(0:00) Liz Williams: Hello I’m Liz Williams. I’m a teacher of the visually impaired at Tapton School and I’ve been here for a number of years. I’ve got overall responsibility for the exams for visually impaired children. At Tapton the exams are done quite formally from year seven, right through to A-levels. So we start straight away with the pupils to make sure they are used to the different formats available for visually impaired pupils from the exam boards. At year seven we give the pupils a lot more support to access the Braille and large print exams, and then as they get older we withdraw that support so a lot of them will be independent by the time they get to their GSCEs and can do the exams without support.

(00:48) Simon Kerrigan: My name is Simon Kerrigan. I am a teacher of visually impaired students at Tapton School. Once the needs of the individual have been assessed, and identified, you are able to order a range of adapted papers from the exam boards. The students with more severe visual impairments, large print modified papers are available in size 18 and 24 font. The size 18 modified papers are on A4 paper and the size 24 are on A3. These are modified and are not just an exact copy; the questions have been adapted to improve visual access to them. Papers are also available in grade one and grade two Braille with tactile diagrams.

(01:28) Jerry: I’m Jerry, I’m in year 11 at Tapton School and I’m doing my GCSEs. I have Nystagmus and in class day to day I use an iPad to access the board and the worksheets. In the exams I have large print, preferably on A4 but at the minute I can only get it on A3 which makes it difficult. In exams I get extra time because of my Nystagmus which means it’s harder to read the questions. I type my answers on the laptop because it’s easier to read than my own hand writing, and for a calculator I use the iPad.

(02:11) Liz Williams: From coming in at year seven, we monitor the children doing the exams over the five years prior to GCSEs, so we get an idea of how much time they need; a reasonable amount of time to complete exams, which are the best rooms for them to be in in terms of lighting. Whether or not they still need the practical help or a reader or a scribe, now I discuss with the exams officer then what would be reasonable adjustments to get them the access arrangements that they will need as an individual.

(02:41) Pete Trainer: My name is Pete Trainer, I am the exams officer here at Tapton Secondary School in Sheffield.

(02:47) Vanessa Bell: and my name is Vanessa Bell; I am exams manager at Tapton School in Sheffield. We liaise with SENCO and the vision support, and then apply for the appropriate modified paper on the online access arrangements site. This has to be done by the end of January to ensure that we receive the papers in good time.

(03:10) Pete Trainer: In addition to their modified papers, some students may require further support. This can range from extra time for that particular student, which can range from 25% up to 100%. This is entirely dependent on the individual needs of that student and we would have looked into this and had that approved beforehand. On top of this they may require further support which could come in sort of human form from members of staff such as members of the visual support department who would act as reader, scribe or prompt, to help the student more effectively carry out their exam paper.

(03:47) Simon Kerrigan: Another format that’s available is electronic format. It’s important that you’ve practiced this style of paper in advance to make sure the PDF format is compatible with any access technology that’s used by that student. It’s important for any of these types of papers that you have familiarised them with that type of format so that then becomes their usual way of working and they’re aware of that and familiar with it when they go into their real exam.

(04:14) Liz Williams: You’ve got to be flexible yourself in what you’ll finally accept, but I do find the exam boards quite helpful and will enter a dialogue to discuss how they can, well how we can both meet the needs of the pupil.

(04:28) Yanko Georgias: I am Yanko Georgias. I am a student in year 11 at Tapton Secondary School. For my exams the access arrangements that I have include extra time, which is 80% extra, a reader to come with me in the exam so they can show me around the tactile diagrams which are in Braille as I can’t see the print version of them. A Braille paper, which I have because I can’t read the print versions, so I can read it. My braille paper is grade one Braille which is uncontracted Braille. I practice in advance for my exams. I write my answers on a laptop on a word document which has speech software on. All those arrangements make me feel confident. I feel that I can achieve all my potentials in my exams which are in May.

(05:22) Liz Williams: In order for the student to reach their full potential, you know you have to know the student as an individual and their normal way of working. You also need to know what’s available from the exam boards, what you can reasonably ask for on behalf of that pupil, and that way marry the pupil’s normal way of working with the best access arrangements for them as an individual, and then they will have the best chance of getting the best mark possible in the exam.

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