

Culture Minister tells MP – Libraries have the answer

Ian Murray Labour MP for Edinburgh South asked The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport a written question recently and has shared the answer with us.

He wanted to know what assessment the Minister had made of the potential benefits to (a) partially sighted and (b) blind people of (i) e-readers and (ii) other digital reading materials; and what steps her Department is taking to increase access to those materials. He tabled the written question on 16 October 2019 and has just received a written response.

Answer: Matt Warman:

The UK Government recognises that, although we live in an increasingly online world, a significant part of the population remains digitally excluded, and as a Government we are actively committed to tackling digital exclusion. In the Digital Strategy, we committed to enabling people in every part of society – irrespective of age, gender, physical ability, ethnicity, health conditions, or socio-economic status – to access the opportunities of the internet.

In addition, most public libraries offer the loan of e-books and e-audio books, with some also making available the loan of e-book readers and other technology to enlarge the print. A number of local authorities use their website to communicate the services available to visually impaired people from their libraries.

[Libraries Connected](#) has developed the Six Steps Promise with

the Royal National Institute for the Blind and Share the Vision to ensure libraries can support people with reduced vision. The promise includes:

- ensuring that all blind and partially sighted customers are connected to the most appropriate service for their reading needs and that they are able to make full use of an accessible public library service
- using [Reading Sight](#), a free website supporting blind and partially sighted people to access reading and reading services
- providing local collections of accessible reading materials and information in physical or digital formats, and be able to signpost library users to a wider range of resources

Our own monthly newspaper is available on the PressReader App which will read the paper out loud to anyone who is unable to read it.