# Country Report – UK

## For consideration by the ICEB General Assembly May 2016

## By Mandy White, Braille subject lead for UKAAF (UK Association for Accessible Formats)

### Introduction

It has been a very busy time for UKAAF over the past two years with the majority of our work being based around finalising the implementation of Unified English Braille (UEB). The deadline for the change was the end of December 2015 and by and large this was achieved. This work is covered in much more depth in the paper on UK implementation being presented at the assembly. Other work includes looking at braille codes affected by the implementation of UEB such as chess and Welsh and also more general work, such as formatting and a physical standard for the braille cell.

### Structure

UKAAF continues to run 3 braille working groups (coding, teaching and production) which meet every 2 months via teleconference. Each group has about 7 or 8 members. The UKAAF board also meets every 2 months, every other meeting is face to face. UKAAF has its AGM every year in June.

### UEB

Over the past two years we have completed face to face UEB training for over 600 teachers and have worked with RNIB to provide a range of material to support long term braille users transferring across to UEB. RNIB continues to update various braille learning and reading schemes. UKAAF continues to provide a termly UEB update which highlights developments and new resources available in the code. The email list for people with queries about the code will also continue to be available.

### Clarifying the approach for maths and languages

Two temporary working groups were set up for maths and language specialists to ensure that an agreed single method would be used for transcription in specific subject areas particularly for students, text books and exams. The guidelines were added to the UKAAF website.

### Welsh and Chess

Welsh braille uses English braille as its ‘base code with additional contractions, word signs and group signs appropriate for Welsh vocabulary. UKAAF set up a Welsh braille group which agreed the modifications that needed to be made to the current Welsh code to bring it into line with UEB. This will make it a lot easier for children using both languages in schools. Similarly (but to a lesser extent) the UK chess code has been slightly revised to take into account the introduction of UEB. The new codes can be found on the standards page of the UKAAF website.

### Presentation Guidelines

We have produced some guidelines on how to layout braille. They took a long time to agree. The approach that was taken was to give a guiding principle for each formatting area (page numbering, paragraphs, footnotes etc) and then give some examples of good practice. This gives producers/publishers some freedom in the way that braille is laid out whilst still ensuring that good practice is followed. We are now in the midst of producing an appendix to the original document which contains all the tricky stuff such as tables and forms and poetry and plays. We are focussing much more on examples than narrative in this publication.

### Braille cell standard

We were often asked about the dimensions of a braille cell by students and graphic designers and found we did not have an agreed answer to give them. We did quite a bit of research looking at international standards and what embosser manufacturers used. We now have an agreed standard which will be added to our website shortly.

### Other activity

The braille group continue to update the UKAAF website with links to interesting news and articles on braille and also provide the judges for the annual ONKYO braille themed essay writing competition. We have also worked with Pharmabraille, a website offering advice and coding tables to the European pharmaceutical industry on braille labelling of their products.

### The future

Although the intensity of the work around implementing UEB has fallen away there is still much to be done. Current areas of activity include

* Guidelines for electronic braille documents
* Guidelines for embossing, labelling and binding braille documents
* Guidelines for producing a correctly structured document (to enable good braille to be produced)
* Agreeing a specification for a UK Duxbury braille format

We are indeed fortunate to have a dedicated and hard working group of people to move this work forward and I finish this report by offering them my unreserved thanks.

MW 20/04/16

### 