Library in 2000 and Sheffield Central Library in this study relates to OPAC accessibility. Leeds Central Library used Talis whereas Sheffield Central Library uses SirsiDynix Symphony. As such, it is uncertain whether this improvement is due to the use of
different software, or whether it is the product of improved disability awareness on the part of Sheffield Central Library. Sheffield Central Library also scored much better than Leeds Central Library in the policies, practices and procedure category, suggesting that Sheffield Central Library has a better awareness of accessibility issues in 2012 than Leeds Central Library applied in 2000.

Figure 14: A graph to show the observational data for a central library of a different metropolitan borough council

Birmingham Central Library has eight floors available to the public, in relation to the six floors available at Newcastle City Library. Newcastle City Library was selected for participation in this study due to its similarity to Birmingham Central Library, which is currently closed. Both libraries are located in a very large English city and are uncharacteristically big for a public library.

Figure 14 shows that the physical access scores for the two libraries are very similar. The only category in which Birmingham Central Library was awarded a higher points value than Newcastle Central library was the alternative formats category. The biggest difference between the two libraries can be seen in the layout and signage category with 23 and 44 points for Birmingham Central Library and Newcastle
Library respectively. In libraries as large as Birmingham Central Library and Newcastle City Library, it is essential to have clear signage and guidance, and for it to be accessible to all borrowers. Birmingham Central Library scored moderately in this category in McCaskill’s 2000 study, suggesting there was room for improvement in the presentation and signage of their library. Newcastle City Library, on the other hand, scored 44 out of a possible 50 points for their layout and signage. Newcastle Central Library is well laid out and has excellent signage and guidance, which had been implemented with consideration to the needs and preferences of all borrowers.
9 Conclusion

The Equality Act was introduced in October 2010 to protect individuals with certain characters. Disability became protected under the Equality Act 2010 and the DDA ceased to exist in Britain. The DDA changed the way in which services provided for people with disabilities, and played a pivotal role in improving provision, raising awareness and reducing disability discrimination. This study aimed to investigate the current level of awareness of the Equality Act 2010 and the level of disability provision in public libraries.

The study investigated the provision at four case study libraries, located in different counties, and being governed by two different types of local government authority. The research indicates that disability provision is inconsistent throughout England. It also found that awareness of the Equality Act 2010 was limited and that training varied greatly between different library authorities.

The literature review highlighted the lack of professional literature relating to the Equality Act 2010. Wendy Hudson, Service Development Librarian at Sheffield Central Library, suggested that the poor coverage of the Act in the professional press may have led to a limited awareness of the legislation (Hudson, 2012). It certainly appears that the DDA continues to overshadow the Equality Act 2010, despite the former’s obsolescence. Newcastle City Library was the only case study to have knowingly updated their policies to include references to the Act and only two interviewees had any awareness of the Act at all.

The case study findings indicate that the location, age and type of authority in which the libraries operate are not relevant factors to their levels of provision. The oldest case study library building scored well and only Newcastle City Library provided better provision. Sheffield Central Library scored the lowest against the observational criteria and Newcastle City Library scored highest, suggesting that the type of authority does not have an effect on disability provision, as both libraries operate within a Metropolitan Borough Council. The highest scoring library in McCaskill’s (2000) original study was Burnley Library, which operates within a
district of a county council, which further supports the theory that the authority type is not relevant.

The observational findings have been compared with comparable data from McCaskill’s 2000 study. The findings suggest that general disability provision has improved, in spite of the limited awareness of the Equality Act legislation. However, a comparison of the interview data from both studies suggests that many of the challenges and failings identified in 2000 (McCaskill) continue to effect today’s public library disability provision.

Perhaps in light of the current economic situation, the financial constraints are now more of an issue than ever. The introduction of self service and volunteers has led to reduced staffing levels in many libraries, making it harder than ever to free up staff to attend training. The move towards e-learning and online learning tutorials has enabled staff to carry out training without leaving the building, but it is questionable how effective this training can be when it relates to practical skills, such as leading visually impaired people and communicating with disabled borrowers. Although the majority of councils in England are providing some level of disability training to a significant proportion of staff, there remains too many staff who have had no training, or have had no refresher training to keep their skills up-to-date. Training will improve staff confidence and ability, which will have a positive effect on customer service.

The challenging financial situation means that libraries need to make the most of the aids and services they have already purchased, so that money has not been wasted and borrowers are not disadvantaged. Library staff need adequate training, not just in disability awareness, but also in the facilities available to aid access and improve the library experience for a borrower with a disability. McCaskill (2000:48) commented in her 2000 study that it appears some libraries were merely paying ‘lip service to the DDA’. Linda Butler, one of McCaskill’s interviewees, spoke of purchasing pieces of equipment ‘which then sit in cupboards or get broken and staff don’t know how to use them’ (Butler, cited in McCaskill, 2000:48). The poor presentation and promotion of some auxiliary equipment remains a prominent
issue and Butler’s comment applies just as much to the current study as it did twelve years ago.

