

Photography and Disability in England

A report commissioned by the Arts Council and Shape London

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PREFACE

In December 1985, the **Arts Council** launched the Code of Practice on Arts and Disability, which it is encouraging all of its revenue clients to adopt. A comprehensive Resources Pack was prepared as well as a Directory of Arts and Disability Organisations and Projects (1989). From these it rapidly became clear that there was little information available on work being done either by or on behalf of people with disabilities in the area of photography.

Ad Lib, a group specialising in research and training in disability awareness and the arts, was commissioned in February 1987 to prepare this report. A copy of the research brief is included in section 8.

The Manchester 'Disabled People's Arts Conference and Workshops' took place during the period of research in March 1988. The need to establish criteria and direction for the further development of disabled peoples' arts, including photography, dominated its agenda. This consideration gave the initial research brief a wider interpretation.

Throughout the research and writing period, the project has been guided and monitored by a steering committee. The **Arts Council** would like to thank the following members for their advice and support: Ruth Bailey, Maria Bartha, Rudi Breakwell-Bos, Richard Crawford, Jacqui Duckworth, Guy Evans, Rob Greenwood, Nicola Gunn, David Hevey, Chris Killick, Amanda King, Dawn Langle, John Mason, Elspeth Morrison, Michael Ann Mullen, Samena Rana, Colin Rattee, Arthur Scrase, Peter Stroud and Celia Wood.

Since the draft report was received, the **Arts Council** has published a comprehensive Arts and Disability Action Plan which is available from the Arts Access Unit. The Visual Arts Department has also produced a Visual Arts Action Plan which addresses many of the issues raised in the recommendations of this report. Copies are available from the Visual Arts Department. Both are free of charge.

The report was completed in 1989 and we are sorry that some of the information and details are now out of date. The opinions expressed in the report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the **Arts Council**,

Shape, or the members of the steering committee. However, comments and recommendations on this report are welcomed and these should be sent to the photography officer.

Barry Lane, Photography Office, Arts Council, 1990

1. INTRODUCTION

This report was commissioned by the **Arts Council** and **Shape London** to investigate the practice and potential for photography and disability in England; that is, photography done by, with, or for disabled people.

This field remains underdeveloped and our starting point was to establish what was going on, and where.

The report falls into four main sections. The first gives the recommendations, the second provides the context for this discussion of photography and disability; the third addresses current issues arising from the research; the fourth describes twenty-nine projects investigated during the work.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The main recommendations are that the photography section of the **Arts Council** should:

Formally clarify what conditions and criteria it will apply to the assessment of grant applications, and particularly include the level of involvement or control by disabled people in projects seeking funding

Lead the way in recruiting disabled advisors, photography advisory group members and staff as vacancies arise

Commission the publication of a book which explores the issues around images of disability and documents photographic representation to date. The book should be highly visual. Editors should include disabled people with experience within photography and representation

Commission the publication of a handbook which documents the organisation of photography and disability work, provides guidelines for good practice, including information on equipment adaptations and technical resources, as in the Arts and Disability Resource Pack, and gives case studies of recommended practice

Earmark funds for exhibitions by, with and for disabled people and encourage organisations involved in the productions of these exhibitions to consider wide distribution via prints, posters, postcards, calendars etc

Arrange and promote a day-long forum to discuss possible guidelines for the encouragement of photography that does not undermine disabled people.

Representatives of charities, advertising agencies, magazines and newspapers which use photographs of disabled people should be invited, as

should representatives of the **NUJ** and **ACTT**. Workers from the independent photography sector, and in particular disabled photographers and photography workers should be encouraged to attend and to lead the discussions. An agenda based on practical examples of work and compiled with disabled peoples' organisations should be set and distributed in advance

Secondary recommendations are that the photography section of the **Arts Council** should:

Ensure that photography magazines funded by the **Arts Council** are applying the Code of Practice and implementing their equal opportunities policies, with regard to employment and to their promotion and coverage of issues devoted to photography and disability

Approach universities and colleges with an art administration faculty to maintain the photography and disability database. Possible candidates include Newcastle Polytechnic, City University, Leicester Polytechnic and Manchester University. The database should be distributed by the **Arts Council** in the form of **IBM** compatible discs to regional arts associations and the **Shape** network, with printouts available on request

Fund in collaboration with the Shape network and disability arts groups, a pamphlet for day centres and adult training centres. This should show clearly how the photography funding network is relevant to them, give examples of projects and joint projects which include similar institutions, and provide a map of regional arts associations with contact numbers and, where possible, names

Approach local education authorities in order to co-commission a teaching pack on photography and disability, and to promote the inclusion of the topic in INSET teacher training programmes

Discuss with the regional arts associations the distribution of the Arts and Equality: an Action Pack for Arts Organisations and a Code of Practice for Independent Photography to all photography clients

Other recommendations to the **Arts Council** are that the training section and arts access unit should:

Continue to provide disability awareness training for arts council staff and staff within **Arts Council** funded organisations

Provide training bursaries for disabled photographers and administrators. (Bursaries should be conditional on the host organisation providing at least one year's employment to the trainee, if the bursary period is satisfactorily completed)

Fund, in collaboration with the **British Council of Organisations of Disabled People**, a regional training programme for disability awareness/equality trainers working in, or wishing to work in, the arts and photography in particular

Work to improve access, in consultation with disabled people's organisations, for the **Arts Council** building

Recommendations to other organisations:

That **SKILL**, the **National Bureau for Handicapped Students**, should undertake a survey of further and higher educational opportunities for disabled photographers. The **Arts Council** should assist the Bureau to promote and distribute, in collaboration with the **Shape** network and disability arts groups, a pamphlet based on the results of the survey

That the **NUJ (National Union of Journalists)** and the **ACTT (Association of Cinematographic and Television Technicians)** should make union membership easier for disabled photographers, including the possibility of group membership

That **BAPLA (British Association of Picture Libraries)** should encourage its members to maintain and promote images that represent disabled people in acceptable ways

That photography organisations should encourage disabled people who wish to transfer their photographic base from segregated projects (usually beginners-type workshops) to mainstream work or projects

3. PHOTOGRAPHY AND DISABILITY

3.1 Photography - Background and Definitions

The role of disabled people in photography has primarily been that of photographic subjects from able-bodied perspectives. A brief history shows a frightening range of discriminatory images, from medical photography, where a person is a specimen for study, to the work of photographers such as Diane Arbus, who has been accused of portraying people as freaks. Charities foster an image of helplessness to tug at heart and purse strings, while human interest stories at the end of the news focus on those who have 'made it' on able-bodied terms. Popular and amateur photography often exclude disability entirely, with disabled people absent from family histories, or, if present, with disability concealed and disguised.

Early community-based photography made facilities available to disenfranchised groups of people. Disability remains a relatively underdeveloped area because involvement is frequently denied on the grounds of lack of physical access to facilities and training.

As community photography grew, it was realised that better physical access does not in itself encourage of new and challenging work. More recent developments have concentrated on providing a constructive and questioning context for work by and with groups with specific identities. Women's photography and Black photography have had particular impact.

Many of the projects discussed in this report have begun to challenge this situation. The result has been photography which is important to independent photography practice and disabled people. For example, inventive work on self-identity is particularly important to disabled people who frequently lack affirmation of self that these images provide.

Organisations approaches to photography and disability vary considerably. They may be broadly divided as outlined below with some overlap between categories.

Self-advocacy

Self-advocacy is defined as “people being their own advocates and speaking for themselves” (*We can speak for ourselves*, Cooper & Hersov, National Bureau of Handicapped Students, 1986). It involves independence, decision-making, freedom of choice, self-expression and group identity attained through a shift in the balance of power between disabled and non-disabled people.

Within photography there is an increasing focus on self-advocacy for people with learning difficulties. **Lanercost Photography Project** uses photography with this aim: “Photography is useful because it’s about making choices and being in control - ways of looking at things, how you want them to look, and an understanding of the process”.

Photography is regarded as a means to an end. Self-image work has targeted disabled people through **Camerawork’s** “A Sense of Self” exhibition. Disabled people were able to control the way they were photographed, exploring their self-identity in the process.

Campaigning for disability rights

London Disability Arts Forum, **Arts Integration Merseyside** and other disabled people’s organisations seek to use photography to document and promote the disability movement, to provide a forum for debate and to increase disabled people’s involvement in photography, including accountability to disabled people. **Northern Shape** lobbies mainstream arts organisations and funders through photography. **In-Valid?** uses its photographic resource materials in disability awareness training and **Format** uses non-stereotypical images to challenge the preconceptions of able-bodied people.

Skills-sharing

Several organisations are involved in passing on technical photographic skills through workshops, including **Posterngate Photography Workshop**, **CLIC** and **Nelson and Colne College**. **Arts Integration Merseyside’s** apprenticeship scheme taught skills, particularly in arts administration.

Creativity

CLIC's main aim is to enable disabled people to practice photography independently for creative expression. **Courtlands School** has similar aims.

3.2 Disability and Impairment - Definitions

This report adopts a concept of disability as oppression. Many people have impairments which may be physical, sensory, learning, emotional or hidden. Disability is a particular form of oppression which works against disabled people, denying them full access to the social world. Social and economic organisation, not individual impairment excludes disabled people from photography and other art forms. This exclusion operates at all levels, from training courses which do not admit disabled people and lack of physical access to facilities through to disabled people's invisibility or misrepresentation in the images produced.

While the concept of disability as oppression has been broadly agreed among the organisations of disabled people, specific terminology is a debate extending beyond the scope of this report. For present purposes the terms "disabled people" and "people with disabilities" will be used interchangeably.

3.3 Arts and Disability vs. Disability Arts

The value of art to disabled people has been regarded primarily in terms of therapy. In 1981, the International Year of Disabled People, a series of seminars were held (in the main for non-disabled professionals) to discuss how best to create access to the arts. This led directly, in 1982, to the first comprehensive review of facilities which enable disabled people to involve themselves in the arts which was published in 1985 as Arts and Disabled People: The Attenborough Report. While moving away from therapy as the primary reason for disabled people's involvement, it scarcely touched on issues of control by disabled people or on disability arts.

Developing out of the report, the **Artability** conference was an attempt by the predominantly non-disabled committee to stage a major national conference on the issues raised. Largely inaccessible to disabled people, both financially and physically, boycott was threatened by disability organisations and the conference was cancelled.

