



Integration Joint Board

30<sup>th</sup> November 2017

This Report relates to  
Item 12 on the Agenda

# Sensory Support – Tape Service

*(Paper presented by Lillian Cringles)*

*For Approval*

<b>Approved for Submission by</b>	Lillian Cringles, Chief Social Work Officer, Dumfries and Galloway Council
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<b>List of Background Papers</b>	Not applicable
<b>Appendices</b>	Appendix 1 – List of Tape Service Publications January 2017 Appendix 2 – Results of the Survey of Service Users

## SECTION 1: REPORT CONTENT

**Title/Subject:** Sensory Support – Tape Service  
**Meeting:** Integration Joint Board  
**Date:** 30<sup>th</sup> November 2017  
**Submitted By:** Lillian Cringles, Chief Social Work Officer  
**Action:** For Approval

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Report was presented to the Council's Social Work Services Committee on the 10<sup>th</sup> October 2017. The Minute of that Committee is detailed below:

*Decision:*

#### **NOTED**

*5.1 The extent of the consultation undertaken in the course of the review of the tape service as detailed at paragraph 3.6-37.7*

*5.2 That there are a number of alternative, accessible services available to Dumfries and Galloway residents with visual impairment as detailed at paragraph 3.9 – 3.10*

*5.3 That there is reducing demand for the tape service as detailed below at paragraph 3.7 and*

*5.4 That there is reducing output from volunteers for the tape service as detailed at paragraph 3.16*

#### **AGREED**

*5.5 To support the proposal that the Sensory Support team assist the few remaining service users of the tape service to transfer to alternative sources of comparable services as detailed at paragraph 3.17*

*5.6 To advise the Dumfries and Galloway Integration Joint Board of the review of the Tape Service and the outcome of the review for their consideration*

#### **RECOGNISED**

*5.7 The importance of the work of the volunteers of the Tape Service and acknowledged their contributions*

## **2. Recommendations**

### **2.1 The Integration Joint Board is asked to:**

- **Note the decision taken at Social Work Committee on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2017**
- **Agree to discontinue funding for the Tape Service from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018**

## **3. Main Body of the Report**

- 3.1 The practice of supporting volunteer readers recording selected magazine articles onto cassette tapes and distributing these by post to visually impaired people began in 1975. Six years later Solway Sound, a charitable organisation, was formed. Solway Sound offers a weekly talking newspapers service, with monthly magazine excerpts, for the same client group. The Council's Tape Service therefore traditionally focussed on recording special interest publications.
- 3.2 Social Work has worked closely with Solway Sound over the years, allowing them to use recording facilities provided in Social Work premises, firstly in Catherine Street and then in Irish Street. The same facilities were used by the Tape Service. During July 2016, Social Work Services had to vacate the Irish Street offices to allow the building to be refurbished in line with the Council's Asset Plan for Dumfries and office rationalisation programme. It had been hoped that the recording equipment could be re-housed in Dumfries Activity and Resource Centre, but this proved not to be possible without extensive adaptation works. Instead, the service accepted an offer from the Deaf Society to use their premises in Rae Street, Dumfries, on a temporary basis.
- 3.3 The Rae Street premises are not ideal and this was never intended to be a long-term solution. Some of the volunteer readers were unhappy with the move and stopped reading as a result. Whilst addressing health and safety concerns at Rae Street, the service has continued to consider alternative locations. As Solway Sound's requirements are for access to facilities at and for a specific time every week, outwith office hours, we have managed to accommodate them in shared premises at North West Resource Centre. This accommodation did not meet Tape Service volunteers' requirements as it is not available during the daytime, since it is the base for the Leaving Care team, a frontline Social Work service.
- 3.4 Structural changes within Adult Social Work services during 2015 also led to new management arrangements and an in-depth review of the effectiveness of the delivery of all services to people with sensory support needs. There was no evidence that the Tape Service had previously been the subject of any service review. Furthermore, the client and publications list had become out of date.
- 3.5 A further historic arrangement was that two part time admin posts had evolved into dedicated support to the Tape Service alone. Following corporate and service reviews of the Council's administrative functions, we needed to rationalise business

support and move to more cost effective generic provision across the whole service, in order to maximise efficiency by better use of technology, as well as deliver savings.