When considering the impact of spending money on equipment that would benefit the disabled, it is important to remember that many of the facilities and services that benefit people with disabilities also benefit other borrowers (Barker, 2011:9). Ramps and lifts are frequently used by borrowers with pushchairs or shopping trolleys; alternative formats are used by all groups of borrower, and bright attractive furniture will appeal to everyone.

The case study findings confirm that consultation continues to be underutilized by some libraries. Although Newcastle City Library and Northamptonshire Central Library demonstrated best practice in the ways they consult and consider their borrowers, there remain too many libraries like Sheffield Central Library who engage in no dedicated consultation and make changes without liaising with borrowers. By including people with disabilities in research and evaluation, libraries are doing their part to provide equal treatment, equal access and equal outcomes to people with disabilities (Burke, 2009:52). It is also important to engage proactively with borrowers, rather than placing the onus on borrowers to seek facilities and services that are not always on display or advertised. In addition, failure to promote services will result in poor usage of equipment and low levels of library usage by disabled borrowers. It is important that no borrower feels excluded or unable to access the library service.

Library provision for the disabled has improved and some libraries are demonstrating best practice and a true awareness of borrower needs. However, the case study findings confirm this is not universal and borrowers do not receive an equal service throughout England. The Equality Act aimed to remove inconsistencies and promote the same quality of service throughout the country, but this research suggests that the vision has not yet been achieved. The Equality Act has been law for almost two years, yet there is little mention of it in professional literature and little awareness in the sector. It is hoped that as publications on the Act begin to become commonplace and library policies are
updated accordingly, that provision will improve in due course and that borrowers with disabilities will receive the same high standard of provision and service throughout England.
10 Recommendations

This study has highlighted examples of best practice and excellent customer focus from its case study libraries. It concludes with recommendations for the future.

➢ Promote disability awareness and social inclusion from a young age. Stop prejudice setting in

Library B houses an excellent collection for parents and carers on disability and issues relating to social inclusion and acceptance. It contains picture books for children and non-fiction titles for adults and parents, covering topics such as disabilities and significant life events. They provide a tool for adults to teach younger children about real-life issues in a way that is child-friendly and promotes a message of equality and diversity from a young age. The collection was prominently displayed in the children’s section and was housed in a dedicated display unit. This kind of reading material raises the profile of people with disabilities and helps children accept and understand others.

➢ Publicity and Information

Clear publicity and the dissemination of accurate information are vital. All published material should be appraised on a regular basis for its accuracy and relevance, and updated to include the latest information. Marketing should have an ‘end date’, at which point it is evaluated, then amended, replaced or renewed as appropriate. Information is not a static commodity and it is important that procedures reflect this. Websites can quickly go out of date but a regular check of the information would prevent errors going unnoticed long-term.

Newcastle City Library and Northamptonshire Central Library liaise with Disabled Go, an award-winning website which provides online access guides to a wide range of venues in Britain, including libraries. The site checks the information on an annual basis and responds to error feedback within 24 hours. (Disabled Go, no date: n.p.). Not only is Disabled Go an excellent example of effective information management, but it is also a valuable promotional tool. The charity send out a
surveyor to each venue to collect the necessarily data and publish it online, where it is accessible to anyone with internet access. It provides prominent and valuable in-depth access information that would be impractical to publish on many library pages.

➢ Know your borrowers

In addition to consultation, storing disability needs on your Library Management System can provide valuable information to staff by discreetly highlighting potential needs. Northamptonshire Central Library had this facility activated within Talis, which not only provides additional information to library staff dealing with the borrower, but also allows the County Council to gather statistical information about the potential needs about their borrowers, and amend their policies accordingly.

➢ Target your training and built staff confidence

The aids and services stocked by each library are unique, and training needs to reflect this. It must be centred round the library’s own facilities, where they are, and how to use them. It is not enough for front-line staff to be aware of disabilities if they then don’t know how best to assist borrowers, or don’t know what equipment is available. Training needs to focus on the front-line staff, rather than management, as they have the most contact with the public.