The very few groups of disabled people in existence before The Attenborough Report - **Graeae** 1980, **British Council of Organisations of Disabled People** 1981, **Strathcona** 1983 - were still in early stages of development. The **Artability** conference provided an impetus for the first concentrated across-the-arts protest by disabled people, and evidence of both involvement in the arts on disabled peoples' terms and of demands for change.

The debates which revolved around the role of disabled people within the arts and the role of the arts within their lives intensified. These debates can be divided into two broad areas, arts and disability and disability arts. Both have the primary aim of ending segregated 'special' arts and the ultimate aim of integration. Both work differently to this end.

Arts and Disability

This approach to the arts is to involve all sections of the community on an equal basis, making no differentiation between disabled and non-disabled participants - "We think of a person as artist first, disabled second - it's ability that counts".

Treating everyone on this basis can overlook certain particular needs that a disabled participant may have. The focus is on individuals' impairments, rather than viewing disability as an oppression. Total physical access, without recognition of the particular experiences disabled people have in common, denies participants the emotional access which validates these experiences. This risks a half-way integration, with disabled people being "invited in" to participate on non-disabled terms. An integrated project is not one which simply provides workshops for disabled people, but one which involves disabled people at all levels of decision-making and recognises the particular experience of disability throughout its structure.

Disability Arts

Disability arts recognises the particular experience of disability, using it for self-knowledge and to inform arts practice and the community at large. The longer-term aim of disability arts is true integration into that community, on our terms. It involves building up an arts movement controlled by disabled people.

Disability arts may consist, at its extreme, of work that could not physically be produced by a non-disabled person (photography as seen by someone with a specific visual impairment, for example, or using muscle-spasm to create a particular photographic quality), to art exploring the experience of disability or created simply by a person defining themselves as disabled. It is the common identity of living with disability-oppression that is the mainstay of the arts movement. Disability arts demand that the experience and different quality of work produced be acknowledged by non-disabled people and organisations.

This approach has been criticised - "you're segregating yourselves". However, it is necessary for disabled people to take the opportunity of time away from non-disabled people through choice, to recognise and validate the particular experiences of disability and to communicate what needs to be different within the wider community.

Non-disabled organisations and individuals have a responsibility to ensure their practice is in an accessible form to disabled people, as and when we choose to feed into it. The current debates have been used by some non-disabled people to excuse responsibility on their part - "if they don't know what they want..."

However, debates are valuable vehicles on which to move forward. The common aim of the two debates is true integration of disabled people into the wider community. "There's integration on anyone's terms, and there's integration on our terms, and on our terms we'll get it right. We're using the arts to integrate disabled people, and hopefully, at the end of it, we'll be able to put disability arts culture in a little glass case and say 'there it is, we don't need it anymore', because we're completely integrated into the community".

Both the arts and disability and the disability arts approached are represented within this report. The debate must inform any investigation of an art form in relation to disability.

4. RESEARCH METHODS

A questionnaire was prepared and distributed using independent photography sector and **Shape** network mailing lists. Additional distribution was arranged through publicising the research project and through personal contacts. The returns were used as a basis for visits to 50 organisations and individuals involved in photography and disability. These visits provided the data for the topic issues and recommendations in this report. Contact was made with a range of organisations to encompass as wide a spectrum of approach as possible. Selection criteria were as follows:

Focus of work: organisations were chosen from the arts sector, disability organisations, social services provision and education. Both the voluntary and statutory sectors were included, with groups controlled by both disabled and non-disabled people. Visits were made to arts and disability groups, disability arts forums, photography and community arts projects, arts centres, galleries, a museum, photo agencies, an oral history project, publishers, schools and colleges, adult training centres and regional arts associations.

Scale of work: discussions took place with individuals, local groups and national organisations, ground workers and policy makers, including informal as well as formally constituted groups.

Geographical spread: visits were made to organisations throughout England

Type of work: the range of work considered included technical tuition, documentation, exhibitions and publications, leisure, campaigning, self-advocacy and therapy.

Involvement of disabled people: disabled people were involved as workshop participants, photographers and photographic subjects, employees and policy makers. Organisations varied in approach to their integration, segregation and separation.

The ease or otherwise with which contact was made with organisation and individuals was governed by their proximity to formal structures. Established groups, arts organisations and nationally recognised bodies were relatively simple to contact. Groups and individuals outside of these structures proved less easy to find.

Consequently, a number of areas have been left under-represented in this report. Additional long-term work is needed to build a report appropriate networks, in particular, to involve groups outside the mainstream arts sector. These would include day-centres, adult training centres, other education providers and training establishments. Contact also needs to be kept with photographers in general and disabled photographers in particular.

5. TOPICS

5.1 Access

Physical access

Access is generally regarded as 'special' provision, affecting only a small minority of the population. Organisations frequently overlook the fact that disabled people form at least 10% of the population and that lack of access can have a profound effect on both disabled and non-disabled people. Access rarely exists as mainstream provision, but is generally tacked on after difficulties have become apparent.

Even new buildings often exclude physical access from planning. In the absence of effective anti-discrimination legislation, physical and other access is dependent upon an organisation's commitment. The Art and Equality Action Pack produced by the **Arts Development Association (ADA)** provides arts organisations with effective advice once that commitment is forthcoming.

Fire regulations frequently limit the use of premises by disabled people, although an organisations fear of the regulations can create even greater restriction.

Buildings with stairs and no alternative access are often through to exclude people with walking difficulties and may be used as an excuse for not targeting disabled users. In the short-term some organisations use inaccessible facilities for people who are not mobility-disabled, and put workshops in venues with mobility access for other users, while working in the longer term towards accessible premises.

Access improvements are often omitted on grounds of cost, although much improvement is inexpensive. Concern over lack of technical knowledge also inhibits progress, although the kind of creative thinking discussed in section 5.12 is frequently of greater significance.

Funding does not exist for structural and equipment provision, from some RAAs, trusts and (for disabled employees) the Manpower Services Commission. However, information on available grants was unknown to most organisations and individuals visited, and publicity is much needed. Grant-giving bodies often refuse to fund access provision where project funding or employment is on a yearly basis. The grants systems are also often cumbersome and slow to use.

Physical access is regarded primarily as ramps or general mobility access. Exceptional organisations incorporate a full range of access - induction loops, Braille signs, toilet facilities, photographic equipment on moveable shelves, keypads etc

Action on physical access tends to disregard access to information, transport, parking, circulation around the venue, use of facilities, admission charges and personal assistance. Physical access does not only affect building-based organisations. In Liverpool, a portable darkroom with accessible facilities is used to take workshops to a variety of settings.

Some organisations have found that information on access is not readily available. **Projects UK** researched its own access requirements, but found it time-consuming. There is a need for accurate, user-friendly reference materials to help organisations improve access provision, as well as a standardised method of recording and displaying access details. The purchase and distribution of the **ADA Pack** by regional arts associations will go some way to addressing this problem. Information on the state of access is rarely made available to the public, which may discourage potential users.

The **London Borough of Islington** has developed an access strip for publicity material, using symbols representing ramps, lifts, hearing loops, guide dogs admitted etc. It is included in all publicity, and where provision is not made the appropriate symbol is deleted. More details information is available on request. While some publicity information does carry details of physical access, no examples were found in employment advertising.

Information is inaccessible to many disabled people. Most publicity is in printed form, and most workshops are presented orally with no sign language interpretation. Printed information often demands high levels of literacy and rarely uses pictorial support or substitution. Publicity is frequently displayed or distributed in venues which exclude disabled people on their mailing lists. A few organisations rely solely on personal contact to distribute information.

Emotional access

Access is more than physical. People should be fully involved and welcomed in all aspects of an organisation. Where physical access does exist, but emotional access is lacking, organisations can be bewildered by their lack of success - “we’ve made it [physically] accessible and they still don’t come. We’ve done all we can”.

Physical access should be provided with dignity, sensitivity and safety, not through an unsigned rear entrance by the dustbins. Ramps are frequently so steep as to be not only difficult, but dangerous. One person may find a ramp easier than steps, or the reverse. Organisations should provide a choice.

When there is no stated policy on the involvement of disabled people, disability issues are frequently overlooked, even where physical access exists.

Disabled people are usually considered as members of the public, and less frequently, as employees or management committee members. One organisation which has made extensive access adaptations to its gallery and bookshop still has no wheelchair access to office space, blocked by a single narrow doorway. Positive action is vital to redress the imbalance.

Positive action means directly addressing publicity and information to disabled people and organisations known to involve them. It also means involving disabled people in an organisation’s work. **Oldham Art Gallery** formed a disabled people’s user-group supported by a part-time worker, and encouraged others to become involved in the gallery’s work, monitor its progress and have an input into programming. It also means addressing the specific self-advocacy needs of people who, having been excluded over a long period, may need time to build self-confidence before being able to fully participate in organisations. **Lanercost ATC** trainees often choose to observe workshops before becoming involved and **Arts Integration Merseyside** set up an apprenticeship scheme to offer both training and work experience.

Emotional access includes recognising and representing disabled people’s interests and experiences. Disabled people should have the opportunity to take control over the way they are photographed. Planning should ensure that disabled people’s experiences are represented in programming. **Camerawork**, **Impressions Gallery** and **Matrix** all include disability issues in exhibitions and workshops.

5.2 Employment

The organisations which employ disabled people are usually those controlled by disabled people. There are very few in the mainstream. Other organisations, like

Shape, occasionally employ disabled photographers on a freelance basis. Regional Arts Associations and the **Arts Council** have made little progress in this respect, even where there is a strong disability policy. This is regarded by some as symptomatic of a lack of commitment.

Many organisations are too small to be affected by the Disabled Person's Employment Act, which requires those of 20 or more to have a minimum of 3% disabled people. As this legislation is rarely enforced, employment of disabled people very much depends on an organisation's own commitment. Without this, the valuable skills and experience they bring with their participation is lost.

Several organisations have an equal opportunities policy, but there remains much confusion about discrimination. For example, an advertisement for a job that requires scaffold climbing should not carry an equal opportunities message because some disabled people would clearly be excluded. However, equal opportunities does not mean that all employees should necessarily be able to undertake every aspect of an organisations work. Some organisations positively target disabled people in their recruitment.

Equal opportunities policies should be monitored, using formalised procedures throughout an organisation, including permanent staff and artists, and from response to advertising through to employment and staff turnover.

