“Taking Six Steps” to reading Improving public library services for people with sight loss in the UK through staff development and reader engagement

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Abstract:

For five years, the "Six Steps" promise has offered people with sight loss a simple standard of service from their public library that is common in over 200 authorities across the UK. Working in partnership with the Society of Chief Librarians and a number of independent charities, Share the Vision (a partnership of public, academic and third sector library organisations) has developed training, web-based tools and raised awareness of the needs of print disabled people as well as providing library staff with a place to seek advice and guidance.

In the absence of a government funded national library service for print disabled people, we have taken the initiative in bringing together expertise from a wide range of organisations to provide a support network which offers resources and expertise to our public libraries.

This paper seeks to examine how staff meet the challenges of dealing with a community group which may be small but which has very specific needs. It also looks at how a community whose lives can be dramatically enhanced by access to reading, information and learning can be more successfully served by better understanding of their needs through increased staff awareness. Throughout 2013-14, we have offered, in partnership with The Network, workshops designed to help frontline staff deal with the challenges of delivering public library services to blind or partially sighted people.

In the coming year, Share the Vision will be working with the Royal National Institute of Blind People to commission externally led research which will help us to craft our services for the future. With this research in hand, we will develop new training resources focusing in on the use of new technologies and make these freely available to our public library service colleagues across the UK and beyond. We will build on tools we and RNIB have already developed and provide training which is specifically aimed at libraries and library staff and which will enable us to improve access to libraries for print disabled people.

Keywords: reader engagement, staff development, sight loss
A question to you all. How would you feel if you lost your sight and were not able to carry out those most basic actions that are so central to us, as library and information workers? How would you feel if those services you used to use were now suddenly inaccessible to you?

Losing your all or part of your sight is something that happens to increasing numbers of people across the world, and more especially now as our communities become more aged in nature. Many of the day to day activities you undertake would become enormous challenges – you would have to get used to dealing with simple operations in a completely different way and, although you would be able to do many of the things you were used to doing previously, there would be a process of learning how to overcome the challenges which have come your way.

To illustrate the point, a close and very active relative in her eighties set out into her local town one morning as she had always done, to do her shopping, meet friends and enjoy the facilities of the coastal community in which she lives. She sat down in a café in the town centre to have a drink but began to experience pain behind her eye. She managed to travel home by public transport and spent some time lying down to relax. Four hours later, she had lost the sight in one of her eyes through Arteritis and her life changed there and then. Five years later, she has little sight in the affected eye and has gone on to contend with cataracts as well as facing monthly treatments for macular degeneration in her other eye. At her worst, she has been unable to leave the house, could no longer see to read or write and found it challenging to be able to deal with her daily life. The one bright place amongst all these challenges is her ability to continue to engage with reading through audio or large print and her library service has been vital in keeping this going. It has kept her agile mentally and has helped to keep her stimulated. Reading is one of the easier skills to continue with due to the now very extensive resources available as physical audiobook or downloadable audio content.

Public libraries and, in the UK, those charities that provide services for people with print disability are, then, a vital part of the support for a community which across our country numbers, for those with sight loss alone, around 2 million people. Adding in those who have other forms of print disability such as Dyslexia takes the figure far higher. Our biggest challenge though is that, although there are a considerable number of people who have specific reading needs, they are spread across a country which is home to over 68 million and so services are naturally much more numerous and developed for those who do not face the challenges of print disability. This also means that, in the absence of a national library offer for people who need to engage with reading and information in different ways, the public library service must play an important role in working with those national organisations (usually charities) that provide the support and the special expertise in dealing with the needs of a growing number of people.

Keeping staff up to date with new technology and resources and a basic understanding of the needs of the community is a difficult and complex process. There are still over 3000 public libraries across the UK and, with that number of buildings, and the staff and volunteers who work in them, we have to work hard to try to bring consistency to our approach and to provide our workers with the confidence to help their customers get the best from their libraries. It’s often difficult for staff and volunteers because they may not deal with people with sight loss as frequently and, unless they have experience of sight loss in the family, they may feel uneasy in their ability to help. They lose the confidence to be able to assist because
they have forgotten how to use screen readers, for example, or they just feel as though they need to treat people with sight loss differently. For the past 25 years now, Share the Vision has been working across the whole of the UK to try to assist libraries and library staff from every aspect of our profession in improving services and continuing to develop our offer for print disabled people.

