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**Accessing Materials: making appropriate and effective
'reasonable' adjustments for print impaired students in higher
education**

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Overview

- Methods
- Current status
- Selected participants
- Some common adjustments
- Eight areas highlighted so far
- Summary

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Methods 1

- Using Emancipatory Research Paradigm and Social Model of Disability
- Semi-structured qualitative interviews (Stage 1) and questions sent electronically (Stage 2)

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Methods 2

- Staff participants chosen through snowball sampling
- Student participants self defined as print impaired attracted via email, posters and leaflets
- Stage 1: studied 4 universities, 30 staff and 15 students
- Stage 2: 7 students, UK-wide

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Current status

- Data collection finished
- Most interviews transcribed
- Preliminary analysis started
- Due to complete in 1 year
- This presentation: 8 illustrative examples of issues

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Selected participants

- University names removed
- Participants chose their own pseudonyms
- Subject names are anonymised

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- John, computing-based, VI
- Hazel, disability support worker working with John
- Emily, text-based, dyslexic
- Jim, maths-based, VI
- Michael, maths-based, VI
- Steve, computing-based, VI

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Some common adjustments

- Production of materials in alternative formats
- Non-medical helpers, e.g. notetakers, scribes, readers
- Equipment, e.g. computer, software
- Extra time in assessments

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Access to course content

- Chalk and talk is particularly inaccessible
- PowerPoint also has problems
- Problems with lecturers gesturing
- Advance lecture notes can help
- Students may benefit from extra one to one tuition

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Jim: "They will tell the lecturers to read the equations around the board and all that, but first, it's hard to follow a long equation, even if it's read out, and second, they don't always remember, which I don't blame them"

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Access to textbooks

- John had trouble getting editable electronic versions of textbooks from publishers
- Often he would be given PDFs, which were not useful to him personally
- eBooks often have measures which render them inaccessible

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- John: "You send [publishers] an email and you beg and you go on your knees and you explain your situation and you end up with a PDF which is totally useless to you."
- He had better luck going to authors

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John writes "a convincing email"

"This is the experience that I would get if I was going to go through the publisher. Can you help me in any way? Do you have at least a contact for example of a publisher who has to be in someway helpful or speedy in their reply?' ... And most people are compassionate and they will send ... what you are asking for"

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Reading around

- Jim reported trouble obtaining Braille copies of textbooks
- As no textbooks could be provided, he was told he "strictly only [needed] the notes" from lectures to study the course
- Of course this is not reasonable

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Workflow for staff

- Hazel was involved in obtaining reading lists for John
- Hazel found inconsistent workflow over the academic year caused bottlenecks

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Hazel: "There is a lack of smoothing across the academic year. We try, we make every attempt to foresee this ... before an academic year, we try and get the reading lists in at the moment they are ready ... but if the lecturer hasn't written the course yet, there's not much you can do about it."

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Effect on students of delays

- Michael had Braille notes typed up after the lectures
- This usually took "a couple of weeks but at one point it got really bad last year and once I didn't see a set of notes till six weeks after the lecture"

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- During this period, these delays and other health issues led to Michael having to retake a year
- Michael had trouble accessing all course materials and getting Braille textbooks for extra reading
- "I know that I'm probably capable of high marks but I'm just not able to do it 'cos I haven't got the knowledge"

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- For one module Jim got none of the module content in Braille until 3 weeks before the exam
- "the whole term was ... wasted 'cos I ... couldn't do anything for the module. And in that three weeks I just had to revise, read up and learn"

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Reliable conversion to Braille

- Michael had notes and handouts retyped and converted to Braille
- No one could proof read these
- He "was told that it would just be too time consuming"
- He felt his Braille notes could not be completely relied on

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Extensions

- Sometimes it is necessary for students with print impairments to take extensions to complete work
- Due to, e.g. delays getting materials, slower reading speeds
- Extensions can be helpful but have their problems

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John tried not to ask for extensions

“Of course that puts ... the pressure on something else so for example if ... I have to produce something by Friday if I postpone it to next Friday, it will mean that whatever I was going to do in the second week is going to be pushed even further and it would be kind of an escalating effect”

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- Jim tried not to ask for extensions
- “I don't see any point in having extra time. I take it as a given fact that if you have a disability you just have to work that little bit harder maybe, ... I mean you can't ask for an extension of your life”
- But is this reasonable?

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Inappropriate adjustments

- Steve complained that he had been bought software he couldn't make use of

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Steve: "When I went for my assessment the guy was very keen on me getting a piece of software where a notetaker could take notes on a laptop and those would appear on my screen in real time... [with my subject's] notes it's totally inappropriate ... like if you take all the words from an hour lecture you'll probably have about an A4 page worth of words but 4 pages of stuff."

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- Later in his course, Steve needed a computer but was told there was not enough money left for the one he wanted
- "I couldn't get as powerful as I would have liked because I wasted 300 quid on this stupid piece of software"

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Emily: "I've been told ... they probably won't let me have a whiteboard and they won't pay for that, that's not on the list, as it were, and I think that's the one thing I really need. They buy you all this fancy software but I just want a whiteboard"

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Summary

- Initial analysis; 1 year to go
- Students still having problems
- Some caused by systemic constraints that are often beyond the control of university staff
- e.g. Publishers, time constraints, assessment extensions
- There is often no good solution

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