Job descriptions are often very rigid. Requirements, such as a driving licence or irrelevant academic qualifications, discriminate against disabled people who may use a different means of transport or have been denied access to formal education. Consultation with disabled people is needed at all stages, from compiling the initial job description to retaining flexibility once the person is in the post. Job sharing and flexitime should be considered and it may be possible to negotiate job descriptions between workers.

Many organisations tend to either exaggerate people's needs or avoid discussion altogether. An individual's requirements should be taken into consideration after selection has been made, to avoid prejudice. Access to interviews should be arranged separately by administrative staff.

Few organisations are aware of financial assistance that is available for building adaptations, computer equipment or for personal assistance, including support from the Disablement Advisory Service teams located in job centres. DAS assistance has been found to be extremely slow in arriving. Arrangements for equipment can take as long as four months and approval for building adaptations even longer. Organisations employing people on short-term contracts, such as the MSC Community Programme or apprenticeship schemes, may be refused assistance. The policy and process for allocation needs to be revised to meet disabled people's, and organisation's, real requirements.

Once in post, regular reviews should take place. New and more effective ways of working may emerge, and reviews should allow for these to be incorporated.

It is important that jobs with direct responsibility for disability are held and controlled by disabled people. Care should be taken that individuals in these posts are not to be isolated, and support from other disabled people should be built into the organisation, as at **Oldham Art Gallery**.

Where an organisation appoints a disability adviser, care needs to be taken that responsibility for disability issues remains in all sections of the organisation with the key person maintaining an advisory role. Some organisations use disabled staff as 'disability experts', regardless of whether this is part of their job description or not.

Disabled people should be represented throughout an organisation's work and not only encouraged to work with other disabled people, ignoring the validity of their experience in all other areas. Disabled people are also commonly channelled away from more 'active' or directive posts. Disabled people must be allowed to decide for themselves whether they can or cannot do a job. They must be given the same opportunities for risk-taking as non-disabled people.

During this research very few disabled photographers were found. With the exception of the staff at **Bradford Heritage Recording Unit**, all were freelance workers. Other disabled workers are often employed on a short-term basis. People on Severe Disablement and related benefits have to give up this higher rate of benefit in order to work, risking its loss once a contract has ceased.

Remuneration also needs to be realistic enough so that disabled people on higher rates of benefit, and with additional related living costs, are able to accept the work. Community programme wages, particularly at non-supervisory level, and similarly low wages, exclude some disabled people.

5.3 Photographers

Very few freelance photographers, particularly disabled photographers, were interviewed. Photographers existing outside the formal arts structures are far more difficult to track down. They frequently work on a small scale with a small selection of clients, do not have an easily identified base and produce little or no publicity.

Towards the end of this project an increasing number of freelance photographers became known to the research team. Identification of freelance photographers interested in photography and disability takes place through networks of contacts which take time to establish. There is a substantial demand for a directory of disabled photographers, and a long-term strategy is needed to identify people for inclusion in updated versions of the photography and disability database begun

with this project.

Artists Newsletter Publications published A Code of Practice for Independent Photography during 1989. Its equal opportunity section encourages photographers to challenge discriminatory myths and recognise their important role in portraying under-represented individuals and groups. This suggests that contracts supported by public subsidy should be monitored by the funding bodies.

5.4 Vocational Training

Very few disabled people have received any formal training in photography. Physical and emotional access is largely absent. Exclusion may be a result of a training establishment or particular circumstances, such as personal living conditions. Only three disabled people were found who had either gained entry to or completed a photography course at degree level. There is little expectation that disabled people will qualify in photography: "If they enjoy it, fine. If they take home some of their pictures, even better. If they buy their own camera, marvellous. If they carry on after they leave, then that's really wonderful. At the end of the day, its not getting qualified photographers that's the aim".

Where a disabled person does a mainstream course, negotiations regarding examination arrangements and equipment may be painfully slow and discouraging, and information about available resources may be inaccurate. Funding for vital equipment may be refused on the grounds that it is suitable for use by all students. Examination arrangements may be unnecessarily restrictive, prohibiting the use of an assistance to carry out work under a student's direction.

Most leisure involvement in photography takes place in segregated workshops, through organisations like **Shape**, segregated schools, adult training centres etc. Very few local camera clubs have physical and emotional access. Encouragement to join mainstream photography work, where formal training exists, is generally low. Where a transition to or involvement in these organisations is sought, non-examined photography knowledge is often not given appropriate status.

Because there are so few disabled photographers, there are virtually no disabled tutors. The absence of role models for disabled people may act as further discouragement to disabled people wishing to pursue training. In response to inaccessible mainstream training, **CLIC** is formulating its own photography courses, initially to train its own members as tutors. It is hoped that in the longer term, this training will be recognised as a professional qualification. It is important to note that separate courses are a stage on the way to fully accessible, mainstream courses and not an end in themselves.

An increasing number of arts organisations are aware that many disabled people

do not have the experience and qualifications stipulated for a post due to earlier discrimination. Some organisations, particularly those controlled by disabled people, offer training as an integral part of the job, but often on an ad hoc basis. If a more formal approach which encompasses a greater range of skills and experience can be provided, it will benefit both the organisation and the individual's future work prospects, **Bradford Heritage Recording Unit** encourages its photographers to use the year's contract to work towards mounting an exhibition, and one of its disabled photographers has since gained a place to study photography at degree level.

An apprenticeship scheme at **Arts Integration Merseyside**, targeting disabled people, gave the apprentice an opportunity to explore openings in vocational training for disabled people and to gain workshop presentation skills.

5.5 Training and Information for Organisations

Several organisations are "desperate" for training and almost all express a definite need for it. There is much confusion over what is appropriate. Disability has long been subjected to medical and technical approaches, and this is mirrored in people's expectations of training. Courses are often set up in the hope they will demystify disability and provide unequivocal solutions to the 'problem of disability'. Training is often more highly valued when delivered by expert (non-disabled) professional workers.

Many organisations resist having any involvement with disabled people prior to receiving training. Yet the training requested is frequently not particularly useful or relevant to disabled people. As **Northampton Arts Development** puts it, "We need training in what we need training in".

Disability Awareness/Equality Training

Disability awareness/equality training seeks to replace norms and myths with the reality of the experience of disability, so participants have a sound basis for subsequent action. It also examines practicalities, such as employment procedures. Underlying it is the skill of facilitation and empowerment.

Disability awareness/equality training is a current trend, and varies considerably in quality. **Camerawork** and **Paddington Printshop** found their training "almost not tough enough". They would like an assessment of their own work to date and help in setting clear objectives. Other organisations' staff have found it challenging and relevant, enabling a political perspective on disability and a personal ability to act.

Elements of disability awareness/equality training can be introduced into all areas of an organisation's work. The **National Museum of Photography, Film and Television** holds workshops for teachers in photography as a campaigning

technique, selecting disability access as its theme.

There is a need for an organisation, such as the **British Council of Organisations of Disabled People**, to establish a forum of disability awareness/equality trainers and to coordinate a more strategic approach. This could include producing a register of trainers, a précis of past work, a synopsis of their approach and an indication of specialist interest areas.

Other Training

There is a high demand for training which gives information on impairments and needs. For the most part this is not appropriate. Disability awareness/equality training should provide an opportunity to identify a sensitive and appropriate approach to disability issues. It is the individual disabled person who is the expert on their particular needs and the person from whom information should be gained. Specific training may be appropriate in certain circumstances (e.g. learning British Sign Language), but it is only of real value if the philosophy of disability awareness/equality training underlies it.

There is a need for training for photography and administrative workers in setting up and coordinating apprenticeship schemes for disabled people, of the kind described in the Vocational Training Section.

For many organisations consultancy may be more appropriate than formal training, in order to set clear objectives with the organisations. This may be so for groups such as **Camerawork** and **Paddington Printshop**, or as a follow-up to disability awareness/equality training.

Information

Much of the specific information people require from training exists in reference materials, but it is frequently difficult to obtain or interpret. More accessible and accurate information is needed.

Paddington Printshop has undertaken to produce a manual on photography and disability and **Bristol Community Service Volunteers** aims to produce a book with workshop participants on photography projects involving people with learning difficulties. There is a need for these types of information to be available, and for an accurate, 'user-friendly' resource book for organisations to assess simply their access needs. Both the [Arts and Equality: An Action Pack for Arts Organisations](#) and [A Code of Practice for Independent Photography](#) should be distributed more widely.

A database is currently being compiled to provide information on disability and photography work, facilities and resources in England, as part of this research project. There is a great demand for this information, and such a database will

need regular maintenance and development.

General

Many organisations seek help from local authority advisors or rehabilitation workers as “the easiest route to someone who’s a specialist in the field”. Consultation should be with representative groups of disabled people. The assumption that all disabled people are experts on disability is false. Training and information should be available to all staff.

Many organisations have little or no money available for training or information-gathering. While training is occasionally arranged centrally with invited representatives from several organisations, it is most effective within a single organisation or where people’s work and needs are closely related. Funding bodies should make money available to organisations for appropriate training and information-gathering.

Occasionally, funding bodies will allocate money within the general category of disability. It is important that money potentially available to disability-controlled groups is not allocated to training non-disabled people. Instead, separate funding sources should be set up for such training purposes.

5.6 Publicity and Promotion

Most organisations are not very knowledgeable about how to reach disabled people with information. Advertising frequently only exists in printed form and is not widely available through the mainstream press or accessible venues. Financing wider availability can be difficult - “grants demand it, but do not fund it”. It is important that information reaches disabled people directly and is not filtered out by middle-tier agencies.

Few organisations explicitly welcome applications from disabled people in their advertising. Even when they do, response can be poor. Disabled people may still find that an organisation’s structure and work are irrelevant to their needs. They may need to be convinced that an organisation is genuine, so one instance of positive action will not be enough. Publicity generally contains little useful information on access provision, as discussed in section 5.1 on Access.

5.7 Workshops and Courses

Workshops are probably the main areas of involvement of disabled people in photography, although in practice the extent of their control varies considerably.

Photography workshops take place across a wide range of organisations, with different foci, including self-advocacy, decision-making, technical skills and representation debates. Self-advocacy and decision-making workshops are

mainly aimed towards people with learning difficulties, and workshops initiated by disabled people's organisations are particularly concerned with representation issues. Workshops that go beyond technique to explore themes and applications of photography are equally important.

Disabled people are not adequately included in further or higher education, and basic skills courses are still thin on the ground. Many disabled people are unfamiliar with workshops. Trainees at **Lanercost Photography Project** often observe sessions before subsequently becoming involved. **Lincoln Media Workshops** makes a pre-visit to groups with which it works so that tutors and participants can first meet socially.