So, how have we done this, and how do we plan to develop in a world which is rapidly changing and where, for many of us over recent years, resources have become more and more scarce?

First a little background to Share the Vision.

STV is a registered UK Charity and also a Company Limited by Guarantee. Established in 1989 as an initiative led by the Royal National Institute for Blind people, the partnership’s purpose is to enhance access to library and information services for print disabled people through greater cooperation between public and voluntary sector organisations. Today it has become a UK wide partnership of the main voluntary sector organisations that produce and lend reading materials in accessible formats as well as the main bodies for publicly funded libraries. STV’s membership comprises:

- British Library
- Calibre Audio Library
- Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
- CILIP School Libraries Group
- Clear Vision Project
- Royal National Institute of Blind People
- School Library Association
- Scottish Library and Information Council
- Society of Chief Librarians
- Society of College, National and University Libraries

Since its formation, STV has promoted partnership working through a string of projects, enhanced understanding of the needs of print disabled people and how mainstream library services can address them, as well as campaigning on a range of issues such as copyright and accessibility in partnership with RNIB, the Right to Read Alliance and others.

From its earliest inception, the partnership has sought practical solutions to the lack of a publicly funded National Library Service for print disabled people in the UK – something which, of course, does exist in many countries across the world. The situation we have found ourselves in has been complex and has often required innovative solutions to the challenge of linking together services with different governance structures. All of the members of the partnership are committed to work together practically in order to provide shared resources and in trying to reduce barriers to those who need services in accessing them. Our work has crossed our own internal “national” boundaries within our home nations, as well as the more organisational boundaries between public and third sector organisations and there have been strong relationships with international partners through the IFLA specialist committee for “Libraries serving people with print disabilities.”

Central to our quest for improvement has always been the need to get our message across and to help people in library situations to understand more fully the needs of our print disabled
customers by giving them the confidence to be more proactive in supporting them. We’ve done this in different ways and with different approaches as the years have gone by.

From the beginning, Share the Vision recognised the need to be able to support library staff and library managers with advice, guidance and practical solutions to the provision of service for people with sight loss. To understand how we have reached our current position, it’s necessary to go back and look at a number of the projects which have brought us to a stage where over 200 libraries are signed up to a scheme which supports people across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

In 2000, with support from the Museums Libraries and Archives Council, a first, major “Best Practice” manual was produced and this aimed to provide guidance to library services on a wide range of issues such as stock, library layouts and customer services. Published in a series of ring binders, this practical tool was issued to every library service in the country. Like most print resources, this quickly went out of date and, also in common with many externally funded projects, the sustainability of such a document was difficult to achieve.

In 2003 Share the Vision and its partners looked into a more permanent solution using the rapidly developing Web. A task force of library professionals and representatives from the Charity Sector came together to look at how resources and expertise might be pooled to provide a networked approach to people with specific needs in accessing alternative reading formats. With assistance from the Museums Libraries and Archives Council and the support of Share the Vision, the taskforce set about creating a network of “champions” in local library services. The group began to look at ways of joining together services and stocks to bring a more integrated approach to library services for people with print disabilities. The Gateway project produced newsletters and provided advice and guidance, with a watching brief on the combined catalogue resource Reveaweb. Reveaweb brought together for the first time a national catalogue of alternative format resources based on the collections of the major suppliers, such as RNIB and Calibre, who acted as agents for the smaller organisations.

Through the Gateway Project, a great deal was learned about the potential for services to come together to provide a more integrated service and a more knowledgeable and versatile workforce. However, what was not really clear was how this could be more practically used at the front line. In 2008, following a challenge from the RNIB National Library Service, the North East Accessible Libraries and Information Services was commissioned. The proposal was for a project which would allow the Third Sector providers of reading for blind and partially-sighted people to work with a group of public libraries to look for ways of providing a more integrated, efficient offer, which utilised the resource and tools that each had available to them. The ultimate aim was to look for a model which could be implemented across the country.