Local disability groups may offer free training and practical advice to library staff. Forming partnerships with disability groups can be mutually beneficial, as it enables the library to provide a better service to people with a disability, and it will raise the profile of both organizations.
Promote independence

Independence is important to many people with disabilities. The Penfriend technology employed by Newcastle City Library is a means of allowing borrowers with a sight or reading disability to ‘browse’ audio books on the shelves. Audio data is programmed into the book spines and can be read by the Penfriend when scanned. The built in speaker then reads the information aloud and the borrower is able to access information about the book without needing the assistance of a member of staff or carer. The Penfriend technology does involve a financial commitment but Newcastle City Library use volunteers and Duke of Edinburgh members to record the audio data, minimizing further expense, and providing a valuable service to borrowers. The involvement of Duke of Edinburgh members can also increases the profile of the library to young adults and stimulate interest in the library and information sector.
Interview References


Hudson, W. (2012). Interview at Sheffield Central Library, conducted by Debbie Southwell on August 17, 2012


Thurston, M. (2012). Interview at Newcastle City Library, conducted by Debbie Southwell on August 15, 2012
References


Appendices

Appendix I: The Act pertaining to disability

Full title: An Act to make provision to require Ministers of the Crown and others when making strategic decisions about the exercise of their functions to have regard to the desirability of reducing socio-economic inequalities; to reform and harmonise equality law and restate the greater part of the enactments relating to discrimination and harassment related to certain personal characteristics; to enable certain employers to be required to publish information about the differences in pay between male and female employees; to prohibit victimisation in certain circumstances; to require the exercise of certain functions to be with regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and other prohibited conduct; to enable duties to be imposed in relation to the exercise of public procurement functions; to increase equality of opportunity; to amend the law relating to rights and responsibilities in family relationships; and for connected purposes.

6 Disability

(1) A person (P) has a disability if—

(a) P has a physical or mental impairment, and

(b) the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on P's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

(2) A reference to a disabled person is a reference to a person who has a disability.

(3) In relation to the protected characteristic of disability—

(a) a reference to a person who has a particular protected characteristic is a reference to a person who has a particular disability;

(b) a reference to persons who share a protected characteristic is a reference to persons who have the same disability.
(4) This Act (except Part 12 and section 190) applies in relation to a person who has had a disability as it applies in relation to a person who has the disability; accordingly (except in that Part and that section)—

(a) a reference (however expressed) to a person who has a disability includes a reference to a person who has had the disability, and

(b) a reference (however expressed) to a person who does not have a disability includes a reference to a person who has not had the disability.

(5) A Minister of the Crown may issue guidance about matters to be taken into account in deciding any question for the purposes of subsection (1).

(6) Schedule 1 (disability: supplementary provision) has effect.

(Great Britain, 2010: Equality Act, Part 2, Chapter 1, Section 6).

15 Discrimination arising from disability

(1) A person (A) discriminates against a disabled person (B) if—

(a) A treats B unfavourably because of something arising in consequence of B’s disability, and

(b) A cannot show that the treatment is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

(2) Subsection (1) does not apply if A shows that A did not know, and could not reasonably have been expected to know, that B had the disability.

(Great Britain, 2010:. Equality Act, Part 2, Chapter 2: Discrimination: Section 15)
20 Duty to make adjustments

(1) Where this Act imposes a duty to make reasonable adjustments on a person, this section, sections 21 and 22 and the applicable Schedule apply; and for those purposes, a person on whom the duty is imposed is referred to as A.

(2) The duty comprises the following three requirements.

(3) The first requirement is a requirement, where a provision, criterion or practice of A’s puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in relation to a relevant matter in comparison with persons who are not disabled, to take such steps as it is reasonable to have to take to avoid the disadvantage.

(4) The second requirement is a requirement, where a physical feature puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in relation to a relevant matter in comparison with persons who are not disabled, to take such steps as it is reasonable to have to take to avoid the disadvantage.

(5) The third requirement is a requirement, where a disabled person would, but for the provision of an auxiliary aid, be put at a substantial disadvantage in relation to a relevant matter in comparison with persons who are not disabled, to take such steps as it is reasonable to have to take to provide the auxiliary aid.

(6) Where the first or third requirement relates to the provision of information, the steps which it is reasonable for A to have to take include steps for ensuring that in the circumstances concerned the information is provided in an accessible format.

(7) A person (A) who is subject to a duty to make reasonable adjustments is not (subject to express provision to the contrary) entitled to require a disabled person, in relation to whom A is required to comply with the duty, to pay to any extent A’s costs of complying with the duty.

(8) A reference in section 21 or 22 or an applicable Schedule to the first, second or third requirement is to be construed in accordance with this section.
(9) In relation to the second requirement, a reference in this section or an applicable Schedule to avoiding a substantial disadvantage includes a reference to—

(a) removing the physical feature in question,

(b) altering it, or

(c) providing a reasonable means of avoiding it.

(10) A reference in this section, section 21 or 22 or an applicable Schedule (apart from paragraphs 2 to 4 of Schedule 4) to a physical feature is a reference to—

(a) a feature arising from the design or construction of a building,

(b) a feature of an approach to, exit from or access to a building,

(c) a fixture or fitting, or furniture, furnishings, materials, equipment or other chattels, in or on premises, or

(d) any other physical element or quality.