- 3.6 The review of the Tape Service established that in 2016, there were 379 people on the list of service users, 231 lived out with the region. Details are shown in **Appendix 1**. We contacted these people who were not resident in Dumfries and Galloway by a recorded message on tape to explain that we could not continue to provide the service. We received no objections and stopped sending tapes to people living outside the region. At the same time we identified magazine selection and issue of tapes were sporadic and that a number of magazines were not being read. Where there were fewer than 6 registered readers and the magazine cost more than £5, we therefore stopped these publications and have received no objections from service users.
- 3.7 We attempted to contact the 148 Dumfries and Galloway residents on the list, firstly by telephone and then, if that was unsuccessful by letter, to ask them whether they wished to continue to receive tapes. The results of the survey of service uses are summarised in **Appendix 2**. The range of responses received including people telling us that they:
- had not received a tape for a long time
  - did not listen to tapes when received
  - would prefer to receive memory sticks
  - thought they were receiving the service from Solway Sound
  - would be happy to transfer to Solway Sound
  - were interested in finding out more about alternative sources of material both local and national
- 3.8 Previous plans for the service had included making better use of available technology by moving to memory sticks and encouraging readers to read at home to avoid the inconvenience of travelling to a central location. However, when we explored the feasibility of this with the Council's business Technology Services, they were clear that the Council cannot support the use of memory sticks for security reasons. Volunteer readers could of course use memory sticks under their own arrangements, independent of the Council.
- 3.9 The survey of service users established that there is no ongoing demand for the Tape Service which cannot be met by alternative provision. There are two free local talking newspapers services within the region, in the east and the west, as well as a number of national organisations and publications that provide full audio versions of their material on-line. We have been unable to identify any local authority in Scotland who provides this service directly. All Talking Newspaper providers appear to be third sector based organisations.
- 3.10 One of the main concerns from the volunteer reader group is that other services do not provide as wide a variety of publications. However, Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) provide a Talking Books service free of charge with over 60,000 items. RNIB also provide a Newsagent service that offers a choice of full digital download, CD or USB stick. Users can download and listen to audiobooks, talking magazines and podcasts on their computer, smartphone or tablet, with no

need for any specialist equipment, using the free RNIB Overdrive app, or choose to be sent material through the post. Help is available to set up the app. There is an annual subscription charge of £59 which gives access to an audio version of all magazines offered in a choice of formats.

- 3.11 Social Work is also working closely with the Council's library service to ensure that the wide range of needs of all residents is met. A further example is East Kilbride Talking News (a charitable organisation) who produces Scottish Farmer on memory stick. They have contacted the Sensory Support team recently as they are keen to receive new referrals for Dumfries and Galloway residents. This is not a publication the Tape Service has provided in the past. East Kilbride Talking News produce Scottish Farmer free of charge on memory stick and send it out to people all over Scotland and can also provide boom boxes if need be. The continuation of the Tape Service would duplication provision available elsewhere and is limited to the number of articles readers are able to record in the time they are able to give.
- 3.12 The Tape Service is paid from the Sensory Support budget which forms part of the overall budget delegated by the Council to the Dumfries and Galloway Integration Joint Board. Sensory Support have been receiving funding from central government annually since the inception of the See Hear Strategy in 2013/14. The See Hear Strategy is about meeting the needs of people with sensory impairment and the money is granted to Local Authorities to promote and implement the See Hear Strategy. The money can be provided to other organisations locally who are implementing the Strategy. For example in 2015 Social Work Services, on behalf of the Council, transferred this money to the Dumfries and Galloway Hard of Hearing Group to support a short term project. The Social Work contribution was used to part fund a Co-ordinator's post for 3 years, with an application to the Robertson Trust to fund the rest of the cost of this post. Officers are currently working with NHS to develop an integrated service specification to formally commission defined services from the Hard of Hearing group. Funding is expected to continue for at least the next three years.
- 3.13 The estimated annual cost of the Tape Service to the council was around £40k in 2016/17. The breakdown of this cost is shown in the table below. Since 2016 costs have continued to reduce as the service has contracted due to reducing demand and the need to improve the value for money of the service.

Costs 2016/17	£
Staff	26,885
Management time	2,774
Premises	5,000
Equipment/maintenance	5,000
Publication subscriptions	820
Total	40,479

- 3.14 In 2016 the service purchased 100 USB players, known as Boom Boxes, along with 350 USB sticks and a USB duplicator. The total cost of this equipment was £5402. Our subsequent inability to transfer to digital provision does not mean, however, that this equipment is not being put to good use. A number of USB players have

been provided to service users for use in their own homes, 20 have been transferred to Solway Sound and 5 are retained by the Sensory Support team for demonstration and short term loan purposes. The remained are being offered to Day Centres and Care Homes throughout the region. The transfer of equipment to Solway Sound was to ensure that they could deliver a service for people referred to them by the Council.