The North East of England was chosen for its relatively small size, variety in communities and history of working together. The region has twelve library services which include two main urban areas and two large rural counties. The project drew together inputs from the region’s public library services as well as charities such as RNIB and Calibre, the Museums Libraries and Archives Council and local societies.
It was plain at the outset that our services were only reaching some blind and partially-sighted people and one of the aims was to increase awareness, but also to ensure that the services that were there were relevant. There was an obvious need for better communication of the offer and more understanding of the role of staff in promoting the message.

The project set about by looking firstly at the situation with regard to the provision of services.

The results were striking but probably unsurprising in that individual library services provided different levels depending on the size of their authority and location. From the work which took place it was clear that there was a need to provide more consistency and for more partnership working. It was also very clear that a conversation with the local community was also necessary, to develop an understanding of whether their needs were being met and where services needed to focus on their development.

Two separate regional consultation conferences took place – the first to provide a focus and an understanding of the major areas for improvement and the second at the end of the project to check that progress had been made. The initial conference event provided the backbone of the action plan through the clear messages which were received from those people who participated. These were summarised as follows

- Availability of content (more books, more quickly)
- Reading formats (there was considerable confusion over the variety available)
- Independent choice for customers (with or without personal support)
- Library premises & access
- Need for access to a full range of local, regional and national library services
- Activities (Availability information and the ability to join in)
- Staff/volunteers (staff were praised but there was a need to maintain skills)
- Customer communications (the need to ensure that the message is out there)

Over the three years of the project, a considerable amount of work took place in addressing those elements of the identified needs which could be practically attempted. In some cases, it was just not possible to effect a change – for example, decisions about which content would be produced in alternative formats could not be influenced by local library services. It was however possible to work with staff across the region to provide opportunities to learn from each other and, more importantly, from blind and partially-sighted people themselves. Workshops to introduce technology, how to support the needs of blind and partially-sighted people and how to get the best of the resources available to them, were organised and well supported.

By the end of the project, each library service had taken advantage of the shared approach and, in some, services had developed well beyond expectations, providing a model for others to work towards. The final consultation event brought together a group of people who provided us with valuable feedback – it was clear that there had been a shift change because staff were more aware of needs due to their continued involvement with the project and with the customer base it developed. There were, naturally, still some challenges and it was plain to see that, just like any other customer group, needs are often very individual and it is not always easy to provide a comprehensive service which suits everyone!
The value of approaching services collectively was immeasurable and it provided the confidence for us to start looking at how a National “offer” might be developed, taking into account the challenge of achieving consistency across such a large number of different library services spread through four home nations.

The Six Steps Promise

In 2010, Share the Vision and the Society of Chief Librarians set about developing a simple “promise” to blind and partially-sighted people which would provide a basic and consistent level of service for anyone visiting a library signed up to the scheme. From the outset, the challenges of working with a large number of library authorities spread across a small but populous nation was not going to be an easy task. The differing circumstances of our many library authorities, large and small, meant that the “promise” needed to work on two levels – an ultimately achievable basic list of six items, backed up by a recommended action plan with guidance to help services develop further.

Six easy steps were identified as follows

1. Use “Your Reading Choices” with every blind or partially sighted customer to assess their reading needs and facilitate access to public libraries and other relevant services

2. Use Reading Sight for information about accessible reading and reading services. Improve knowledge of services and organisations available.

3. Provide local collections of large print and audio books

4. Have a strategy in place for provision of access technology throughout your library service

5. Designate a "champion" for the reading needs of blind and partially sighted people

6. Participate in Make a Noise in Libraries fortnight, run annually by RNIB

Every library service across England, Wales and Northern Ireland was invited to join the scheme by signing up via the Society of Chief Librarians and, in Scotland, services were included through the Scottish Library and Information Council. In each service, a Six Steps “Champion” was identified – to overcome the challenge of maintaining the knowledge and skills of the workforce, the Champion’s role was to take responsibility for developing a more in depth knowledge of the needs of print disabled people in the library service for which they worked. The intention was to provide a local “expert” in each service who could cascade knowledge and act as a contact point for national initiatives and activities.