(11) A reference in this section, section 21 or 22 or an applicable Schedule to an auxiliary aid includes a reference to an auxiliary service.

(12) A reference in this section or an applicable Schedule to chattels is to be read, in relation to Scotland, as a reference to moveable property.

(13) The applicable Schedule is, in relation to the Part of this Act specified in the first column of the Table, the Schedule specified in the second column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part of this Act</th>
<th>Applicable Schedule</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part 3 (services and public functions)</td>
<td>Schedule 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Part 4 (premises)</td>
<td>Schedule 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 5 (work)</td>
<td>Schedule 8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
21 Failure to comply with duty

(1) A failure to comply with the first, second or third requirement is a failure to comply with a duty to make reasonable adjustments.

(2) A discriminates against a disabled person if A fails to comply with that duty in relation to that person.

(3) A provision of an applicable Schedule which imposes a duty to comply with the first, second or third requirement applies only for the purpose of establishing whether A has contravened this Act by virtue of subsection (2); a failure to comply is, accordingly, not actionable by virtue of another provision of this Act or otherwise.

22 Regulations

(1) Regulations may prescribe—

(a) matters to be taken into account in deciding whether it is reasonable for A to take a step for the purposes of a prescribed provision of an applicable Schedule;

(b) descriptions of persons to whom the first, second or third requirement does not apply.

(2) Regulations may make provision as to—

(a) circumstances in which it is, or in which it is not, reasonable for a person of a prescribed description to have to take steps of a prescribed description;
(b) what is, or what is not, a provision, criterion or practice;

(c) things which are, or which are not, to be treated as physical features;

(d) things which are, or which are not, to be treated as alterations of physical features;

(e) things which are, or which are not, to be treated as auxiliary aids.

(3) Provision made by virtue of this section may amend an applicable Schedule.

(Great Britain, 2010: Equality Act, Part 2, Chapter 2: Adjustments for disabled people)

23 Comparison by reference to circumstances

(1) On a comparison of cases for the purposes of section 13, 14, or 19 there must be no material difference between the circumstances relating to each case.

(2) The circumstances relating to a case include a person’s abilities if—

(a) on a comparison for the purposes of section 13, the protected characteristic is disability;

(b) on a comparison for the purposes of section 14, one of the protected characteristics in the combination is disability.

(3) If the protected characteristic is sexual orientation, the fact that one person (whether or not the person referred to as B) is a civil partner while another is married is not a material difference between the circumstances relating to each case.

24 Irrelevance of alleged discriminator’s characteristics

(1) For the purpose of establishing a contravention of this Act by virtue of section 13(1), it does not matter whether A has the protected characteristic.
(2) For the purpose of establishing a contravention of this Act by virtue of section 14(1), it does not matter—

(a) whether A has one of the protected characteristics in the combination;

(b) whether A has both.

25 References to particular strands of discrimination

(2) Disability discrimination is—

(a) discrimination within section 13 because of disability;

(b) discrimination within section 15;

(c) discrimination within section 19 where the relevant protected characteristic is disability;

(d) discrimination within section 21.

(Great Britain, 2010: Equality Act, Chapter 15, part 3)

Provision of services, etc.

29 Provision of services, etc.

(1) A person (a “service-provider”) concerned with the provision of a service to the public or a section of the public (for payment or not) must not discriminate against a person requiring the service by not providing the person with the service.

(2) A service-provider (A) must not, in providing the service, discriminate against a person (B)—

(a) as to the terms on which A provides the service to B;

(b) by terminating the provision of the service to B;

(c) by subjecting B to any other detriment.
(3) A service-provider must not, in relation to the provision of the service, harass—

(a) a person requiring the service, or

(b) a person to whom the service-provider provides the service.

(4) A service-provider must not victimise a person requiring the service by not providing the person with the service.

(5) A service-provider (A) must not, in providing the service, victimise a person (B)—

(a) as to the terms on which A provides the service to B;

(b) by terminating the provision of the service to B;

(c) by subjecting B to any other detriment.

(6) A person must not, in the exercise of a public function that is not the provision of a service to the public or a section of the public, do anything that constitutes discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

(7) A duty to make reasonable adjustments applies to—

(a) a service-provider (and see also section 55(7));

(b) a person who exercises a public function that is not the provision of a service to the public or a section of the public.

(8) In the application of section 26 for the purposes of subsection (3), and subsection (6) as it relates to harassment, neither of the following is a relevant protected characteristic—

(a) religion or belief;

(b) sexual orientation.

(9) In the application of this section, so far as relating to race or religion or belief, to the granting of entry clearance (within the meaning of the Immigration Act 1971), it does not matter whether an act is done within or outside the United Kingdom.
(10) Subsection (9) does not affect the application of any other provision of this Act to conduct outside England and Wales or Scotland.