Several organisations commented on the frustration of participants and tutors at the brevity of the workshops - "We've just got started when its time to end" - and the lack of follow-up work. Funding bodies need to recognise the time it takes to build confidence in workshop settings and to create new skills, particularly for people who have previously been excluded. Many groups also commented on the need for a high staff-to-participant ratio. **Courtlands School** found that the maximum possible group size was six pupils. Several other groups depended on volunteers to achieve the one-to-one ratio they require. Funding bodies must recognise the financial implications of staffing needs.

Outside social services institutions there are very few photography courses that meet disabled people's needs. Many organisations give poor physical access as a reason for excluding disabled people. Groups need to be encouraged to hold workshops off-site when their own facilities create major access barriers. Off-site work should exist as part of a strategy towards including disabled people throughout an organisations' activities.

CLIC is an organisation that does work to meet disabled people's needs, providing a valuable context in which disabled people can learn skills together, whilst working towards full control of the organisation by its members. **Camerawork** and **Northampton Community Arts** offer individual tuition. While separate groups can build on shared experiences, it is also important that disabled people can have full access throughout to mainstream photography organisations.

5.8 Joint Projects and Partnerships

Several organisations are involved in joint projects as part or all of their work. The balance of control is affected by which body made the initial approach.

Some mainstream arts organisations, recognising how little involved disabled people are in their work, have approached local disability groups, such as **Shape** to facilitate their contacts. Many of these organisations are not representative of disabled people. Some have used initial contacts to build strong links, working

with disabled people towards increased control of photography projects. **Camerawork's** 'A Sense of Self' exhibition is an example of this. **Matrix** works with **Gateway Youth Clubs** for young people with learning difficulties, extending participants' self-advocacy skills through the work, so that the project is increasingly directed by the participants.

Organisations setting up joint projects need to be certain that disabled people are choosing to become involved. There is a risk that this contact may be regarded as an end in itself, maintaining disabled people on the periphery of mainstream bodies.

Some joint projects emerged through an approach from a disability organisation wishing to concentrate specifically on the disability experience in their work. **Arts Integration Merseyside** set up the 'Disability: Self Image - Self Portrait' workshops and exhibition with **Open Eye Gallery** so that the gallery passed on photography skills, and disabled participants chose how to use those skills. This can lead to new ways of working. When the **Manchester Coalition of Disabled People** was ready, it approached **North West Arts** and the two worked in close consultation to set up the disabled people's arts conference and workshops. **Birmingham Disability Rights Group** and **Building Sights** went through a similar process when producing a disability awareness resource pack.

In both cases, mainstream organisations are having to learn to facilitate the work, accept direction from disabled people and pass on skills for disabled people's use. **BDRG** states "It's important to get basic politics right first. There's no point in people helping or being involved as a favour".

5.9 Facilities and Equipment

Making photographic facilities and equipment fully available to disabled people does not necessarily mean extra expenditure. A great variety of makes and designs is already on the market, and careful, imaginative choice from the available range is often adequate.

Where adaptations are needed it is impossible to anticipate every need of every possible user, and they are always best made in consultation with the individual concerned. Many organisations have devised their own simple equipment modifications. **CLIC** and **Courtlands School** have devised several effective and inexpensive adaptations using commercially available equipment and household and scrap materials. Some organisations have found useful collaboration with design students and with **REMAP** engineering panels which design one-off items of equipment.

While no darkroom can provide for every possible need, certain principles provide a sound guide. These include adjustable-height work surfaces, lever taps, room to manoeuvre, clear large-print instruction sheets and safe containers

for handling chemicals. Advice on appropriate design is available from a number of organisations which draw extensively on experience.

Not all workshops rely on using darkrooms. Some of the most interesting work is concerned with the use of existing photographs, or with simple cameras and cheap commercial development, or with simple studio lighting.

There is still relatively little written down about making facilities accessible and some groups such as **CLIC** and **Camerawork**, find a substantial amount of time is spent advertising on possible adaptations. **Paddington Printshop** and **The Disabled Photographers' Society** have documented some approaches to design, and **Posterngate Photography Workshop** and **B-Line Photographic Association** are working to co-produce an information pack on accessible darkroom design.

Organisations often use lack of adapted facilities as an excuse for not working with disabled people. A realistic action plan, such as those of **Camerawork** and **Posterngate Photography Workshop**, with adaptations happening in stages and with full consultation of disabled people is more useful. While recognising that current provision is not ideal, they are not allowing imperfect facilities to postpone the involvement of disabled people.

5.10 Photographic Exhibitions and Publications

A number of organisations and many individual photographers are as concerned with the distribution of photographic productions as they are with teaching or learning skills. In an effort to counteract limitations of mainstream imagery, they are aiming for wider circulation of alternative imagery. At the same time control over use of those images is sought by those who are represented.

Many bodies would value organised documentation of material - whether it be exhibitions, work sheets, publications, or archive photographs. Interest has been shown in information of a technical nature, ideas for workshops, examples of work in and out of photography organisations, and visual discussions of representation.

Arts Integration Merseyside, Battersea Arts Centre, Blackfriars Photography Project, Camerawork, CLIC, Impressions Gallery, Matrix and the **Photo Co-op** have all produced exhibition material, although much of it is not for public hire.

Camerawork, The Disabled Photographers' Society, Lanercost Day Centre, and **Paddington Printshop** all have printed material in preparation, including representation debates, documentation of projects, and disabled photographers' resource information. Matrix is building a photo-library to include images of disability.

The publication of a directory of published and exhibition materials, undertaken by the **Arts Council**, and distributed to clients by regional arts associations would encourage the inclusion of this work in future programmes of galleries and other organisations. The directory should also be made available to appropriate officers within the education authorities and social services departments.

5.11 Photographic Representation

Opinions and practices in the area of image production and use often conflict. Debates on photographic representation are fragmentary, and sometimes non-existent. On the whole it is organisations with photography as first priority which have become involved in debates in a practical manner. Exceptions include Disability Arts in London magazine and **The Spastics Society**.

The range of concerns encountered can be summarised as follows:

Who takes photographs?

This debate embraces what particular qualities are present in images produced by disabled people, and what relevance imagery of disabled people by able-bodied people has? **Disability Arts in London** has a policy of using only disabled photographers, and promotes employment of disabled people. **City Engineers** in Manchester produced an exhibition using non-disabled photographers, but controlled by a panel of disabled people. Some organisations prefer to publicise work without referring to disability - "or there's a risk of it becoming a freak show".

What is photographed?

Should disability be coincidental, concealed or explicit in an image? Is disability the main motive for it? Many disabled people feel that the disability angle is always present: "This is what this photograph is about, this is what I'm about. This is my experience, this is what I photograph from my perspective". For **Disability Arts in London** magazine it appears direct expression about disability is favoured - "It is our responsibility to make deliberate comment - where else can you see that?" **Format** makes disability explicit in its photographs in order to challenge traditional assumptions.

Why photograph?

Messages clearly vary according to the organisation's approach to disability. Both **Matrix** and **Format**, along with disabled people's organisations, seek to directly challenge stereotypes of disability. Work may act primarily as self-affirmation for disabled people or may be directed towards non-disabled people. **Disability Arts in London** magazine uses photographs to draw attention to the

text. Images are not currently translated in the magazine's audio copy. Where images are translated, the tape reader necessarily imposes an interpretation onto the image.

How are photographs distributed?

Disabled people's organisations, charities, the press, or gallery curators may use the same photograph differently. Various users will have divergent motives and the same image may appear in a range of contexts that will either empower or disempower disabled people. **Lanercost ATC** has found difficulty with local press interpretations of disabled people's work ('Pictures tell story of courage'). **Oldham Art Gallery** expressed concern that exhibitions can mislead the viewer if they are not conceptualised, through text or discussion. The majority of images are in monochrome. **Camerawork's** 'Sense of Self' exhibition used colour images to contrast with black and white documentary photography. Printing and paper quality vary according to an organisation's resources and priorities.

Who has control over the use of photographs?

A sequence of choices is made between the production and distribution of a photograph; from the photographer, to the art editor, or curator. Each has their own traditional artistic licence. Good practice depends on the level of commitment to the photographic subject by the person(s) in control of the image.

Arts Integration Merseyside avoids photographing workshop participants because of potential intrusion. Some organisations reported difficulties in persuading the local press to use images of disabled people at all, even when documenting a disability event. **Northern Shape** has found a conflict of interests in its exhibition between portraying disabled people as independent and encouraging funding. Some organisations have found difficulty in obtaining funding when working with particularly excluded disabled people. **Yorkshire Arts Association** includes 'non-disablist' images in its criteria for photography awards.

There remains concern over the way disabled people have been and continue to be represented, whether through absence of disability in photographic imagery, or the limited range of messages are given. Very little representation of disability by disabled people exists.

Workshops promoting representation debates use a variety of approaches. **Lincoln Media Workshops** use participants' family album photographs as a starting point for discussion. A similar exercise by **Matrix** revealed one participant to be completely absent from her family album, and initiated a longer-term plan to teach the skills to enable her to photograph her own family. Other work has included consideration of public images, absence from images, non-visible disability (David Hevey), documenting history of disability (**Impressions**

Gallery 'The Mind'), self-image, and disabled people taking control of images (**Camerawork** 'A Sense of Self').

This is an issue which will never be completely resolved. But progress is possible through continued debate. Quite simply, the more forums where this debate is discussed, the more progress will be made. Some immediate results could be achieved by the hosting of seminars by regional arts associations, in collaboration with appropriate disabled persons organisations, for publicists and designers working with clients in the region.

Contact should also be made, via the relevant department of the **Arts Council**, with local education authorities in order to discuss the production of educational packs tackling representation. LEAs should be encouraged to discuss this with teachers at INSET training seminars.

5.12 Finding Solutions

There is a general lack of information on existing solutions to the exclusion of disabled people from photography. Organisations with a long-term involvement of disabled people, such as **CLIC** and **Camerawork**, find a lot of their time is spent answering other groups' queries. An information resource and a network for organisations and photographers to swap ideas are needed, as is a coherent approach to disability issues among examination boards and other official bodies so that advice and decisions are not ad hoc or contradictory, as found by educational establishments.

Control by disabled people should be central to a network's organisation. One group reported withdrawing from a national network through isolation caused by "having to convince them that control by disabled people is necessary and right".