In every library service that has signed up, the Six Steps promise requires a basic stock provision for blind and partially-sighted people and, naturally, this has included large print books for those who can still use conventional text and also an audio offer, initially as either tape or CD with, more recently, downloadable products, MP3 discs and single use players. The recent, rapid development of e-books and e-audio has changed the face of our provision for blind and partially-sighted people but has brought its own challenges as a consequence. Many libraries have found it hard to cope with the demands of providing downloadable audio because of the high cost and the challenge of providing the range of material needed by customers.
To draw together services and to provide the database of expertise, the online resource Reading Sight was developed with its associated interactive reading plan tool Your Reading Choices. These provide a more versatile version of the Best Practice Manual produced in the 1990s – Reading Sight offers a range of information from the background to eye conditions to accessibility advice for buildings and background to electronic formats and forms of reading. Your Reading Choices is really a portal to the services offered by a number of charities and also by public libraries. A questionnaire-based approach allows the librarian, carer or health professional to guide the customer through their responses to the most appropriate organisation to assist them in their own preferred reading format, or the one most appropriate to their needs.

The most difficult area for public library services across the UK has always been in providing the relevant and most widely used accessibility software for their public access computing facilities. Invariably, services will consult with local people, choose a package only to find that they are then receiving comments from customers who prefer another. This very complex situation has led to lack of confidence in staff about their ability to deal with the needs of print-disabled people and the different approaches in provision in library authorities means it’s difficult to be able to provide a consistent offer across the country. It also provides a huge challenge in providing support to staff because it’s less easy to produce training resources which can be shared across boundaries. Reduced budgets have also meant a reduction in the ability to keep software up to date. The Six Steps promise asks library authorities simply to have a strategy in place to provide accessible software. Five years on as the Promise is facing revision, this is an area which will need to be dramatically changed and will require a great deal more staff support if we are really to make progress in assisting our communities.

The final element of the Six Steps Promise is around promotion and publicising the services the UK’s library services provide for print-disabled people. Each year in June, events, activities and awareness raising takes place during “Make a noise in libraries” fortnight. Libraries that have signed up the Six Steps Challenge are asked specifically to take an active part in the fortnight and many will mount events, reading groups, exhibitions and visits to libraries to provide staff with the opportunity to engage with both existing customers and potential library members.

Although the use of the Reading Sight and the Your Reading Choices tool are the centrepiece in terms of staff awareness and understanding of the needs of print-disabled people, there is no real replacement for at least some face-to-face training. Over the years that Share the Vision has been working on these practical approaches to dealing with the needs of people with sight loss and other print disabilities, there have been numerous occasions when staff have been drawn together to share learning in workshops. Most recently, as part of the continuing programme of work to develop the Six Steps approach, a series of workshops has been offered in several parts of the UK, including opportunities in Edinburgh, London and Cardiff.

The Six Steps Workshop programme has been offered in conjunction with The Network (an independent organisation which exists solely to tackle social exclusion in communities) over the past two years. Each workshop has followed a similar pattern and has been offered to around 50 participants at a time and, where possible, based in a library venue in one of the nine English regions, Wales or in Scotland.
At each event, agendas have included a background to the Six Steps offer and the reasons for its existence, a print-disabled speaker explaining the challenges that face people with sight loss and other disabilities and a background to access technology to give simple solutions to common challenges. Working with both Royal National Institute of Blind People and with Action for the Blind, the workshop organiser, John Vincent, has been able to provide a varied experience which has shown participants how to make use of the access features of PCs, Apple products and other tablets and readers. Most important, it has given participants the opportunity to come together and talk about their individual experiences and challenges in their day-to-day work.

As the workshops have been supported both by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals and Share the Vision, costs have been minimised which, in view of recent reductions in many library service budgets, has meant more staff have been able to attend. Feedback from the face-to-face workshop events has been extremely positive and a further programme is planned for 2015-2016, once again in a partnership between Share the Vision and The Network. In the coming programme, the issues around digital access and the move towards self-service in both library terms and more generally in terms of engaging with both national and local government in the UK will be a high priority.