31 Interpretation and exceptions

(1) This section applies for the purposes of this Part.

(2) A reference to the provision of a service includes a reference to the provision of goods or facilities.

(3) A reference to the provision of a service includes a reference to the provision of a service in the exercise of a public function.

(4) A public function is a function that is a function of a public nature for the purposes of the Human Rights Act 1998.

(5) Where an employer arranges for another person to provide a service only to the employer's employees—

(a) the employer is not to be regarded as the service-provider, but

(b) the employees are to be regarded as a section of the public.

(6) A reference to a person requiring a service includes a reference to a person who is seeking to obtain or use the service.

(7) A reference to a service-provider not providing a person with a service includes a reference to—

(a) the service-provider not providing the person with a service of the quality that the service-provider usually provides to the public (or the section of it which includes the person), or

(b) the service-provider not providing the person with the service in the manner in which, or on the terms on which, the service-provider usually provides the service to the public (or the section of it which includes the person).

(8) In relation to the provision of a service by either House of Parliament, the service-provider is the Corporate Officer of the House concerned; and if the service
involves access to, or use of, a place in the Palace of Westminster which members of the public are allowed to enter, both Corporate Officers are jointly the service-provider.

(9) Schedule 2 (reasonable adjustments) has effect.

(10) Schedule 3 (exceptions) has effect.

(Great Britain, 2010:. Equality Act, Chapter 15, part 3)
Appendix 2: Freedom of Information Request

Good evening.

My name is Debbie Southwell and I am submitting a Freedom of Information Request for information relating to the level of disability awareness training undertaken by library staff. Specifically I would like to know the following information, which I would prefer to receive in electronic form, by email:

Do you provide disability awareness training to library staff in your authority?

If so, what percentage of library staff in your authority have completed such training, if known?

And finally, whether training has been updated or provided to cover the introduction of the 2010 Equality Act, which includes important information relating to disability?

I am contactable by email, at this address, or by telephone on 07762 613388, if you require more information or clarification.

I hope to include this information in a forthcoming publication on the topic; please let me know if this would not be acceptable for copyright or legal reasons. I intend to refer to library authorities by name in the publication to demonstrate examples of best practice and highlight areas for improvement.

I look forward to hearing from you shortly.

Kind regards,

Debbie
Appendix 3: Ethics application form

University Research Ethics Application Form for Undergraduate & Postgraduate-Taught Students

This form has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)

Complete this form if you are an undergraduate or a postgraduate-taught student who plans to undertake a research project which requires ethics approval via the University Ethics Review Procedure.

Your Supervisor decides if ethics approval is required and, if required, which ethics review procedure (e.g. University, NHS, Alternative) applies.

If the University’s procedure applies, your Supervisor decides if your proposed project should be classed as ‘low risk’ or potentially ‘high risk’.

*PLEASE NOTE THAT YOUR DEPARTMENT MAY USE A VARIATION OF THIS FORM: PLEASE CHECK WITH THE ETHICS ADMINISTRATOR IN YOUR DEPARTMENT*

This form should be accompanied, where appropriate, by all Information Sheets / Covering Letters / Written Scripts which you propose to use to inform the prospective participants about the proposed research, and/or by a Consent Form where you need to use one.

Further guidance on how to apply is at:

www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure/review-procedure

Guidance on the possible routes for obtaining ethics approval (i.e. on the University Ethics Review Procedure, the NHS procedure and the Social Care Research Ethics Committee, and the Alternative procedure) is at:

www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure/ethics-approval
Once you have completed this research ethics application form in full, and other documents where appropriate, check that your name, the title of your research project and the date is contained in the footer of each page.

If your Supervisor has classed the project as ‘low risk’:

- Email this form, together with other documents where applicable, to your Supervisor; and
- Sign and date Annex 1 of this form and provide a paper copy to your Supervisor.

**Important Note for Supervisors:**

Following the ethics review the Supervisor must provide the academic department’s Ethics Administrator with a copy of the ‘low risk’ research ethics application that s/he reviewed and a completed Ethics Reviewer’s Comments Form indicating the ethics decision that s/he took in relation to it. The Ethics Reviewer’s Comments Form can be downloaded here: [www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/further-guidance/universityprocedure2/reviewersc](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/further-guidance/universityprocedure2/reviewersc) The Ethics Administrator reserves the right to consult the Chair of the academic department’s Ethics Review Panel (or equivalent) of s/he has concerns that projects classed as low risk should in fact have been classed as potentially high risk.

If your Supervisor has classed the project as potentially ‘high risk’:

- Email this form, together with other documents where applicable, to your department’s Ethics Administrator; and
- Ask your Supervisor to sign and date Annex 2 of this form and provide a paper copy of it to your department’s Ethics Administrator.

