# RNIB Centre for Accessible Information (CAI)

# Research report #9

# Accessible format transcription in the UK: State of the nation

**Published by:**

RNIB Centre for Accessible Information (CAI), 58-72 John Bright Street, Birmingham, B1 1BN, UK

**Commissioned by:**

As publisher

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**Date:** 18 January 2011

**Document reference:** CAI-RR9 [01-2011]

**Sensitivity:** Internal and full public access

**Copyright:** RNIB 2011

**Citation guidance:**

Cryer, H., Home, S., and Morley Wilkins, S. (2011). Accessible format transcription in the UK: State of the Nation. RNIB Centre for Accessible Information, Birmingham: Research report # 9.

**Acknowledgements:**

Many thanks to all the transcribers who took part in this study.

Thanks also to Claire Jones, Dave Gunn and Mary Steiner.

**Note:**

The findings of this project have been shared with the UK Association for Accessible Formats (UKAAF).

## Accessible format transcription in the UK: State of the Nation

## RNIB Centre for Accessible Information (CAI)

FINAL version

18 January 2011

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### Executive Summary

This final 'state of the nation' report summarises findings from a two-stage research project to give a full picture of transcription in the UK. Separate detailed reports of findings from focus groups and a questionnaire are also available (see References). Direct quotes from transcribers are included in all reports.

#### Background/Context

The purpose of this project was to better understand the transcription industry in the UK. The project aimed to bring transcribers together, so all can benefit from sharing successes and good practice. By listening to the needs and concerns of transcribers, key priorities can be identified for future solutions that the industry can work together to deliver.

#### Method

The project used a mixed methods approach. Stage one involved focus groups with transcribers to identify key issues. Stage two involved a questionnaire (based on focus group findings) to quantify results and identify priorities for future work.

24 transcribers took part in focus groups. 48 transcribers completed questionnaires. There was much diversity among respondents in terms of settings in which they worked (e.g. education, commercial transcription, government, self employed). This diversity was reflected in the findings that transcribers are not all the same and face different issues and concerns.

#### Training

Most training in transcription is informal with many transcribers learning on the job, from experienced colleagues or from manuals. Some formal training was reported, mainly provided by RNIB. 80% of respondents felt more training was required.

#### Transcription guidance

Transcribers used a range of formal guidance available on the production of accessible formats. Respondents identified various improvements which could be made to existing guidance such as making manuals easier to use and available online. Areas where further guidance was needed were transcribing images and general principles of transcription. Informal (in-house) guidance was also widely used.

#### Transcription tools

Transcribers used a wide range of tools to produce accessible formats, from high tech embossers to simple tape recorders. Areas of need identified included for tools to be simpler, more affordable and accessible to blind and partially sighted transcribers.

#### Support

Two different types of support required by transcribers were identified. These include peer support (from a community of transcribers) and external support (from an organisation offering guidance and professional development). A sense of community was important to many, to share information and resources, but few currently felt such a community of transcribers existed. Many were willing to share information and expertise with other transcribers. Transcribers felt they had little opportunity for professional development, and were positive about the idea of external assessment or qualification in transcription quality.

#### Priorities for development

During the focus groups respondents generated ideas for development work which could benefit transcribers. These ideas were rated by questionnaire respondents to identify priorities. Key areas for development included developing further transcription guidance (easy to use manuals, sample materials and national standards for production); reducing the costs faced by transcribers (through including training in the purchase of tools, and making tools themselves more affordable); and offering further support to transcribers (through qualification schemes, conferences and online networking opportunities).

#### Conclusion/Recommendations

Findings show diversity among transcribers making it difficult to suggest solutions to benefit all. However, key issues which were important to the majority of transcribers were training, guidance and support.

Development work identified around training includes exploring with transcription tool suppliers the options for including training with sales, and carrying out further research to identify how best to meet transcribers' training needs.

Areas for further work relating to transcription guidance include development of manuals, sample documents, and national standards; involving willing transcribers in producing guidance; producing specific guidance on transcribing images and general principles of transcription (i.e. the process), and providing guidance on which transcription tools to invest in.