Networks can form a basis for informal discussion which may give rise to new initiatives. **In-Valid?** was established in this way. They can also provide support for organisations working for change, and motivate complacent groups. One organisation outside formal structures has received funding, but has since been "left to get on with it" in isolation.

The process within organisations of recognising particular needs and responding appropriately is central to any provision in which disabled people can work as equals. There are two main ways in which solutions need to be developed; firstly as part of general planning, and secondly as a response to a specific need. The extent to which an organisation can make abstract provision for a wide range of potential users has limits. Beyond a base level, it is provision for specific users which is important.

Paddington Printshop discussed its attitude. "I think you need a relationship with a person and a certain approach, being open and giving permission to state

your need, someone is going to listen to it and solve it with you". The most successful adaptations take place in an environment where emotional access allows a disabled person to state needs without fear of discrimination, and where there is a high level of consultation as part of the solving process. Paddington Printshop's Eliminating Shadows: A Manual on Photography and Disability is an introduction to creative solution: "Once it had been established that it was possible to think in a divergent way, I became aware what a simple thing it was".

Many organisations are wary of taking the risks involved in this kind of approach, and while waiting for the perfect plan achieve nothing at all. It is essential that, having consulted with disabled people, organisations take the first step that will open up new debates and possibly introduce new and exciting work.

Camerawork recognises potential difficulties and conflicts arising from its exhibition 'A Sense of Self', but by taking risks, has promoted open debate of the issues.

Disabled people have been disenfranchised for generations. True progress will only be achieved through a long-term commitment to change, allocation of resources, and the active involvement of disabled people in decision-making, either directly or in an advisory capacity. **Greater London Arts** is one of the few organisations to have approached this level of understanding through its insistence on a three-year plan from all its clients.

Management - Policies into Practice

The key to equality of opportunity is a commitment to disabled people. Equal opportunities statements are not in themselves sufficient. Statistical monitoring of employment, attendance and participation does not create equal opportunity. Realisable targets and timetables, which recognise the urgency and scale of disabled people's exclusion, need to be set. Policies must reach every level of an organisation, from touring to administration and staffing to public participation, and must be coordinated.

This generally means allocating additional time and resources. Revenue and project budgets need to take these costs into account. Proposals which omit such consideration should be questioned by funding bodies. Advice should be available to clients on how to make provision when applying for funding. Some RAAs now have arts and disability officers and advisers for this purpose, although it is essential that advice is issued in consultation with disabled people's organisations.

The greatest progress has been made among those organisations which have established consultation and collaboration with local disabled people's groups. Much of this contact has been the result of disabled people's lobbying. Mainstream organisations need to take responsibility for making the initial contact.

Disabled people should be represented in organisations' management committees. While individuals may represent their own opinion as committee members, it should not be assumed that they represent the disability community's interests unless they have been specifically designated by a disabled persons' organisation.

The **Arts Council's** 'Code of Practice on Arts and Disability' requires clients to prepare, discuss and implement an action plan by March 1988. Progress has been uneven, although most RAAs have attempted to meet this schedule. Some organisations, including groups working with disabled people, have no stated policy for their full involvement. Many clients have found the Code valuable, but lack practical and financial support in implementing it. Most concentrate on long-term changes, particularly in employment and management, to the exclusion of immediate measures. A balance is needed to ensure that organisations do not delay progress.

Many organisations are too narrow in their approach to creating equal opportunity. Changes need to be made which recognise the society-wide exclusion of disabled people, including inaccessible transport, lack of personal assistance and restricted educational opportunity. National and local government policy may have a bearing on an organisation's working methods. For example, changes in community care mean that many more people with learning difficulties will require access to facilities.

Equal opportunity policies need to be monitored using regular, formalised procedures. Monitoring should take place throughout an organisation and include staffing, management and audiences. It should also range from publicity and programming through to staff turnover. The **Ikon Gallery** is implementing a comprehensive equal opportunities policy with phased, targeted objectives drawn up between local disability organisations and its own council of management. Organisations need to approve a specific policy and objectives to ensure that disabled people's involvement is not dependent solely on individual staff members' commitment. Several organisations have lost strong initiatives where a particularly committed staff member has left. Some organisations extend beyond equal opportunities policies to positively target disabled people throughout their work in order to redress imbalances in opportunity.

Funding bodies often want to know what percent of an organisation's activities include disabled people. Although these numbers can be useful, they can also be very crude and not accurately reflect an organisation's sensitivity (emotional access). Many disabled people do not register as such for fear of discrimination. Therefore, their needs may go unrecognised.

Organisations do not need to make big statements, but should respond to needs sensitively and effectively. Funding and support organisations need to recognise

this in assessment and grant-aid criteria.

Confusion exists over whether policies are being targeted towards people with impairments or disabled people. What should be relevant to an organisation is an individual's particular needs. People with impairments are only disabled in the face of inadequate provision. Equal opportunities monitoring should concentrate on those people who define themselves as disabled.

The survival of arts and disability groups is currently dependent on their understanding of and conformity to existing funding structures. Newly-formed disability arts groups may find these structures inappropriate to their work. Groups may require additional to different support, advice and resources to develop their work. They do not require artistic direction. Disability arts are underdeveloped and do need 'pump-priming' or 'leverage' money from funding bodies; the former to initiate projects, and the latter to encourage other funders. In addition to the targeting of art form funding, there is a need for funding allocated specifically to disability arts. Funding criteria need to give priority to control by disabled people and to a project's contribution to disability culture rather than to traditional standards of artistic excellence. This is not to lower artistic standards, but to make way for the development of a disability aesthetic.

5.14 Regional Arts Association

Regional arts associations differ in size, constituency and approach. They are the front-line of arts funding in England and their policies and practice make a profound impact on the arts in their particular region. It is in their use of funds and interpretation of policy that particular arts enterprises flourish or perish.

So it is with photography and disability. The strength of independent photography within a region, and its commitment to work with disabled people are essential, as is the success of an RAA in developing partnerships with statutory and voluntary organisations.

North West Arts and **Lincolnshire and Humberside Arts** are just two associations confident about the future development of arts and disability, and disability arts in their area. They have both developed good links with disability organisations and individuals and are prepared to acknowledge the needs of disabled artists and individuals. The former works with organisations like the **Manchester Coalition**, the latter through its encouragement of **Artlink**, which promotes the RAA to disabled people and organisations, and vice versa.

RAAs have assimilated the Code of Practice on Arts and Disability, and in some cases have produced their own action plans or policies. These have produced greater involvement of disabled people in the management of an association, or as advisers to various sections. Some RAAs have established specific arts and disability budgets which operate alongside the implementation of the code of

practice within each art form. Disability awareness training has been undertaken by increasing numbers of staff in RAAs.

Despite these achievements, progress has been uneven. Some associations work towards the facilitation of arts and disability, and disability arts, in close collaboration with clients and local disability groups. In others, contact with even the local **Shape** organisation was tenuous, let alone with any groups controlled by disabled people. Some clients felt very isolated and unable to gain support from their RAA on work with disabled people. However, progressive RAAs are already providing a number of different role models which should greatly assist other organisations to develop arts and disability in their area. Similarly, the development of equal opportunities varies considerably. This is of crucial importance when clients can point to the associations record when assessing their own performance on equality of opportunity.

For the long-term development of arts and disability, including photography, the employment of disabled people and their involvement in the management of RAAs is a priority.

Photography itself may not always get the best deal within a RAA. Officers may have photography as part of a general visual arts portfolio. The predominance of documentary photography and confusion over representation debates may militate against the expansion of photography resources. RAAs need to work in partnership with disabled people's organisations and individuals to implement the A Code of Practice for Independent Photography. In many cases the RAA's funding will be the pump-priming necessary for long-term development to take place. Within photography, these partnerships are of absolute importance when developing photography centres and for the flow of information and advice required by clients to respond to demands from disabled photographers and individuals.

Continual negotiation with local authorities is also particularly important. In many cases the improvement of access and equality of opportunity can only be achieved with their cooperation. RAAs need to promote independent photography and especially the work of disabled photographers to local authorities and their region.

Promotion should not be confined to established channels, but be actively pursued with social services and education departments. Financial encouragement should be given to clients to include equality of opportunity for disabled people in their programme of work and development of facilities. This is best achieved through clear procedural practice, involving officer responsibility and earmarked budget heads.

For the long-term development of arts and disability, including photography, the employment of disabled people and their involvement in the management of

RAAs is a priority.

5.15 The Arts Council

The **Arts Council** is the funding body for the arts in England which supports the regional arts associations and other clients. The photography section of the **Arts Council** is developing its role in research and information. This report is an example. The Council has devolved most responsibility for establishing independent photography centres around the country to RAAs.

The term 'independent' photography is used by the Council to distinguish a sector of work from the dominant forms of commercial and amateur practice. The aims of its Photography Advisory Group include a number of points particularly relevant to photography and disability. Equality of access to all production, reproduction, distribution and archive facilities is a priority. So too is the creation of training opportunities for photographers and administrators, and the growth of a critical understanding of photography, essential in considering the representation of disabled people.

The **Arts Council** has also developed a Code of Practice on Arts and Disability, and produced a fairly comprehensive Arts and Disability Resource Pack distributed to regional arts associations and clients. RAAs often adapt this pack for distribution to their own clients. Many interviewees commented on the usefulness of the pack, but find that difficulties in implementing the Code of Practice have not been sufficiently dealt with. It is felt the pack could be improved by containing clearer information on provision of access details. (Existing information is comprehensive, but not simple to use). This should be done by consulting with disability organisations to devise a standardised method of recording access details. There is need for two levels of detail: a strip for use on all information where symbols representing different aspects of access are crossed off when not available and a sheet of detailed information available on request to be included with all job descriptions, annual reports, and where space allows.

The pack could also include information on equipment adaptations and technical resources. Clients need to put aside time in their yearly programme to assess their training needs and to plan and work towards full disability access. Without this, overstretched budgets and staff will not be able to predict the particular requirements of their work with disabled people. The resource pack could contain a checklist of planning and budgeting factors to be taken into account when involving disabled people. While some information is available, it is generally not readily accessible.