Ethics Administrators are listed at:

[www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.99105!/file/Ethics-Administrators.pdf](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.99105!/file/Ethics-Administrators.pdf)
I confirm that I have read the current version of the University of Sheffield 'Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue', as shown on the University's research ethics website at: www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy

A1. Title of research project:

An Updated Look at Public Library Provision for the Disabled in England

A2. Name of Student: Debbie Southwell

Department: Information School

dlsouthwell2@sheffield.ac.uk
Email:
Tel.: 07762613388

Name of Supervisor: Barbara Sen

A3. Proposed Project Duration:

Start date: June 2012
End date: September 2012

A4. Mark ‘X’ in one or more of the following boxes if your research:

- involves adults with mental incapacity or mental illness
- involves prisoners or others in custodial care (e.g. young offenders)
- involves children or young people aged under 18 years
- involves using samples of human biological material collected before for another purpose

X
involves taking new samples of human biological material (e.g. blood, tissue) *

involves testing a medicinal product *

involves taking new samples of human biological material (e.g. blood, tissue) *

involves additional radiation above that required for clinical care *

involves investigating a medical device *

* If you have marked boxes marked * then you also need to obtain confirmation that appropriate University insurance is in place. To do this email insurance@shef.ac.uk and request a copy of the ‘Clinical Trial Insurance Application Form’.

It is recommended that you familiarise yourself with the University’s Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue before completing the following questions. Please note that if you provide sufficient information about the research (what you intend to do, how it will be carried out and how you intend to minimise any risks), this will help the ethics reviewers to make an informed judgement quickly without having to ask for further details.

A5. **Briefly summarise:**

i. **The project’s aims and objectives:**

This project aims to examine the current level of disability provision in English public libraries, and in doing so, update the findings of a 2001 article discussing the response of libraries to the Disability Discrimination Act (McCaskill and Goulding, 2001). The study will also explore the current levels of provision in light of the Equality Act 2010, in order to investigate what impact, if any, the legislation has had on disability provision in public libraries. Finally, the study will establish the current levels of training provided for public library staff regarding disability and the Equality Act. The results of the study will inform future policy and highlight service provision gaps for the library authorities, in disability access, policy, service provision, and training for staff.
ii. The project’s methodology:

The data will be collected in a variety of ways, and the study will use both qualitative and quantitative data. The Freedom of Information Act will be used to request data on training statistics and information from a broad range of authorities throughout England. It is the researcher's intention to establish whether authorities had provided disability awareness training to its staff, and if so, what percentage of staff have undertaken the training, and whether it was updated following the introduction of the 2010 legislation.

Interviews will be conducted with staff to get their views on provision and suggestions for improvements. The interviews will be semi-structured, and will take place with library managers or equivalent members of senior staff. The interviews will use a combination of open and fixed questions, as well as probes to illicit the fullest possible answers. The interviews will be conducted and recorded in all five case study libraries. They will then be transcribed to ease analysis and provide a written representation of the interview process. The interview format and questions will be piloted in one library, and amended if necessary before being used in the other case study libraries.

Quantitative data will be collected during visits to each library, regarding the facilities in each library, attempting to view them as a disabled person would experience them.

The facilities will be recorded, using a scale to indicate the level at which the provision was provided. The scale will be formulated by the researcher and aims to reflect the points system employed in the original study (McCaskill and Goulding, 2001), which allocated points on a scale of 0 to 5 for each criterion. The observational data will be collected on policies and procedures, physical access, layout and signage, alternative format availability, the provision of auxiliary aids and services, and the accessibility of the OPAC and new technologies. The data will then be ranked and a comparison between the different library sites, and the original data findings, will be carried out. The comparison is designed to illustrate to what extent disability provision has improved since the 2001 study.

A6. What is the potential for physical and/or psychological harm / distress to participants?

None.

A7. Does your research raise any issues of personal safety for you or other researchers involved in the project? (especially if taking place outside working hours or off University premises)
The research will be conducted in public libraries during opening hours, and interviews will take place within library buildings, so there should be no danger to personal safety.

A8. How will the potential participants in the project be:

i. Identified?

In order to closely replicate the case-study criteria of the original study, the case study libraries will operate within five separate council organizations. The central library of two different metropolitan boroughs, the principal library in one of the five districts of a county council, the central library of a county council library and a library comparable to the main library of an inner London borough will be sought as case-study libraries. Libraries that are geographically suitable will be determined through online research.

ii. Approached?

A list of suitable libraries will be compiled that meet the criteria, and the top three potential libraries ranked in every category, with the most convenient library at the top. The first choice in every category will then be invited to participate by email; if participation is declined, then the process will be repeated with the next library on the list until a library is secured for each category. The criteria will require each library to be located in a different large English town or city and it is necessary for each library to be accessible by public transport.

iii. Recruited?