Activities which could offer further support to transcribers include investigation of the logistics of sharing transcribed resources; development of qualifications or assessment for transcribers; establishing a network through which transcribers could interact, share information and access guidance, and arranging conferences at which transcribers could learn and network.

### 1. Introduction

Hundreds of people in the UK work in the area of transcribing documents into accessible formats for blind and partially sighted people. These people - transcribers - work in a wide range of settings, from local authorities producing educational materials, to commercial organisations transcribing bills and correspondence for service providers.

Despite the broad range of settings in which transcribers work, they have much in common, in terms of the everyday challenges they face in their jobs, the equipment they use and the skills and training they require.

This project aimed to bring together transcribers from a range of different production settings to investigate the issues facing the UK transcription industry today.

#### 1.1 Context

Historically, in the UK, there were three industry associations relating to accessible formats. These were format specific, with an organisation for braille standards (the Braille Authority of the UK - BAUK); braille producers (UK Association of Braille Producers - UKABP); and producers of audio information (Confederation of Transcribed Information Services - COTIS). In 2009 a merger of these three organisations saw the creation of the UK's overall body for the promotion of accessible formats - the UK Association for Accessible Formats (UKAAF).

The objectives of UKAAF are to promote and enhance the use of accessible formats and set production standards for their use in the UK. One way that UKAAF aims to do this is through encouraging cooperation and information sharing within the transcription industry: acting as the representational body for this industry and to offer a firm knowledge base from which to advise on accessible formats.

In order for UKAAF to be fully effective, areas of work need to be identified that matter to transcribers. By understanding the needs and concerns of those working in transcription, UKAAF can begin to prioritise areas for work to be progressed, to meet transcribers needs and ultimately to provide better quality accessible formats to end users.

On this basis, a formal research project was undertaken to gather data to form a 'State of the Nation' report, identifying what it is like to be a transcriber in the UK today.

This report summarises findings from two stages of research to give a full picture of transcription in the UK. Separate detailed reports of findings from focus groups and a questionnaire are also available (see References for details).

### 2. Method

#### 2.1 Design

This project used a mixed methods approach. Firstly, a series of focus groups were run with a range of transcribers to identify the issues they face and gather detailed data about transcribers' views and opinions.

Secondly, a questionnaire was designed based on findings from the focus groups. This was sent to a wider group of transcribers, and aimed to quantify the initial findings and prioritise areas for development work.

#### 2.2 Participants

Volunteers were recruited via a range of advertisements in industry publications (RNIB magazines Insight and NB, UKAAF's Format Matters), online forums (VI-forum and Tech-Dis) and email lists (UKAAF's mailing list). Initial advertisements prompted 68 transcribers to volunteer to take part in the research.

Twenty-four transcribers volunteered to take part in focus groups (3 groups of 8). Forty-eight transcribers completed questionnaires (note: 20 participants took part in both activities).

#### 2.3 Procedure

Respondents volunteered to take part in the project, and completed a short recruitment questionnaire about their experience in transcription. They also indicated whether they would like to take part in the focus group and/or the questionnaire.

All focus group respondents were contacted individually and fully briefed. Focus groups were conducted by telephone and lasted for approximately 90 minutes. All respondents gave their consent for the discussion to be recorded, and for anonymous quotes to be used in the research report.

The questionnaire was distributed to volunteers via email. Responses were received largely by email, as well as 2 by post and 2 by telephone.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Sample

##### 3.1.1 Focus group sample

The 24 transcribers who took part in the focus groups were based around the UK including representatives in Scotland and Wales. Respondents worked in a range of settings including education (within local education authorities, schools, colleges and universities); commercial transcription; voluntary transcription and central government.

Experience of transcription ranged from 1 to 25 years, with an average of around 10 years. Although not asked to reveal this information, 6 of the 24 transcribers self reported as blind or partially sighted.