- 3.15 Social Work Services tried to keep volunteer readers informed of developments in relation to the service, but unfortunately consulted with them at times on a number of plans that subsequently could not be implemented, including the proposed move to Dumfries ARC and the transfer to digital equipment. The Social Work team would be willing to support a group of volunteers to establish a service in their own right, or to work with an existing third sector organisation. We have explored this possibility with Solway Sound, but they do not want to expand beyond they service they currently provide. Nevertheless, we have been trying to encourage Tape Service volunteers to transfer to Solway Sound as an option, as they are concerned about succession planning, given the age profile of their current volunteer group.
- 3.16 For the four week period from 27<sup>th</sup> June 2017, volunteers completed a total of 7 hours reading of articles selected from magazines purchased and made available. At the end of July, there were 11 magazines which had been purchased and provided for volunteers which had not been read. Service request were historically registered using a manual card system. Of the 64 listed historic requests for 7 different publications, we only have 27 current cards returned. For one of the publications, we have no live requests. Of the remaining 6, 5 of these are available in full, not just selected articles, from other providers including RNIB. RNIB has added the sixth magazine at our request to their list of publications for future consideration. As at 1<sup>st</sup> August 2017, there are a total of 790 people known to Social Work who are registered blind or partially sighted. The capacity of the Tape Service, relying on volunteer readers and manual systems, is not sufficient to provide for a small fraction of these residents.
- 3.17 The current level of output from the existing Tape Service is marginal compared to the digitally based, higher quality service and wider coverage offered by alternative providers, some of whom are national. Members are therefore asked to support the proposed approach which is to continue to signpost all new service users to other appropriate providers and to support the remaining existing users to identify the provider best placed to meet their needs. Once all service users requiring this type of service have been accommodated, Members are asked to support the proposal to the IJB to discontinue funding for the tape service.

#### **4. Conclusions**

- 4.1 The demand for the Tape Service has significantly reduced over recent years. Higher quality, digitally based alternative services with far greater choice of content and format are widely available from both local and national providers. We are unable to provide a comparable in-house service for reasons of infrastructure, capacity and affordability.

## **SECTION 2: COMPLIANCE WITH GOVERNANCE STANDARDS**

### **5. Resource Implications**

- 5.1. The discontinuation of the Tape Service will result in a saving of around £40k which will be available to the Sensory Support team to provide support to meet the needs of increasing number of service users.

### **6. Impact on Integration Joint Board Outcomes, Priorities and Policy**

- 6.1. There will be no adverse impact on the National Health and Wellbeing Outcomes as service users are being fully supported in transitioning to alternative forms of support which meets their needs.

### **7. Legal & Risk Implications**

- 7.1. There are no legal and risk implications have been identified within this paper.

### **8. Consultation**

- 8.1. Extensive consultation with users of the Tape Service has been undertaken in the course of the review of the service.

### **9. Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment**

- 9.1. The Sensory Support team are working with service users to ensure that there is no adverse impact on them and that they benefit from accessing a higher quality service.

### **10. Glossary**

CSWO	-	Chief Social Work Officer
ARC	-	Association for Real Change
RNIB	-	Royal National Institute of the Blind
CD	-	Compact Disc
USB	-	Universal Serial Bus

## Appendix 1 – List of Tape Service Publications January 2017

<b>Magazine Title</b>	<b>People from D&amp;G Receiving this</b>	<b>People from Outwith D&amp;G Receiving this</b>
British Diabetic Association	5	7
Classic Motorcycle	1	
Country Living	15	19
Cue and Review	6	11
Elle	8	9
Forward	0	9
Gardening	8	20
Good Housekeeping	3	21
Gentlemen's Quarterly	1	6
Home & Gardens	3	10
Harpers & Queens	0	4
Inspires	0	5
Life & Work	6	58
Marks & Spencer	16	6
New Beacon	10	38
National Geographic	12	14
Countryman	10	14
Playback	16	10
Rambler	1	5
Railway magazine	1	15
Royalty	5	13
SAGA	4	10
Scottish Field	13	12
New Scientist	0	12
Soundings	139	141
Sunday Post	66	3
Talking Books	13	18
True Detective	14	30
Talking Newspaper news	138	5
Viewpoint	2	17
Which	5	17
Woman	8	21
Woman and Home	4	14
Woman's Weekly	18	22



## Appendix 2 - Results of the Survey of Service Users

<b>Response</b>	<b>No. of Residents</b>
Requested removal from the list	28
Requested referral to Solway Sound	12
Requested referral to other provider	52
Requested a home visit	1
Requested a review	1
Refused to answer questions	1
No contact for a number of years	5
No response*	44
Other	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>

\* In 29 of the 44 cases, there has been Social Work involvement since 2016.

The remaining 15 cases are being reviewed by the Sensory Support Team from September 2017