The **Arts Council** has also developed its work in arts and disability by setting up a monitoring committee composed primarily of disabled members. The committee has a difficult task as the criteria for the assessment of disability arts,

and arts and disability, projects remain unresolved. Unlike some RAAs, the **Arts Council**'s criteria include 'artistic excellence'. This means that while it may make 'special allowances' for work from underdeveloped areas of the arts, such as work by, with or for disabled people, any support for the creation of a disability aesthetic remains largely with organisations controlled by non-disabled people. As a major facilitator of such work, it is vital that the Council's criteria are clear and well publicised.

The **Arts Access Unit** has set up disability awareness/equality training for staff and clients, and practically based training for art-form staff and client groups. Unfortunately access to 105 Piccadilly where the Council is currently based is very limited. (Editor's note: The Secretary-General of the Arts Council has given us his assurance that the new headquarters in Great Tufon Street will be totally accessible to disabled people).

The commissioning, purchase and publication of work by, with and for disabled photographers are to transfer their photographic base from largely beginners-type workshops to the mainstream. Statutory, voluntary and commercial organisations all use photographs of disabled people. They should be encouraged to use photographs by independent disabled photographers.

There is a divergent level of commitment to disabled people within the printed media. While photography magazines which are clients of the **Arts Council** have a good editorial record, producing issues devoted to photography and disability, their wider equal opportunities commitment is also important. We recommend the use of training bursaries for disabled photographers and photography administrators in photography centres and workshops, and that bursaries also be advertised in magazines. We recommend action to facilitate union membership for disabled photographers working in the printed media. However, evidence of a reluctance by local newspapers to print photographs of disabled people indicates that the **Arts Council** should add its weight to the lobbies which exist (e.g. the **Manchester Coalition** and **London Disability Arts Forum**) to improve the representation of disabled people in the media.

The **Arts Council** should also produce a leaflet (similar in format to the Percent for Art leaflet), for publications and agencies regularly using photographers, pointing out their statutory obligations regarding the employment of disabled people, and offering advice on how to obtain work by disabled photographers.

6. CASE STUDIES

The following, brief case studies represent a selection of the 50 projects visited. They are categorised by the organisation's primary focus of work. Where possible each section contains contrasting groups to demonstrate a range of approach and development in photography and disability.

These case studies do not attempt to be representative of all photography and disability work in England, and inclusion is not necessarily a recommendation of an organisation's practice.

6.1 Arts and Disability Projects

Northern Shape

Northern Shape was established in 1984 and forms part of the **Shape** network. Funding is received from **Northern Arts** and local authorities in the region. Arts workshops and performances are initiated or promoted by **Northern Shape** in schools, homes, day centres, prisons, borstals, leisure facilities and hospitals, and a physical access survey of Tyneside's arts venues was commissioned in 1985. In addition to the metropolitan Tyne & Wear, work takes place in Cleveland, Durham, Cumbria and Northumberland. Disability arts groups such as ISIGN are actively encouraged by **Northern Shape**.

Photography has been used by the organisation since 1984 to document work. The consistent use of one freelance photographer has led to the issue of representation emerging from that photographer's relationship to his/her subjects, and a perceived need for the control of images by disabled users. Relocation to accessible premises is seen as a priority by **Northern Shape**.

Artlink

Artlink in Lincoln aims to "create greater equality and opportunity within the arts for people who are mentally or physically disabled, who have a sensory disability, are ill, elderly, or severely socially disadvantaged". Started in 1982 with funding from the **Carnegie Trust**, **Artlink** has a coordinator based in Hull and a project worker in Lincolnshire with RAA and local authority support. The project is part of the Shape network and disabled people are involved in the management of the project. Photography is being developed through workshops in day centres, segregated schools and residential rehabilitation centres in collaboration with **Lincoln Media Workshops** and joint work with **Posterngate Photography Workshop, Hull**.

Lincoln Media Workshops

Lincoln Media Workshops were established as an informal organisation of three freelance photographers in 1987, after they visited a photography project with disabled people.

They felt that their work with disabled people should embrace the experiences of participants and tackle issues such as self-image. Techniques include the use of participants' own photographs, photograms, portraits, self-portraits and chemograms. Preparatory work is thorough and the group work closely with the

staff of any centre they are working in.

Community Links in Camera (CLIC)

In 1978 **Community and Recreational Arts in Barnet (CRAB)** was approached by four disabled women interested in photography. The resulting workshops and touring exhibition “Don’t speak for me” created further demand for this area of work and a recent move to new darkrooms. **CLIC**’s work has enabled disabled people to practice photography independently, and members of the project have devised their own access-adaptations to equipment. Projects have included reportage on access to buildings, positive imagery of disability, nature studies, tape-slide work, touring exhibitions and reminiscence work.

6.2 Disability Arts Projects

Arts Integration Merseyside (AIM)

In 1983, after Merseyside’s **Disablement Resource Unit (DRU)** identified the need for a “Shape-type” organisation in the Liverpool area, **AIM** was set up to encourage integration between disabled and non-disabled people.

Progress was monitored by a special needs advisory group which evolved into a users’ committee, as **AIM** became staffed and controlled by disabled people. It exists primarily as an administrative base, hiring freelance artists and liaising between organisations and individuals. Photographic work has included a joint project with the **Open Eye Gallery** where disabled people set about exploring self-image and produced a touring exhibition, “Disability: Self-Image - Self-Portrait”. A disabled women’s photography project is also planned.

London Disability Arts Forum

The **London Disability Arts Forum (LDAF)** was formed in July 1986 after discussions involving both organisations of disabled people and disabled individuals in the arts. A development worker was appointed to help formulate **LDAF**’s constitution, promote disability arts, and research the cultural needs of disabled people. Involvement in photography has been through day events, where disabled photographers have exhibited, and through **Disability Arts in London** magazine where most photographs are by disabled people.

In-Valid?

In-Valid? was formed in 1984, using community arts activity to promote access issues, and it created a touring photographic exhibition as its first piece of work.

Ideas for projects mainly arise through open meetings and funds are provided by the local authorities, and local councils for voluntary service. **In-Valid?** is housed

in Bradford's community arts centre. Disability awareness training is undertaken in schools and community settings. Photography workshops are inspired by both current issues facing disabled people and by issues concerning the representation of disabled people.

Birmingham Disability Rights Group and Building Sights

Birmingham Disability Rights Group (BDRG) is staffed by one full-time and one part-time worker, both of whom have a disability. Their primary role is to represent the rights of people with disabilities, and **BDRG** is the consultative base for both the city council and the regional arts association. The organisation's work in disability awareness training led to the need for an accompanying exhibition. This brought **BDRG** into contact with **Building Sights** who are providing the photographic expertise. **Building Sights** has two workers who work closely with local adult education centres, producing exhibitions and accompanying issue-based talks. In this case **Building Sights** is working as a facilitator for **BDRG**.

6.3 Photography Projects

Camerawork

Camerawork (formerly the **Half Moon Photography Workshop**) has been based in the East End of London since 1976 and employs up to eight members of staff. It consists of a gallery, large darkroom and finishing spaces. A programme of exhibitions, workshops, courses, events, and darkroom hire is undertaken by **Camerawork**. Until 1985 Camerawork Magazine was produced on the premises, which along with touring exhibitions such as "No Access" and "Visions of the Blind", broke new ground in photography and disability. A structured development plan has resulted in a partially adapted darkroom and a darkroom worker with responsibility for disability provision. **Camerawork**, in consultation with disabled people, has been active in promoting debates on the representation of disability as with the "Representing Disability" day in 1987 and "A Sense of Self" exhibition in July 1988. Outreach work has included segregated schools, Tower Hamlets Social Services, day centres, and Newham Disability Employment Group.

Blackfriar's Photography Project

Blackfriars' Photography Project is an established South London project which runs an extensive range of classes and workshops, and produced work for exhibition and publication.

Until 1985 inaccessible premises meant that disability-related work was done as outside commissions, but since the project moved to new premises with accessible equipment, it works with other disability and photography projects

both in, and outside the building. Staff would like to act as facilitators, providing a range of resources to disabled people and projects: space to meet, exhibitions and tape-slide shows, tutors, and advice. The project is responsive and develops work in consultation with disabled people and disability welfare agencies.

Posterngate Photography Workshop

Posterngate Photography Workshop in Hull is a regional photography centre based in a city council building with a gallery and photographic facilities on the first floor. The project's outreach work with disabled people has developed from work with disabled students of a local FE college. **Posterngate Photography Workshop's** management committee includes two members of **B-Line Photographic Association for the Disabled**, attached to a local employment scheme. The project is working with disabled people designing a darkroom to be situated at **B-Line**, and will have ramp access to a basement itself in the future.

6.4 An Arts Centre

Projects UK

Projects UK in the 'Theatre Village' area of Newcastle Upon Tyne reopened in a newly converted building in 1988, and is involved in commissioning artists, producing exhibitions, publications and records. There are production facilities for sound and photography. The building is fully accessible by lift and all darkrooms are designed with wheelchair users in mind, giving access to colour, black and white, 35mm, and 5" x 4" facilities. **Projects UK** is a limited company with charitable status and a voluntary board of management. There are six staff including a photography worker.

6.5 Community Arts Projects

Byker Photographic Workshop

Byker Photographic Workshop is a community photography project situated in the (award winning) Byker Wall housing project in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne. The workshop is a public resource and a training centre. It offers workshops and exhibits photography. It is run by a management committee of 12-15 regular users, but with no particular written policy. While the darkrooms are accessible, with equipment designed for use by disabled people, work with disabled has not developed beyond three existing members of the workshop.

Lincoln Community Arts

Lincoln Community Arts (LCA) came about when a local community arts worker obtained city council funding for its arts team. The team's building has limited wheelchair access and the darkroom had to be sacrificed to the need for

administrative space. However, most of its work takes place outside the building; much of it is project-based and undertaken jointly with local groups. This has included a tape/slide presentation with the local **MIND** group and with **Club 87** from Lancaster Day Centre. **LCA** works with **Artlink Lincoln** and looks to base projects in buildings with good access.

Northampton Arts Development

Northampton Arts Development (NAD) is one of the few projects undertaking one to one work with users to compensate for lack of mainstream opportunities available to them. **NAD** emerged in 1984 from a development corporation to become an independent borough-funded company working in the 'rough end of town', employing two full-time and one part-time workers. In addition to their one-to-one work there is a full range of local activities including community publications, local festivals and workshops (including work with the Northampton Council for the Disabled Festival). The project prioritises disadvantaged people including disabled people. This has led to work with a local centre for disabled people and a play scheme with children with learning difficulties.