##### 3.1.2 Questionnaire sample

The 48 transcribers who responded to the questionnaire were based around the UK including Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Respondents worked in a wide range of settings including education, commercial transcription, charities, voluntary transcription, prisons, government and self employed. Many transcribers produced accessible formats for a range of customers (e.g. commercial transcribers often produced educational materials as well). Findings suggest that it is difficult to neatly categorise transcribers as there is much diversity within the group, although there is one clear cut group who produce transcription solely for education.

##### 3.1.3 Diversity in the sample

As described, transcribers involved in this research worked in a range of settings. The differences between them are clearly demonstrated by the range of issues they face in their work.

Respondents to the focus groups highlighted issues which they found frustrating. These issues were put to questionnaire respondents, to determine whether there were any common problems across a sample (see table 1).

**Table 1 Problems transcribers face**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Problem** | **Always** | **Often** | **Sometimes** | **Rarely** | **Never** |
| Having to work to tight deadlines | 17% | 47% | 32% | 2% | 2% |
| Original format of information | 4% | 32% | 55% | 6% | 2% |
| Not having an electronic version of information | 2% | 38% | 36% | 23% | 0% |
| Determining correct layout/ interpretation | 2% | 13% | 54% | 26% | 4% |
| Being unclear on the right way to transcribe things | 2% | 6% | 48% | 35% | 8% |
| Unreliable equipment/ software | 2% | 6% | 40% | 42% | 10% |
| Difficult to use equipment/ software | 2% | 4% | 30% | 45% | 19% |

Findings in table 1 demonstrate the diversity among transcribers. For each of the problems suggested, some faced this issue and some didn't, showing that the problems and concerns transcribers have vary widely. These findings demonstrate that transcribers are not all the same: they have different needs and concerns.

#### 3.2 Training

##### 3.2.1 Focus group findings

Respondents reported an overall informal approach to training in transcription. Many were self taught, either picking things up as they went along or learning from published manuals. Others relied on more experienced colleagues, in-house production manuals, feedback from end-users or information found online.

"It's been mainly self-taught, finding information on the net or asking other people."

Formal training was reported by some transcribers. This tended to be courses run by RNIB or product specific training provided by hardware/software suppliers. A significant number of transcribers reported having had no formal training at all.

"I've been working here for 9 years and I've never had any formal training."

Transcribers varied in their views as to whether further training was required. Some felt more training was needed to instil confidence in transcribers and help them to keep up to date with good practice. Others felt working things out for themselves was the best way to learn.

##### 3.2.2 Questionnaire findings

Questionnaire findings reflected those of the focus groups, with the most common forms of training undertaken being learning from more experienced colleagues (88%), on the job training (83%) and learning from guidelines/manuals (73%).

However, formal training was also reported, with 46% of respondents having had formal training in the past 5 years. These courses tended to be run by RNIB (some available only to RNIB staff). Other training providers included other charities, specialist consultants and suppliers of transcription tools.

80% of respondents felt more training was required, showing a clear need in this area. 48% felt lack of suitable training opportunities was a barrier to their professional development.

#### 3.3 Transcription guidance

##### 3.3.1 Focus group findings

Transcribers reported making use of formal guidance for the production of accessible formats. This included instruction manuals for transcription tools and published guidance on producing accessible formats. Braille manuals (such as British Braille and the Braillist's manual) were well known and well used, as was guidance on producing audio and DAISY (Digital Accessible Information SYstem) formats. However, not all respondents knew such guidance existed.

Suggestions were made for ways existing guidance could be improved. In particular, respondents felt manuals were too long, difficult to navigate and not user friendly.

"I find them all very difficult to work with. Simplification is really my main request."

Other improvements suggested were for manuals to be better publicised and available from a central resource, where transcribers could be sure they were accessing the most up-to-date version.

"It would be nice to have somewhere that they could catalogue the kinds of manuals that are available."

Respondents suggested a range of areas in which more formal guidance was required. These included guidance on using Duxbury braille translation software, and guidance on how to produce large print, tactile graphics and electronic documents.