Each library will be invited to participate by email and arrangements will then be made to schedule the interview and quantitative data collection.

A9. Will informed consent be obtained from the participants?

Yes [x] No [ ]

If informed consent or consent is NOT to be obtained please explain why. Further guidance is at: www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/policy-notes/consent

n/a
A9.1. This question is only applicable if you are planning to obtain informed consent:

*How do you plan to obtain informed consent? (i.e. the proposed process?):*

A participant information sheet and consent form will be provided for every participant, in accordance with the ethics procedure, and they will be able to withdraw from the study at any time, without reason. The researcher will offer every participant the option of receiving a copy of all or any part of the finished study.

A10. What measures will be put in place to ensure confidentiality of personal data, where appropriate?

The identity and location of all interviewees and libraries featuring in the case studies will be anonymized throughout the study.

A11. Will financial / in kind payments (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants? (Indicate how much and on what basis this has been decided)

The author will purchase thank you cards for the participants and a small gift per library as a show of gratitude. It is not intended to be in compensation for staff time.

A12. Will the research involve the production of recorded media such as audio and/or video recordings?

<table>
<thead>
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<th>YES</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

A12.1. This question is only applicable if you are planning to produce recorded media:

*How will you ensure that there is a clear agreement with participants as to how these recorded media may be stored, used and (if appropriate) destroyed?*

Interviews will be recorded and transcribed, with permission from the interviewees. Participants will give explicit consent to the audio recording.

Guidance on a range of ethical issues, including safety and well-being, consent and anonymity, confidentiality and data protection’ are available at:

[www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/policy-notes](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/policy-notes)
For Undergraduate & Postgraduate-Taught Students

Student Declaration

The Supervisor needs to receive an electronic copy of the form, and other documents where appropriate, plus a signed, dated paper copy of this Annex 1 'the Student Declaration'.

Full Research Project Title: An Updated Look at Public Library Provision for the Disabled in England

In signing this Student Declaration I am confirming that:

- The research ethics application form for the above-named project is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.
- The above-named project will abide by the University’s ‘Good Research Practice Standards’: www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/good
- The above-named project will abide by the University’s ‘Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue’: www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy
- Subject to the above-named project being ethically approved I undertake to adhere to any ethics conditions that may be set.
- I will inform my Supervisor of significant changes to the above-named project that have ethical consequences.
- I will inform my Supervisor if prospective participants make a complaint about the above-named project.
- I understand that personal data about me as a researcher on the research ethics application form will be held by those involved in the ethics review process (e.g. my Supervisor and the Ethics Administrator) and that this will be managed according to Data Protection Act principles.
- I understand that this project cannot be submitted for ethics approval in more than one department, and that if I wish to appeal against the decision made, this must be done through the original department.

Name of Supervisor: Barbara Sen
Name of student: Debbie Southwell
Signature of student: DLSouthwell
Date: 15th June 2012
For Undergraduate & Postgraduate-Taught Students

Supervisor Declaration

(The Supervisor completes Annex 2 if s/he has classed the student’s proposed research project as potentially ‘high risk’)

The Ethics Administrator needs to receive an electronic copy of the form, and other documents where appropriate, plus a signed, dated paper copy of this Annex 2 ‘the Supervisor Declaration’.

Full Research Project Title: An Updated Look at Public Library Provision for the Disabled in England

In signing this Supervisor Declaration I am confirming that:

- The research ethics application form for the above-named project is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.
- The above-named project will abide by the University’s ‘Good Research Practice Standards’: www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/good
- The above-named project will abide by the University’s ‘Ethics Policy for Research Involving Human Participants, Data and Tissue’: www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy
- Subject to the above-named project being ethically approved I will undertake to ensure that the student adheres to any ethics conditions that may be set.
- The student or the Supervisor will undertake to inform the Ethics Administrator of significant changes to the above-named project that have ethical consequences.
- The student or the Supervisor will undertake to inform the Ethics Administrator if prospective participants make a complaint about the above-named project.
- I understand that personal data about the student and/or myself on the research ethics application form will be held by those involved in the ethics review process (e.g. the Ethics Administrator and/or reviewers) and that this will be managed according to Data Protection Act principles.

I understand that this project cannot be submitted for ethics approval in more than one department, and that if I and/or the student wish to appeal against the decision made, this must be done through the original department.
Name of Supervisor: Barbara Sen

Name of student: Debbie Southwell

Signature of Supervisor: Barbara Sen

Date: 19th June 2012
Appendix 4: Copy of the information participation sheet provided to participants

You are being invited to take part in a research project being conducted by an MA Librarianship student at the University of Sheffield. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the project’s purpose?