Despite having a fully-trained photographer on the staff, limited darkroom access (shared with an "unsympathetic" camera club), and a heavy workload curb the amount of photographic work done. **NAD** hopes to relocate to larger premises which will solve many of its access problems.

6.6 Galleries

Oldham Art Gallery

Oldham Art Gallery is a local authority gallery running a three year programme of events, including performance-base art, an exhibition programme, and a series of workshops. The gallery has cameras available to community groups. It is also the only gallery in the area with a permanent photography space and collection. Exhibitions are produced in series, each staying for eight to twelve weeks. The Gene Lambert exhibition was part of a series which included Marie Damar, Edith Tudor-Hart (who worked on Picture Post and produced photography with disabled children between the 1930s and 50s), Nancy Honey (a personal documentary) and 'The Mind' (from **Impressions Gallery**).

Wheelchair access to the Victorian building is difficult, although possible, and funding is being sought to make major improvements. The gallery uses accessible community centres and darkrooms for workshops, and the Exhibitions Officer (Outreach) is based at a local accessible community centre every Tuesday.

The present Exhibitions Officer has had a long-term commitment to work with disabled people in the arts. This has led to both a concern about the relationship

of disabled artists to the mainstream and the difficulty of persuading the establishment that work with disabled people does not simply mean physical access.

The **Artability Group** of disabled people at Oldham was set up in November 1987 with three years' funding from the Department of the Environment. A local disabled woman works part-time compiling a list of venues and organising events and activities, including photography workshops.

Photography is often used primarily as documentation, for example when a day centre followed the progress of a local mural project via photography and video. The photographer was a technician directed by people from the day centre. Gene Lambert's exhibition was accompanied by contrasting self-image/self-portrait work produced by local disabled people.

The gallery is producing an equal opportunities policy, and there is some demand for staff training, often for simple things such as the way exhibitions are hung. At **Oldham Art Gallery** there was some local opposition to involvement of the community, but the gallery has at present the highest attendance figures since 1980 - "You don't have to convince the public, but the arts establishment".

Impressions Gallery

Impressions Gallery was the second photographic gallery to be established in England (1972) moving to central York during 1976. It was initially funded by the **Arts Council**, later **Yorkshire Arts**. It is not one of its largest clients and has up to 7,000 visitors each month.

It is primarily exhibition space with a darkroom, but it also holds workshops and talks, including some at community centres and hospitals. Physical access is very limited.

An Education Officer was appointed in 1985 to develop an educational and outreach programme. This began through work with local teachers and community centres and included people with learning difficulties. Other disabled people were not targeted, but became involved indirectly.

The recently appointed director of **Impressions Gallery** has taken a deeper interest in work with people with learning difficulties and in particular their moves from institutions to community care. Two photographs were commissioned to research the historical representation of people with learning difficulties in an attempt to escape the "35mm, grainy, reportage type work" of most documentary photography. "The Mind" touring exhibition resulted. In addition to imagery and text from the research (including slides of the Rake's Progress, medical drawings and photographs, plus local photographs of a 19th century home for mentally ill people), tableaux commented on charity photography.

The exhibition was very popular. Many groups of people with learning difficulties, plus doctors, nurses and psychiatry students attended. The comments book is full of an ongoing debate between many of these visitors about the exhibition and staff thought it was **Impressions Gallery's** "best exhibition to date".

It was an expensive exhibition to mount and the cost had to be met entirely from the exhibition budget. Not only was no special financial help available from arts organisations, but regular sponsors would not fund the exhibition because of its subject matter. However, "The Mind" has initiated work which the gallery hopes will lead to a local arts and disability network and the photographer hopes to follow up by working with smaller groups of people met through the exhibition.

The gallery itself is moving to a less expensive location which will also be more accessible and allow development of work with disabled people. Lack of staff time and resources restrict work with disabled people. The Education Officer felt that an "Artlink-type promoter" in the area would make his job much easier, and enable more work to be taken on.

Ikon Gallery

The **Ikon Gallery** was set up twenty-five years ago by Birmingham artists, and has grown from a small-scale enterprise to a major gallery. It is funded by the **Arts Council, West Midlands Arts** and the city council and has over 1,000 visitors per week. It is primarily a public platform for living artists. Over the last twelve years it has organised regular workshops, seminars and talks, and gallery tours which have included **Artlink**, local hospitals, day centres and special schools.

Photography is one element of the total programme and therefore occupies only a portion of the work of the Director, Exhibitions Officer and Education Officer. In the past there was a perception of fine art photography being suitable for the gallery, but the **Ikon Gallery** feels that of all the visual art forms it knows least about photography and related issues.

Physical access to the basement of the building is poor and the gallery has taken advice on how to improve it.

The education and touring programme arose out of discussions about the gallery's roles in Birmingham, including access for disabled people. **Ikon Touring** has included laminated exhibitions of photographs at hospitals and day centres, and an exhibition for people with visual handicaps (in consultation with the **Royal Institute for the Blind**).

Ikon Gallery is concerned to make contemporary visual art available to all people and is aware of "home truths" (such as having had no disabled artist

exhibiting in the gallery). This led to an “acute awareness of the need to focus greater attention upon the needs of people with disabilities”.

The gallery is implementing a comprehensive equal opportunities policy with phased, targeted objectives and in broad consultation with organisations which represent the interests of disabled people (such as Artlink and Birmingham Disability Rights Group), and internally with its Council of Management.

Its aim, over the next two years, is for full physical access for public and staff, equal opportunities monitoring by a sub-committee of the Council of Management (using percentage targets), and one member of staff to be specifically responsible for work with disabled people.

Museum of Modern Art

The **Museum of Modern Art**, Oxford, holds exhibitions, workshops and lectures, and “Special Needs Projects”. The museum has no permanent collection, but holds six exhibitions per year across the visual arts. Regular photography exhibitions include a local open submission exhibition in the café area and an accompanying lecture series.

The museum is situated in an old brewery. Physical access is reasonably good for the public, but there is no wheelchair access to the staff areas. Public access details are included in all literature and advertisements.

The museum has education, and more recently, community programmes based on their current exhibition. These are run in collaboration with local organisations, including **Southern Artlink**, **Courtyard Day Centre** and **Kidlington Adult Training Centre**. **Artlink** has co-funded projects.

The museum targets disabled people in its education programme policy statement and in an employment application form which positively encourages applications from disabled people. Areas for further action are disability awareness training which would be the first stage in achieving employment of disabled people, involvement in management, and an appreciation of the needs of disabled people when designing exhibitions.

6.7 A Museum

National Museum of Photography, Film and Television

The museum in Bradford opened in 1983 and houses the **National Science Museum’s** photography collection. “A mixture of science, art, media studies, education - a multi-museum”.

Occasional surveys are taken of visitors to the museum. It has a local and

regional, rather than tourist-based, audience. Audience surveys do not attempt to assess the number of disabled users.

Its team of 80 staff maintains nine permanent display galleries, four temporary exhibition galleries, the largest cinema screen in Britain, a photographic archive, work with schools and colleges, and a bookshop and coffee bar. It is open six days a week.

Groups of disabled people, particularly people with visual impairments or learning difficulties, frequently visit the museum with non-disabled leaders who have previously checked out the exhibits. Groups from segregated schools and training centres regularly use the museum for social education.

The Education Department expresses an interest in working with disabled people, although it feels that policies such as community care have further discouraged involvement. "They are no longer in a structure where planned visits are arranged by instructors. Even if they've come here in the past, that's not enough to ensure they'll come back under their own steam and use the place as ordinary visitors". The museum may use an outreach worker in the future to encourage underrepresented groups of users.

Within its Education Department, a programme exists for teachers to learn photography as a campaigning technique. Physical access has been used as a theme, and several teachers have repeated the theme with their pupils.

Wheelchair access has been improved considerably over several years, and plans are being considered to install a lift and an inductive loop for deaf people.

Most museum publicity contains information on wheelchair access. Consultation on disability matters is taken with the local authority adviser "the easiest route to someone who's a specialist in the field".

6.8 A Photo Agency

Matrix

Matrix is a two-woman partnership in Leeds set up in 1986 on the Enterprise Allowance Scheme. It provides education and training in photography, commissioned work in the equal opportunities field and an equal opportunities photo library. It holds integrated workshops, targeting young disabled women as participants, and ensuring wheelchair access to a minimum of 50% of venues.

Matrix is concerned primarily with photography as an art and documentary form, using it to teach skills and explore issues of representation. It also recognises a subsidiary role in practising and extending self-advocacy skills, being acutely aware of self-image issues throughout its work. Its photo library holds images of

politically active disabled people.

Self-employment means development time is unpaid, and funding problems have led to short-term projects. "It is frustrating to feel that a workshop has really just got started when it's time to end".

Matrix intends taking on another member of staff, and will advertise specifically for a disabled woman. A six-month research post is also proposed to produce a resource pack on the history of disability-oppression, and an equal opportunities video is being produced with **Leeds Polytechnic**.

6.9 An Oral History Project

Bradford Heritage Recording Unit

The **Bradford Heritage Recording Unit (BHRU)** was set up in late 1983 to document Bradford's history through the stories of local people. It produces touring exhibitions, books and calendars. Themes covered include domestic life 1910 to 1950, the textile industry, childhood experiences of immigration, women and home and work, festivals and health provision.

Where disabled people are the subjects of documentary work, this tends to be coincidental. "We haven't asked them as disabled people, because we didn't feel we should make them feel disabled. We just do everybody a life story, and so if they want to talk about their disability then that's fine".

Disabled employees have tended to join **BHRU** via personal contact, and their physical needs are met by colleagues, sometimes on a rota basis, as access to most of the building is poor. **BHRU's** future is uncertain owing to changes in its funding arrangements.

6.10 Publications

Disability Arts in London

Disability Arts in London magazine started in 1986, jointly produced by **Arts Media Group**, **Artsline** and the **London Disability Arts Forum**. It provides wide coverage and listings of Disability Arts, reviews arts events, covers access provision and activities, and carries job advertisements. The majority of magazine content is by disabled contributors.

Photographs are used in the magazine as a way to lead into writing, but images cannot be 'translated' for the audio tapes editions.

DAIL's criteria for selecting photographs include that wherever possible work by disabled photographers will be used. Judgements on the basis of "quality" are

made and there is a perceived need for training specifically for disabled photographers. Most of the magazine's images are of disabled people, and its aim, through the writing and the pictures, is to convey the image of independent people. Images of people looking happy about what they are doing, particularly in a social context, are sought.