Many respondents also reported using informal transcription guidance such as in-house manuals, which were developed to outline how to do particular jobs or how to use particular tools. These manuals were often used to train new staff.

"We've got some procedural things. They're simple guides so if one of the transcribers doesn't know how to do something or has not done it before they can go to this guide."

##### 3.3.2 Questionnaire findings

Questionnaire respondents also reported the formal transcription guidance they used. Table 2 shows the most commonly used guidance for the production of a range of formats.

**Table 2 Formal guidance commonly used by transcribers**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Format** | **Guidance** | **Percentage** |
| Braille | British Braille | 66% |
| Braille | Braillist's Manual | 64% |
| Braille | Braille mathematics notation | 55% |
| Braille | Braille science notation | 50% |
| Large print | See it Right | 53% |
| Audio | See it Right | 50% |
| Audio | COTIS Audio guidelines | 43% |

Respondents indicated how they thought formal guidance could be improved. The most common responses were to make formal guidance available online (53%) and to make manuals easier to navigate (50%).

Respondents also indicated the areas in which they felt more formal guidance was required. Overall, transcribers highlighted the need for guidance in the production of all formats, although areas of particular need were transcribing images (both tactile and large print) and general transcription principles (guidance on the end to end process of transcription) (see Table 3).

**Table 3 Areas of need for further formal production guidance**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Response** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
| Tactile graphics | 22 | 51% |
| General transcription principles | 20 | 47% |
| Large print images | 18 | 42% |
| Braille | 15 | 35% |
| Large print | 15 | 35% |
| Electronic text | 15 | 35% |
| DAISY | 11 | 26% |
| Audio | 10 | 23% |
| Moon | 7 | 16% |
| No need for further guidance | 4 | 9% |
| Other  (e.g. music, specific software) | 3 | 7% |

Around half of respondents (56%) reported using in-house guidance for the production of accessible formats. This varied by format (see Table 4).

**Table 4 In-house guidance commonly used by transcribers**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Format** | **Number of producers** | **Percentage using in-house guidance** |
| Braille | 44 | 50% |
| Large print | 38 | 32% |
| Audio | 28 | 57% |
| DAISY | 16 | 63% |
| Tactile graphics | 32 | 28% |

[Note: Respondents identified the formats they produced in a recruitment questionnaire. This data was missing for 2 respondents]

#### 3.4 Transcription tools

##### 3.4.1 Focus group findings

Respondents reported using a wide range of transcription tools - both software and hardware. Tools ranged from sophisticated specialist equipment - such as braille embossers and publishing software - to basic, low tech solutions like cassette recorders and hand brailling machines.

Respondents varied in how they kept up to date with developments in transcription tools. Some actively sought information, by looking online, attending events, reading relevant publications and signing up to marketing alerts from manufacturers. Others sought information only when they needed something new, or avoided seeking such information due to concerns over the cost of new equipment.

Respondents identified few needs relating to transcription tools. One exception was an unmet requirement for a simple way to convert PDF documents. Other more general needs identified were that tools should be more simple to use, affordable and accessible to blind and partially sighted transcribers.

"Just simplicity, I don't think it should be as hard as it is."

##### 3.4.2 Questionnaire findings

Again, respondents reported using a wide range of transcription tools. For some production processes, clear market leaders emerged, such as Microsoft Word for the production of large print and Index embossers for the production of braille.

40% of respondents reported having transcription tools which they no longer used. This tended to be due to equipment going out of date or being superseded, having no demand for particular formats, or tools not being fit-for-purpose.

40% of respondents reported having transcription tools which were difficult to use. Common reasons for difficulty included having no time to learn how to use them, manuals/help files being of no use and tools not being intuitive enough for the user.

The most common sources of support when using transcription tools were contacting suppliers (74%) and using manuals/help files (74%). Other common responses were asking colleagues (63%), looking online (57%) and using in-house IT support (52%) - although a number of transcribers commented that in-house IT could not always help with specialist equipment.