During 2015 Share the Vision will be taking the concept of workforce development one step further when, working in partnership with the Society of Chief Librarians and Brighton and Hove Libraries, a creative intern will be recruited to work for a period of six months part time. Partly funded through a central scheme and one of fifty such placements secured by SCL, the intern working for Share the Vision in Brighton will get experience, not only of working directly in a busy public library service, but will assist in a major consultation which will begin during “Make a Noise in Libraries” fortnight this year. The intern will work with local groups and societies and engage with print-disabled people to work on focus groups and consultation activities which will seek to both publicise the offer the library gives but also to gain valuable feedback on what services might be developed in future.

It is also worth mentioning that the Six Steps Promise sits alongside a number of other Universal Offers and Promises which have been developed over the last five years by the Society of Chief Librarians for library services in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. These offers cover reading, health, digital, information and a fifth is currently being finalised focused on learning. Both the Six Steps and a similar Children’s Promise (developed by the Association for Senior Children’s and Education Librarians) cut across these five offers and, for both audiences, due care is taken to ensure that their needs are recognised in any wider work undertaken by SCL.

The wider consultation, which is planned by Share the Vision, in partnership with RNIB from June 2015 onwards, will help to take the understanding further of how services for print-disabled people are viewed. It will also provide an insight into the actual needs of those out in the community who could benefit so greatly from the facilities of their local public library and its partners who, for whatever reason, don’t currently do so. In much of the work which has taken place so far, this has been attempted, but on a reasonably small scale through local networks and organisations. This has tended to produce responses from those people who already engage – if we are to plan services for the future which are relevant, then the views of those who haven’t yet found the service will be imperative.
The Consultation in 2015 will attempt to get beyond the normal confines of library buildings and parent organisations. Using an online survey method, the proposal is to publicise the work through Make a Noise in Libraries fortnight and provide a link in as many printed media as possible in order to get a wide spread of responses from around the whole of the UK. Supported by RNIB, the survey will also seek to gain more understanding of the usefulness and appeal of the services currently provided by the larger charity organisations. Their reading services are very expensive to run and have had to change rapidly because of the developing technology which we have all had to engage with. This project will help identify the elements of the alternative reading services which need to be nurtured and what will eventually be replaced.

Ultimately, we want to upskill our workforce across our home nations to provide a consistency of approach in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The most cost-effective way of approaching this will be through online resources. The Reading Sight and Your Reading Choices already provide an extensive repository of information and a means to assess how to signpost potential customers to the correct services. That said, there is still a gap in providing the most basic understanding of how to deal with print-disabled people in a library situation, that is, the element which will give staff the confidence to see people with sight loss or other print disabilities as people rather than conditions.

The many calls on staff time and decreasing resources mean that interactive web training is the most useful way of working across over 200 library services. During this year, Share the Vision plans to explore the development of an online course which can provide a rounded approach to helping people with sight loss access services. Over the past six months, over 3000 staff across the UK have undertaken an interactive online course hosted on the Learning Pool for the Society of Chief Librarians Universal Information Offer. This method of learning has been supported by regional training teams taken from individual library authorities as a resource to support the project.

This method of learning has been found to be as enormously successful as it is versatile – some library authorities have been able to set up guided workshops using the resources and others have gone for a much more self-service approach where staff get on with the training modules at their own pace and only seek help if they need it. As SCL has continued to invest in the Learning Pool as a more general workforce development tool, Share the Vision sees the potential of developing a similar set of modules which could provide library staff with focused and more structured development for more participants than a standard workshop could provide. At present, it is left for individual authorities to organise their own awareness training of the needs of those with sight loss or print disabilities, a focused, comprehensive programme for public libraries would be an enormous step forward.

So, we’ve come a long way over the last 25 years and we’ve achieved a lot in the last ten, but with constantly decreasing resources and changes in our partner organisations, it has not always been easy. We still have a reduced capacity to face but with more to do and an enormous development in the progress of digital provision. What is our ideal future then? How will libraries develop to assist people with very specific needs – new technology should be the answer to many of our challenges, but there are still many bridges to cross?

