

**Decision Maker:** Care Services Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee

**Date:** Tuesday 4 September 2012

**Decision Type:** Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

**Title:** REVIEW OF THE IMPACT ON SERVICE USERS OF THE  
REMOVAL OF THE RNIB TALKING BOOKS SUBSIDY

**Contact Officer:** Denise Mantell, Commissioning Officer, Education and Care Services  
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**Chief Officer:** Lorna Blackwood, Assistant Director of Education and Care Services

**Ward:** All wards

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1. Reason for report

In July 2011 Adult and Community Services Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee received a paper recommending the removal of the subsidy for the RNIB Talking Books service. The Committee decided that the impact of this change should be reviewed during the summer of 2012. This report contains the outcomes of this review carried out with those who had previously received the service subsidised by the Council.

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2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

Members are asked to note the results of the review which shows that 87% of respondents are currently either paying directly for the RNIB Talking Books Service or using a different service.

### Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy
  2. BBB Priority: Supporting Independence
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### Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Not Applicable:
  2. Ongoing costs: Not Applicable:
  3. Budget head/performance centre: Care Services Budget, Assessment and Care Management
  4. Total current budget for this head: Not Applicable
  5. Source of funding: Not Applicable
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### Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional): Not Applicable
  2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: Not Applicable
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### Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory Requirement Non-Statutory - Government Guidance None: Further Details
  2. Call-in: Applicable Not Applicable: Further Details
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### Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): 98 previous users of subsidised RNIB Talking Book Service
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### Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments:

### 3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 In July 2011 Adult and Community Services Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee received a report on the provision of equipment and talking books for visually impaired people. One of the recommendations of the report was that the subsidy for the provision of the RNIB Talking Books service be withdrawn with new and existing users directed to alternate providers including local library services and national providers that are free.
- 3.2 This Committee recommended that the Portfolio Holder approve this proposed change. Additionally this Committee recommended that the impact of this change should be reviewed during the summer of 2012 to ensure that service users continued to be able to access the services needed, to monitor the impact of the decision and ensure that Kent Association for the Blind (KAB) was providing the support needed to access other services.
- 3.3 Consequently questionnaires were sent to 98 people with visual impairments who had previously used the subsidised RNIB Talking Books service. A total of 50 responses were received.
- 3.4 The questionnaire sought to understand: how often individuals had used the RNIB Talking Books service; whether they had used any other services; which services were now being used, if any; how often they used this service and whether they had received any support from KAB to access a different service and if they were satisfied with this support. Respondents were also given the opportunity to make general comments.

#### **Summary of Consultation Responses:**

- 3.5 47 respondents stated that they had previously used the RNIB Talking Books service, whilst 3 respondents said that they had not previously used the RNIB Talking Books service. Just over half of people using the RNIB Talking Books service had used it at least weekly. Nineteen respondents had previously used alternate services in addition to the RNIB Talking Books. This was mainly audio books from the library.
- 3.6 When asked what services they were currently using, 38 of the respondents stated that they were still using the RNIB Talking Books service which they were now paying for directly. A third of the 38 people currently using the RNIB Talking Books service indicated that they preferred using this service which they perceive is superior to other services and seven commented positively about their ability to afford it. Eighteen people were using other services in addition to the RNIB Talking Books Service, mainly audio books from the library.

Of the nine people no longer using the RNIB Talking Books service:

- Two stated that they could not afford to pay for the Talking Books service. Both are currently using audio books from the library, a service which they had previously been using
  - One person is using a new service
  - Six who are not using any service were among those who had used the RNIB Talking Books service only every two to three weeks or less often. None of the six commented on why this is the case.
- 3.7 Seventeen respondents stated that they had received support from KAB in accessing a different service, whilst 28 had not. Of those who had received support, all stated that they were satisfied with the level of support received.
- 3.8 Five of the respondents commented on the Council library service. One asked that the mobile library provide a better range of audio books which are rotated more frequently. Other comments indicated that people were unaware of the Home Library Service, as they stated that they could not access library services as they were unable to get to a library. Only two people

currently use the Home Library Service, one of whom also uses the on-line library service. The library service has been notified of these comments and asked to contact respondents, where possible, with this information.

- 3.9 The removal of the subsidy for the RNIB Talking Books service has not impacted adversely on the majority of those who responded to the review.

<b>Non-Applicable Sections:</b>	Policy Implications, Financial Implications, Legal Implications, Personnel Implications
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	<a href="#">The Provision of Equipment and Talking Books for Visually Impaired People</a> Report ACS11036