#### 3.5 Support/Community

A key area of interest in this project was the kind of support transcribers felt they wanted or needed to be able to do their jobs.

Two different areas were considered relating to support. Firstly, the idea of support from other transcribers with a sense of community among people in the same profession. Secondly, the idea of support which could be offered by an external body offering guidance and professional development opportunities for transcribers.

##### 3.5.1 Community of transcribers

###### 3.5.1.1 Focus group findings

A key theme raised by respondents in the focus groups was the need for a community for transcribers. There were various ideas for what this might involve, including networking opportunities, opportunities to share knowledge and resources, and having a central point for information and advice (e.g. guidance/manuals).

"[There] needs to be a central point that everybody's expertise, skills and information have gone into."

Many transcribers felt that it would be beneficial for transcribers to get together to share their knowledge or good practice. Many were keen to be involved in such activity and willing to share information.

An important issue for transcribers, particularly those carrying out transcription for education, was the opportunity to know whether someone else had already transcribed a particular book and could share it. The idea of a central repository for transcribed materials was very popular.

"We must all be reproducing the same books, which is a waste of time and resources."

###### 3.5.1.2 Questionnaire findings

Questionnaire respondents were asked to rate how important it was to them to feel part of a community of transcribers. They used a five point scale, from very important to not important at all.

* 19% felt that it was very important.
* 48% felt it was important
* 25% felt that it was neither important nor unimportant
* 6% felt that it was not very important
* 2% felt it was not important at all

Overall, 67% felt that community was important or very important.

Respondents were also asked to indicate to what extent they agreed with the statement "I feel part of a community of accessible format transcribers." Only 19% agreed with this statement. 43% were neutral, 30% disagreed, and 9% strongly disagreed. Together, these findings show that whilst many transcribers feel community is important (67%), few (19%) currently feel part of such a community.

Questionnaire respondents also showed a willingness to get involved and contribute to a community of transcribers, with 60% indicating they would be willing to help.

##### 3.5.2 External support

###### 3.5.2.1 Focus group findings

Anecdotal evidence suggests that there may be demand for some form of assessment scheme for transcribers. Respondents were asked for their views on this subject.

Respondents had a range of opinion about the need for a scheme assessing the quality of transcribed materials. Some were very keen, feeling such a scheme would countersign their hard work. Others felt it was irrelevant to their particular setting (for example, a transcriber who worked exclusively for a blind individual).

A number of benefits to such a scheme were identified. Firstly, there were benefits to transcribers themselves - such as confidence, professional recognition and helping when tendering for commercial work. Benefits were also acknowledged for buyers of accessible formats, who don’t always know if they are getting good quality transcription or value for money. And finally, there were benefits for end users, of having consistent quality transcription from different sources.

"I'd very much like a qualification scheme to sort of countersign what we’re doing and to try and ensure best practice"

"This is an absolute minefield for [customers]. They've got no idea what they're getting; they've got to take my word for it."

"People tend to be grateful for anything and that shouldn't be the case, so I'd be up for external assessment."

Despite identifying many benefits of an assessment scheme, respondents also had a number of concerns. These included the cost of the scheme; how it would work practically - such as who would run it; who would be assessed (an individual or a transcription centre), and how often would they need to be reassessed.

Practical suggestions for how these issues could be overcome included having end users assess the materials, having a professional qualification like an NVQ and having training with periodic refresher sessions.

A key issue raised by respondents was the current lack of opportunity for professional development activity as a transcriber. This issue was explored further in the questionnaire.

###### 3.5.2.2 Questionnaire findings

Questionnaire respondents were asked how useful they would find a quality assessment scheme for accessible format production. 47% rated the idea as very useful, with a further 32% rating it as quite useful. These findings suggest there is support for such a scheme among transcribers.

Transcribers were also asked whether they perceived any barriers to their professional development. 68% felt there were barriers. These barriers included tight budgets (50%), lack of suitable training opportunities (48%), insufficient time for training/development (48%), lack of recognition of transcription as a profession (45%), and lack of contact with other transcribers (41%) [note: percentages of whole sample].