The purpose of this study is to explore the current levels of disability provision in English libraries, in the context of recent legislation. In doing so, this research will update the findings of a previous study on public library disability provision. The research will focus on five case study libraries, which meet the criteria designated by the original study. The case study approach aims to investigate the question of provision in depth rather than breadth. Data is also being collected from 50% of all English library authorities in order to contextualize the findings and to form a broader picture.

Why have I been chosen?

Your library has been identified as one which meets the criteria for a case study library, as set out by the original research methodology. There are no known risks to your involvement.

Participation

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will inform future policy decisions and highlight service provision gaps for library authorities in relation to access, policy, provision and training. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep, and you will be asked to sign a consent form.

You can withdraw from the project at any time without reason or consequence, and your involvement is entirely voluntary. All participants are welcome to a copy of the final publication.

What do I have to do?

The data will be collected in two stages. The first stage requires the researcher to explore the public sections of the library building and record statistical data about its physical facilities and disability provision. This stage of data collection will be essentially independent, although the researcher will need to interact briefly with front-line staff in order to enquire about the membership process and services that may not be visually evident. This stage is expected to have a limited impact on library staff.
The final part of the data collection involves a semi-structured interview between the researcher and a library manager or equivalent senior member of library staff. It will not take more than an hour. The questions will be straight-forward and relate to issues such as disability provision, attitudes towards different types of disability, and awareness of relevant legislation.

All the information collected during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and the identity of your library can be anonymized in the dissertation.

**Will I be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?**

The audio recordings of your interview will be used only for analysis. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings. The original recordings will then be permanently destroyed.

**Ethics approval and contacts for further information**

This project has been ethically approved via The University of Sheffield’s iSchool ethics review procedure. Further details about the research are available from the researcher or dissertation supervisor, whose contact details are as followed:

Debbie Southwell (Researcher)
50 Stannington View Road
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S10 1SR

Mrs Barbara Sen (Supervisor)
Room 234
Information School
The University of Sheffield
Regent Court
211 Portobello
Sheffield
S1 4DP

07762 61338
Dlsouthwell2@shef.ac.uk

0114 222 2635
b.a.sen@sheffield.ac.uk
Appendix 5: A copy of the consent form provided to applicants

Participant Consent Form

Title of Research Project: An Updated Look at Public Library Provision for the Disabled in England

Name of Researcher: Debbie Southwell

Participant Identification Number for this project: Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated July 2012, explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. The researcher can be contacted at disouthwell2@sheffield.ac.uk with any queries or concerns.

3. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my responses.

4. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research.

5. I agree to take part in the above research project.

_________________________  ________________
Name of Participant       Date              Signature

_________________________  ________________

94
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<td>Signature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____________________________</td>
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</table>
Appendix 6: Interview questions

1. What is your understanding of the Equality Act 2010?
2. What is your understanding of the impact the 2010 Equality Act on public library services, in relation to disability?
3. What types of disability do you feel public libraries could consider when responding to the legislation?
4. Do you feel all disabilities are equally catered for in your library?
5. What do you consider to be the biggest challenge for meeting the needs of the disabled?
6. Have you made any changes in response to the legislation?
   - If so, what changes were made?
   - What were they changed from?
7. What future plans, if any, does the library have to adapt to better comply with the Equality Act?
8. Are there any adaptations in services to disabled users that you would want to change but are unable to do so?
9. Does your library have a written policy for providing library services for disabled people?
   - Has this been updated since the introduction of the Equality Act?
10. How would you describe the attitude of staff towards the disabled borrowers?
    - Are they confident and comfortable? Or perhaps a little unsure?
11. Does your library have someone specifically assigned to assist/work with disabled users?
    - What are the reasons for that decision?
    - Has anyone been assigned to coordinate Equality Act compliance?
12. Has your library conducted any consultation with disabled users to establish their needs?
13. Do you promote your services to the disabled and if so, how?
14. Has your library carried out any analysis of library services and/or procedures with respect to adherence to the Equality Act?
15. Would you say library usage by disabled people has increased since this time last year?
   ➢ What reasons do they think are behind this change?
16. Has your library authority reduced its staffing levels in your library since the introduction of self-service?
17. Finally, is there anything else you want to add on the legislation or the way public libraries provide for the disabled
### Appendix 7: Observation Findings

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Appendix 8: Library authorities who received a Freedom of Information request

*No formal FOI response received from these authorities after 37 working days

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To be completed by the Supervisor – Select (a) or (b) by placing a tick in the appropriate box

(a) I, the supervisor, agree to this dissertation being made immediately available through the Department and/or University Library for loan or consultation, subject to any special restrictions (*) agreed with external organisations as part of a collaborative project.

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Department

Signed

Date

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