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Explore Your Reading Choices at Camden Libraries with the RNIB

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Background

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According to the RNIB Sight Loss Data Tool the London Borough of Camden currently has

- 860 residents registered as having sight loss
- 6,610 people currently living with sight loss

RNIB wants to reach people who may not have seen their doctor or a specialist for a variety of reasons and community spaces such as libraires, are ideal places to be able to do this.

According to the Sight Loss and Technology Briefing paper created by the RNIB in 2021, blind and partially sighted people are twice as likely to be digital excluded as opposed to the general population.

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Envoy Connect

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The Envoy Connect is a small, simple-to-use audiobook player which can hold up to fifty books and is designed for people with sight loss who cannot use a smart product.

Audiobooks can be downloaded to the Envoy via USB cable from the Borrowbox and Libby App on a PC, and using the iKiosk software on the device which connects directly RNIB online reading services without having to log-in.

To be able to give people who aren't comfortable with technology, possibly slightly older, access to digital audiobooks and encourage them to go to the library.

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Joining up with Camden and Proposed Project

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Thanks to the LibraryOn funding we're currently tackling these issues head on in a three-strand approach.

1. 200 Envoy Connect Device for audio books
2. More accessible public PC's
3. Training for staff on visual awareness, using the device and accessible technology

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200 Envoy Connect Devices

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- RNIB identified 200 potential users to gift the Envoy Connect Devices

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More accessible Public PC's

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- Have one fully accessible public PC, for VI users, in each of Camden's 9 branch libraries
- Each accessible PC will have a large print, high contrast keyboard
- Along with Dolphin Supernova magnification and speech

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Training for staff

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RNIB to provide training for Camden library staff in:

- Visual awareness and customer service for blind and partially sighted customers
- The envoy connect project and how to use the device
- Accessible technology

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Pilot in Holborn

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Holborn will be the first library with a fully VI accessible PC.

RNIB to carry out training for Holborn library staff

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Challenges

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- The iKiosk software for the Envoy Connect has had delays.
- Had to change up devices at the micro USB port was able to be changed to a USB-C port and that's a lot easier for people with sight loss to use.
- Even though we've identified 200 potential users, talking to Camden sensory team more work will have to go into getting them to the library and building their confidence to use the library

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Potential – Building a Brighter Future

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This project has potentially life-changing consequences to people with sight loss, not only in the ability to be more in control of their books, when they want them and get them, as opposed to waiting for them in the post or otherwise, but confidence in way-finding, connecting with others in libraries and opening up new ways of them becoming a part of the local community.

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What Next?

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We plan to record case studies, take quotes and really evaluate this more on a qualitative basis than a quantitative one.

Ideally, this is something that the RNIB would love to roll out nationwide.

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Any Questions?

Reach out to us at lara.marshall@rnib.org.uk and abul.kashim@camden.gov.uk

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