#### 3.6 Priorities for development work

During the focus groups, respondents came up with a number of ideas for development work which they felt might address some of the issues that concerned or frustrated them. These ideas were presented in the questionnaire, for respondents to rate in terms of how useful they thought these could be. This data offers a means of prioritising areas for future development work, based on the extent to which they would be useful to a wide range of transcribers.

Questionnaire respondents rated each idea on a five point scale, where 5 = not at all useful, 4 = not very useful, 3 = neutral, 2 = quite useful, and 1 = very useful.

Overall, respondents were positive about all the ideas suggested, with all achieving an average rating better than neutral. In order to identify the most popular ideas, reporting focuses on the percentage of respondents rating the idea as 'very useful' (see Appendix 1 for full data table). In each section, ideas are presented in order of their popularity.

##### 3.6.1 Training

Suggestions relating to training included potential ways training could be offered (e.g. as part of purchase of software/through workshops) as well as specific ideas on the delivery of training.

For training to be provided as part of the purchase of equipment/software

Mean = 1.5

57% rated this idea as very useful

Accessible format production workshops

Mean = 1.8

43% rated this idea as very useful

Staggered training, allowing time for participants to develop questions between sessions

Mean = 1.7

36% rated this idea as very useful

Self paced distance/online learning

Mean = 2

23% rated this idea as very useful

Group based distance/online training

Mean = 2.7

11% rated this idea as very useful

##### 3.6.2 Guidance

Suggestions for the development of guidance included general improvements such as making manuals easier to use, as well as more specific ideas for the format guidance might take (e.g. examples, standards, top tips).

Easy to use manuals

Mean = 1.3

77% rated this idea as very useful

Example transcribed materials showing a range of different types of documents

Mean = 1.5

63% rated this idea as very useful

National standards for the production of accessible formats

Mean = 1.5

63% rated this idea as very useful

Key guidance such as 'top ten tips'

Mean = 1.7

47% rated this idea as very useful

##### 3.6.3 Transcription tools

Suggestions for development around transcription tools included guidance on which tools to buy, as well as making tools more affordable, accessible and straightforward.

Guidance on the most appropriate transcription tools to buy

Mean = 1.5

59% rated this idea as very useful

Lower cost transcription tools

Mean = 1.7

55% rated this idea as very useful

Transcription tools which are accessible to blind and partially sighted transcribers

Mean = 1.8

46% rated this idea as very useful

Simplification of hardware and software

Mean = 1.9

28% rated this idea as very useful

##### 3.6.4 Support

Suggestions of development work related to support include developing assessment for transcribers (both quality assessment and qualifications for transcribers), development of a transcription community (perhaps online, or face to face through conferences) and development of a repository of materials.

###### 3.6.4.1 Assessment

Recognised qualification in accessible format production

Mean = 1.7

51% rated this idea as very useful

Quality assessment scheme for accessible format production

Mean = 1.9

47% rated this idea as very useful

###### 3.6.4.2 Community

Accessible format production workshops/conferences

Mean = 1.7

50% rated this idea as very useful

Online transcribers network

Mean = 1.8

48% rated this idea as very useful

###### 3.6.4.3 Repository

Online repository of transcribed materials

Mean = 1.5

60% rated this idea as very useful

##### 3.6.5 Prioritising work

Respondents' ratings of how useful various development activities might be are extremely useful in highlighting practical areas of work which would benefit transcribers in the UK.

In considering all the ideas generated in the focus groups and questionnaire, suggestions can be ranked in terms of their popularity with transcribers to show which ideas would be most beneficial to the industry as a whole (see Appendix 1 for full data tables).

The most popular ideas overall were those relating to improving transcription guidance. Easy to use guidance, sample transcribed materials and national standards for accessible format production were strongly supported by well over half of respondents. Guidance on selecting the most appropriate transcription tools to invest in was also very popular.