Our ideal and our future, then, would be to not have to focus at all on specific needs for print disabled people – if everything was totally accessible then there would be no need for alternative formats, no need for national offers and no need for charity organisations that
support people. This is, of course, not going to happen quickly if at all. With this in mind then, we need to keep our eyes open for opportunities to work more closely together and to develop tools and resources which pool our shared expertise. And, we need to continue to develop that expertise too – one of the more alarming results of constant cuts and constant change has been the loss in the UK of many of the opportunities for staff development and training. There are very few establishments now that prepare new library staff for the work they will have to take on and, with changes in the organisations that support blind and partially sighted people, there are also challenges in regaining and retaining expertise.

In the short to medium-term future, Share the Vision will look closely at ways to link together the expertise that lies between specialist agencies and public sector authorities. An integrated single digital presence which brings together links to every part of the public library and its many offers has already begun to be developed – if such a site can be achieved, we will on the first step to a truly national library offer.

A single supplier of online content for libraries and readers would be a huge advance but, again, this may never come to pass. The complexity of the electronic publishing sector and the many discussions around rights, copyright, digital security mean that, for now, we have to work with what we have.

The electronic world has really thrown us. What should be the answer to everyone’s reading needs, sighted or not, has turned into a mass of confusion. Do we use Ipads or Kindles or E Readers; how do we embrace new formats for e-publishing; what should we do about international copyright issues and how does all this affect those people who need adapted reading formats. Well, the simple answer at the moment is that it is not simple. There are many issues and, for the moment we have to cope with it all the best way we can and just keep moving forward one step at a time. It means that we spend far too much time on trying to work out the solutions to technology which should make life easier for all of us.

Of course, a National publicly-funded integrated public library service for people with print disabilities in the UK would be the ultimate goal, but this is also very unlikely to come to pass. If anything, the trend has been away from centralised services – the move towards independently-run or community-led libraries has meant an even greater challenge to achieve a consistent approach for people with sight loss or print disabilities.

In the UK, we need to learn from other countries. There are much better examples of specialist library services for blind and partially-sighted people than ours across the world – in the Netherlands a national offer is provided, supported by the government and offered in partnership with the public library service. Similarly, in South Africa, the National Library for the Blind is provided under a statute and is directly funded from the treasury. The service in both cases is free and available to all. A national service like this offers the best solution with the expertise and infrastructure at the centre and the ability to take advantage of the public library network to make the connections locally.

In conclusion, as librarians, we remain passionate about the work we do in support of those readers who cannot use conventional reading methods – we want to live in a world where we are able to work and learn from each other, providing reading materials, information and library services which can be easily accessed by everyone on a global basis.
Practical suggestions and topics for discussion in improving services for Print Disabled people.

- Examine your own infrastructure and look for the gaps in provision. Use the resources that you have available to you to the best advantage and wherever possible work in partnership to get the most out of your resources.

- Try to find ways of engaging new audiences beyond those who already know you are there – reach out through whichever networks are available to you.

- Make sure you are able to keep your staff and workforce up to date. Help them to gain confidence in seeing print disabled customers or potential customers as people not a condition.

- Learn from other services how they deal with the challenges of serving people with very specific needs but who are less numerous – sharing resources can help to make services more effective.

- Engage with specialist agencies and providers who can help you to keep up to date with new technologies and new developments in delivering services.

- Make sure that you communicate the message of the importance of reading to people with print disability has and the ways in which it can help to keep the costs of health support services lower.

- Keep looking forward for the opportunities to change services and to alter your offer – we are looking at how we can update the Six Steps in consultation with both our users and with potential future customers.
Appendix 1: Reading Sight and Your Reading Choices Screenshots
Appendix 2: Six Steps publicity leaflet

Six steps to library services for blind and partially sighted people

There are almost two million blind and partially sighted people in the UK who need library and information services just like everyone else. Public libraries have an obligation to provide accessible services to people with sight loss as members of the local community.

Many libraries are doing an excellent job but standards of provision vary from place to place. Share the Vision, the Society of Chief Librarians and the Scottish Library & Information Council call on all public libraries to take the following six steps.