Other ideas related to reducing costs faced by transcribers were also popular. These included having training included in the price of purchasing equipment and software, and lowering the cost of transcription tools. Both of these ideas had strong support from over half of respondents.

Ideas relating to support were also popular, with around half of respondents supporting qualifications/assessment. Suggestions relating to community also had good support, particularly the idea of developing an online repository of transcribed materials.

Overall, all of the suggestions for development were rated positively by respondents, with all having an average rating better than neutral. However, enthusiasm for suggested development varied, with more specific suggestions around how training could be delivered attracting lower ratings. For example, staggered training sessions was rated 'very useful' by only 36%, self paced distance training by 23% and group based distance learning by only 11%. These lower ratings may be due to individual differences in learning styles, meaning different transcribers may prefer different types of training. Whilst these findings suggest that these ideas may not meet the needs of many transcribers, other findings relating to training (e.g. that 80% feel more training is required) show that training is an important issue. This may point to a need for further research into practical solutions to meet transcribers training needs.

### 4. Conclusion

Findings from this project show that whilst transcribers do have much in common, the diverse areas in which they work highlight different needs and concerns related to their specific areas of transcription. This makes it difficult to identify clear cut priorities affecting all transcribers.

Despite this diversity, there are issues which many transcribers agree on. Training is particularly key with 80% of respondents requiring more formal training. Guidance is also important, with many requiring further formal guidance, particularly in the production of tactile and large print images and in general transcription principles. Finally, the sense of community among transcribers is important, with 67% believing community matters but only 19% feeling part of such a community. Many transcribers were positive about ideas relating to support/community such as sharing resources and networking.

Findings suggest that these three issues - training, guidance and community - are of key importance to UK transcribers. So what practical changes or improvements could be made in these areas?

#### 4.1 Training

Relating to training, the most popular suggestion was for training to be included as part of a purchase of transcription tools. This perhaps highlights the difficulty many transcribers face with tight budgets restricting opportunities for training. These findings could be shared with suppliers of transcription tools to start a dialogue about the possibility of such a scheme. Support for ideas relating to the delivery of training was more varied, perhaps demonstrating diverse needs within the sample. This may be an area for further research to understand what kind of training transcribers feel they need in their particular setting and how this could best be delivered.

#### 4.2 Guidance

Many suggestions for guidance were extremely popular among respondents, particularly the production of easier to use manuals, sample transcribed materials to refer to and national standards for accessible format production. Such support suggests that development work in this area would be welcomed by many transcribers. Subject areas in which further guidance is required include transcription of images (both tactile and large print) and guidance on 'general principles' of transcription, outlining the process of producing accessible materials. Transcribers would also welcome guidance on which transcription tools to buy. Many transcribers were willing to share their own experience to input into the development of transcription guidance. Using these willing volunteers would be a good way to develop practice-based guidelines, and to get transcribers working together (see next section - Support/Community).

#### 4.3 Support/Community

Suggestions relating to support/community were also popular. In particular, many transcribers were keen to be able to share resources through an online repository of transcribed materials, which could save much time and duplication of effort. This would be of particular benefit to those transcribing educational materials. Further examination of the logistics of such a service may be useful, to investigate copyright/legal issues for example. Transcribers were also supportive of developing qualification schemes to give them a means of professional achievement; workshops/conferences for transcribers to learn together and network; and an online network where information/guidance could be centrally accessed. Indeed, many were keen to share their own experience, to contribute to such a community. Further work could consider how such a community could work in practice.

#### 4.4 Summary

This study has highlighted various issues that matter to transcribers, and identified a number of areas in which work could be done to better support and equip those working in this industry. These findings will be useful to UKAAF in allocating resources and effort to areas which matter to the majority of transcribers, with the ultimate aim of improving the quality and availability of accessible formats in the UK.