1. Use Your Reading Choices with blind and partially sighted customers to assess their reading needs and facilitate access to public libraries and other relevant services (http://tinyurl.com/rnib2)

2. Use Reading Sight (www.readingsight.org.uk), the free website for library staff supporting blind and partially sighted people

3. Provide local collections of large print and audio books

4. Have a strategy in place for provision of access technology throughout your library service

5. Designate a champion for the reading needs of blind and partially sighted people

6. Participate in Make a Noise in Libraries Fortnight (www.rnib.org.uk/manilf) run annually by the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)

These actions will not cost a lot of money but will make a significant improvement to your library service for blind and partially sighted people.

Sign up to our six steps challenge today. Visit www.goscl.com or www.slainte.org.uk for full details of how to achieve the six steps and to pledge your support.
Appendix 3: Sample job description for Six Steps Intern

Libraries Internship

Job Number:  
B&H00115

Contract Type:  
Internship

Working Pattern:  
Part Time

Minimum Annual Salary:  
£15,144.90

Maximum Annual Salary:  
£ 15,941

Closing Date:  
13/05/2015

Advert introduction
Are you aged 18-24 and registered as unemployed with Job Centre Plus?  
Would you like to work in a library?  
There’s an exciting opportunity for you to join the Brighton & Hove Libraries as a paid intern for six months

Main advert detail
We are running a project to find out what currently works well for visually impaired people, what should change and how they prefer to access library services in terms of print, digital or internet options.

As the Library intern supporting this project you will play a key role in helping to engage with and consult visually impaired library users. This will involve contacting a range of organizations which support visually impaired people and inviting them to participate in a focus group, participating in focus group discussions, helping to set up a telephone reading group for visually impaired people and looking into the range of assistive software available to support visually impaired people

You will need good communication and interpersonal skills, be able to work both as a member of a team and unsupervised, have good computer knowledge and be committed to help make library services easier to use for people who are blind or partially sighted. Brighton & Hove Libraries make access to reading and using computers available to everyone as part of delivering the universal reading and digital National Library offers.

The library offer to blind and partially sighted people is known as Six Steps. You can find out more at http://readingsight.org.uk/accessible_libraries/six_steps_to_library_services_for_blind_and_partially_sighted_people/
You will gain:

• Experience working in libraries and the arts and culture sector
• Experience of working in a team as part of a large organization
• The opportunity to develop customer service skills
• The opportunity to develop strong communication, consultation and engagement skills
• The opportunity to develop knowledge and skills in the use of ICT and access software
• Experience working on a national project to improve library services to visually impaired people.

Support and guidance will be provided throughout the internship.

Hours: 30 hours per week (Monday – Thursday)
6 months fixed term
Appendix 4: Sample Agenda for Six Steps Workshop

Improving our services for blind and partially sighted people: implementing the Six Steps and more

Wednesday 26 March 2014, Edinburgh Business Centre, Edinburgh City Chambers, High Street, Edinburgh EH1 1YJ

Aims
• To assess progress in implementing the Six Steps programme
• To develop awareness of good practice within the region and elsewhere in working with blind and partially sighted people
• To develop skills in working with visually impaired people
• To begin to plan a programme for MANIL 2014 (2-15 June 2014)

Outline programme

10am Welcome and introductions

10.15am Quick reality check – where do we think we are with the Six Steps programme? And what do we still need to do?

10.30am Reading Sight and Your Reading Choices
Mark Freeman, Libraries and Heritage Services Manager, Stockton Borough Council, and Chair of Share The Vision

11.15am Coffee

11.30am Overview of access technology and eBooks
Jane Coates, Ronnie McCusker and Jim McKenzie, RNIB Scotland

12.30pm Lunch

1.15pm Recap of morning

1.25pm How do blind or partially-sighted library users get on with self-service

1.45pm Make A Noise in Libraries fortnight, 2-15 June 2014
What can we learn from MANIL 2013? Start planning for 2014 now! Workshops to plan individual service/regional approaches to MANIL

2.45pm Tea

3pm Showcasing work in Scotland

4.15pm Conclusions, final questions, etc

4.30pm Close