The study has also raised further questions about UK transcribers. For example, the many different settings in which transcribers work may lead to different issues and concerns. Further research could investigate whether there are distinct groups among transcribers (such as those working solely in education) who have needs specific to their setting. Such investigation could also identify whether particular ideas (such as certain methods of delivering training, or the transcription quality assessment scheme) are more relevant to certain groups.

### 5. Recommendations

Recommendations for further work are grouped under the three priorities identified; training, guidance and support/community.

#### 5.1 Training

* Work with suppliers of transcription tools to explore the possibility of including training as part of a purchase
* Conduct further research into specific training needs in different transcription settings, and suitable delivery mechanisms for training

#### 5.2 Guidance

* Develop guidance materials such as easy to use manuals, sample transcribed documents and national standards for the production of accessible formats
* Get transcribers involved in the development of guidance, to make use of their expertise and encourage a sense of community
* Focus particularly on guidance for transcribing images (into both tactile and large print) and general transcription principles (the process of transcribing information)
* Provide guidance for transcribers on the most appropriate transcription tools to meet their needs

#### 5.3 Support/Community

* Investigate the logistics of setting up a repository of transcribed materials to enable resource sharing
* Explore possibilities for developing a qualification/assessment scheme for transcribers
* Develop the sense of community among transcribers. Investigate potential for transcription conferences, and an online community allowing transcribers to network and share information

### References

Cryer, H., Home, S., and Morley Wilkins, S (2011). Accessible format transcription in the UK: Focus group findings. RNIB Centre for Accessible Information, Birmingham: Research report #9A.

Cryer, H., Home, S., and Morley Wilkins, S. (2011). Accessible format transcription in the UK: Questionnaire findings. RNIB Centre for Accessible Information, Birmingham: Research report # 9B.

### Appendix 1

**Table 5: Prioritising what could help**

Note: 'Positive' refers to those rating idea as very useful or quite useful

| **Category** | **Idea** | **Mean** | **Positive** | **Very useful** | **Quite useful** | **Neutral** | **Not very useful** | **Not at all useful** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Guidance | Easy to use manuals | 1.3 | 96% | 77% | 19% | 4% | 0% | 0% |
| Guidance | Example transcribed materials | 1.5 | 93% | 63% | 30% | 2% | 2% | 2% |
| Guidance | National standards for the production of accessible formats | 1.5 | 91% | 63% | 28% | 7% | 0% | 2% |
| Support | Online repository of transcribed materials | 1.5 | 92% | 60% | 32% | 9% | 0% | 0% |
| Tools | Guidance on what to buy | 1.5 | 94% | 59% | 35% | 7% | 0% | 0% |
| Training | Provided as part of purchase | 1.5 | 93% | 57% | 36% | 2% | 4% | 0% |
| Tools | Lower cost tools | 1.7 | 81% | 55% | 26% | 17% | 2% | 0% |
| Support | Recognised qualification in Accessible Format production | 1.7 | 85% | 51% | 34% | 11% | 2% | 2% |
| Support | Accessible formats workshops/conference | 1.7 | 89% | 50% | 39% | 4% | 4% | 2% |
| Support | Online transcribers network | 1.8 | 78% | 48% | 30% | 20% | 2% | 0% |
| Guidance | Key guidance such as top ten tips | 1.7 | 90% | 47% | 43% | 4% | 4% | 2% |
| Support | Transcription quality assessment scheme | 1.9 | 79% | 47% | 32% | 15% | 0% | 6% |
| Tools | Accessible transcription tools | 1.8 | 81% | 46% | 35% | 17% | 0% | 2% |
| Training | Accessible format production workshops | 1.8 | 88% | 43% | 45% | 9% | 0% | 4% |
| Training | Staggered training | 1.7 | 88% | 36% | 52% | 11% | 0% | 0% |
| Tools | Simplified tools | 1.9 | 78% | 28% | 50% | 22% | 0% | 0% |
| Training | Self paced distance/online training | 2 | 81% | 23% | 58% | 13% | 2% | 4% |
| Training | Group based distance/online training | 2.7 | 39% | 11% | 28% | 46% | 7% | 9% |