While some of the contributing photographers would like to show their complete range of work in the magazine, regardless of whether or not it has a "disability content", others feel the disability aspect is always present. "This is what this magazine is about, this is what I'm about, this is my experience, this is what I photograph from my perspective, I want this to go in the magazine." The magazine says "It is our responsibility to make deliberate comment about disability... where else can you see that?"

Paddington Printshop

Paddington Printshop is a printing organisation using photographic processed extensively in its work. Based in West London, it has grown to specifically encompass provision for disabled people, particularly addressing individual needs. Its Manual of Photography and Disability suggests approaches to design and adaptation of equipment and facilities.

Research and development work with simple practical applications has included setting up a fully accessible darkroom and equipment. Much of the access is created through basic adaptations of existing equipment, in consultation with an occupational therapist. The results have encouraged more creative thinking - "You're simply saying - let's spend five minutes on seeing how we can make sure Nancy can lift this screen from there to there, and what's lying around that would allow us to do that". Prototypes of this equipment have since been sold to a London youth club and a bookshop in Dominica.

The Printshop believes approached to photography are distinct. In photography the raw commodities are already available - there is no need to invent a camera. Instead, basic questions remain to be asked: what research has been done? Who has what equipment? To what specification has it been adapted? How do you create an environment that could actually work comfortably for disabled people without having to make big statements?

6.11 A School

Courtlands School

Courtlands School in Bristol is attended by about 75 physically and sensorially disabled pupils between the ages of 11 and 16, from throughout Avon. The school core curriculum of Maths, English, Biology, etc is sited at a lower academic level than mainstream education, with few children taking public

examinations, and with greater concentration on arts subjects and skills for daily living - Drama, Photography, Cookery etc. Teachers take children for a range of subjects.

Photography classes originated in 1982 when a photographic record was made of a school holiday. Many children became involved, including those who have difficulty using other media. The following academic year it became part of the curriculum.

During weekly classes a theme is taken, including portrait work, puzzle pictures, and experimental work on shutter speeds, often extending beyond the classroom.

Some older children are involved throughout a photographic project. Most children help with parts of the process, such as timing, or focusing the enlarger. **Courtlands School** shares some projects with a neighbouring comprehensive school and has exhibited at the **F-Stop**, Bath and the **Arnolfini**, Bristol.

Very occasionally a pupil takes an examination in Photography (City & Guilds), although academic qualification is not the main aim. "If they enjoy it, fine; if they take home some of their pictures, even better; if they buy their own camera, marvellous; and if they carry it on after they leave school, then that's really wonderful. At the end of the day it's not getting qualified photographers that's the aim".

There are six children in each photography class of 90 minutes. Funding is allocated on a curriculum basis, putting major constraints on the amount of work which can be produced. (On photography visits each pupil is only able to take two or three photographs).

Although each class of pupils has a variety of needs, very few adaptations were needed. Holding the camera was the most common problem, and tripods, minipods, Meccano-type structures have all been used as solutions. Release buttons and electronic switches are simple methods for shutter release. A pupil with visual impairment used an auto focus camera and was immediately able to point at any source of noise.

Environmental access is a perennial problem when travelling beyond the school, as is finding adults who can legally take responsibility outside the school.

6.12 Colleges

Vauxhall College of Further Education

This South London college runs GCSE courses for students aged 16 and upwards. In 1987 a disabled student enrolled on the "New Start Media Group"

course for mature students aiming to take GCSEs in Photography and Film Studies in summer 1988. Her tutor spent half of the first term researching with her the most appropriate equipment, with advice from the **Photo Co-op**, **Camerawork** and **CLIC**. The student uses a wheelchair and has limited manual dexterity so it was planned to purchase a camera and a De Vere enlarger with base board controls. Grant aid was refused on the grounds that it was standard equipment and could be used by able-bodied students. Funding was eventually found from within the college.

The student also requires an assistant in practical sessions and double staffing is not funded. The examining board stated that the practical element of the photography exam had to be done unaided, although this was later found to be incorrect. It took a term and a half to overcome these problems and sort out a basic working structure.

Nelson & Colne College of Further Education

Nelson & Colne College runs City & Guilds, GCSE and summer school courses. Their resources include a large workroom with darkroom alongside. There are several enlargers and a colour processor.

The summer school has run for thirteen years specifically for sixty disabled children. Photography is one of many activities and a ratio of almost one to one staff/children is available through student volunteers. Funding is found from institutions, such as churches and local industry, to sponsor children. Materials expenses create limitations, but children have photographs to take home at the end of the course.

After completing the summer school some older children have continued to the college foundation course, City & Guilds and GCSE. One student is currently aiming to work as a landscape photographer. The City & Guilds evening course runs for four years, includes theory and practice, and can fill the gap between amateur and professional practices. Students who complete, receive membership of **The Royal Photographic Society**. Continuous assessment and project-based portfolio work are central to the course.

6.13 Adult Training Centres

Adult training centres (ATCs) are set up by social services departments to provide vocational and life-skills training to people with learning difficulties who do not have access to mainstream employment. Of several thousands of ATCs in England, only two working with photography were identified. ATCs appear to be very isolated from local, regional and national arts resources, and are more likely to align with social services than arts institutions.

The ATCs arts work (and that of other organisations involved with people with

learning difficulties) centres on developing decision-making skills, with arts production a very secondary aim.

Lanercost Photography Project

Lanercost Adult Training Centre is based in Southmead, Bristol, and funded by Avon Social Services. Breakthrough is a Community Service Volunteers (CSV) project providing training for people with learning difficulties. The **Lanercost Photography Project** is a joint project between **Lanercost ATC** and **CSV Breakthrough**. The project has 20 regular members, and meets for an afternoon each week.

Trainees often observe the project before becoming involved. The prime aim is “to actually put the decision-making in the trainees’ hands, so they’re in control”. The staff of three photographers, with several Lanercost staff and volunteers, means that instruction can take place on a one-to-one basis. A tangible and structured development approach is established, including visits to a local theatre to experiment with lighting and to create a life-sized pinhole camera-cum-darkroom which can be entered to observe and experiment with the mechanics of photography.

According to one of the workers, “photography is useful because it’s about ways of looking at things and what you think about things, how you see yourself, how you want things to look, but it’s also about giving people more of an understanding of what goes on (light hitting paper, chemicals, things like that). And it’s about making choices and decisions and being in control”.

Participants have recently been experimenting with composition, choosing scenes from magazines and books, and recreating them using themselves and objects, and then photographing them. The project has almost no funding, and uses cameras loaned by the CSV Media Resources Unit. It takes place at the ATC art room, although staff feel an independent display space and darkroom would increase its potential.

There is concern about publicising exhibitions as being by people with learning difficulties because of “the risk of it being treated as a freak show”.

Nene Adult Training Centre

Nene Adult Training Centre on the edge of Northampton has 170 trainees and 18 instructors. Trainees are involved in either activities or an occupation, or a combination of the two. Activities include sport, arts, gardening, and social skills. Occupations for men include manufacturing paving stones or firewood, and for women, soap packing. Facilities include workshops, sports hall/auditorium, recreation room, arts rooms and kitchen area.

The photography group was started in 1983 by two instructors who are amateur photographers. They produced a slide show of ATC work and have since continued to photograph events and activities to show visitors and parents, and for display around the centre. A photography resource pack has been produced for health education training, and trainees are encouraged to bring photographs from home into communications classes.

A darkroom was set up and equipped in a storage cupboard. Most photography, particularly developing and printing, is produced by the instructors, but trainees are able to use the darkroom in supervised groups of four, first observing the process, and then trying themselves. No funding exists for materials, and prints are sold to trainees to compensate, but worries about wastage of materials inhibit the staff from involving trainees more.

All instructors at the Nene teach several subject areas on a full timetable which limits the time available for photography. They are wary of accusations of malpractice. The structure and management of Nene ATC presents difficulties for staff enthusiastic to develop photography in the region via the regional arts association would lead to more, and better, photography practice at the centre.

ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS VISITED

Artlink, Lincoln
Arts Council Photography, Arts and Disability Training sections
Arts Integration Merseyside (AIM), Liverpool
Battersea Arts Centre, London
Birmingham Disability Rights Group (BDRG)
Blackfriars Photography Project, London
Building Sights, Birmingham
Byker Photographic Project, Newcastle
Cambridge Darkroom
Camerawork, London
Chances, Atherton
Community Links In Camera (CLIC), London
Community Service Volunteers, Bristol
Courtlands School, Bristol
David Cross, photographer, Cambridge
Disability Arts in London (DAIL)
Greater London Arts
Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People
David Hevey, photographer, London
Ikon Gallery, Birmingham
Impressions Gallery, York
In-Valid?, Bradford
Lanercost Adult Training Centre, Bristol
Lee Centre, London

Lincolnshire and Humberside Arts, Lincoln
Lincoln Community Arts
Lincoln Media Workshops
Link Thamesdown Community Arts, Swindon
London Disability Arts Forum (LDAF)
Matrix, Leeds
Museum of Modern Art, Oxford
National Museum of Photography, Film and Television, Bradford
Nelson and Colne College, Nelson
Nene Adult Training Centre, Northampton
Northampton Arts Development
Northern Shape, Newcastle
North West Arts, Manchester
Oldham Art Gallery
Paddington Printshop, London
Keith Pattison, photographer, Newcastle
Posterngate Photography Workshop, Hull
Projects UK, Newcastle
Queen's Hall, Hexham
Shape, London
Swindon Media Arts Lab
Vauxhall College of Further Education, London
Yorkshire Arts, Bradford

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We can speak for ourselves, Cooper and Hersov, National Bureau of Handicapped Students, 1986

RESEARCH BRIEF

PHOTOGRAPHY AND DISABILITY PROJECT

The Arts Council, in conjunction with Shape, is to initiate a Photography and Disability research project, which may be followed by seminars, training courses, conferences or publications depending on revealed needs. In December 1985 Council launched its Code of Practice on Arts & Disability which it is encouraging all of its revenue clients to adopt. Each has been asked to propose an action plan to begin to implement after April 1987. A comprehensive Resource Pack was provided free of charge to all clients and a Directory of Arts & Disability Organisations & Projects has also been prepared by the Information Section.

The need for a research project in photography is suggested by the fact that although the Resource Pack and Directory contain much useful general information, there is very little that is specific to photography. Furthermore the forthcoming Directory of Independent Photography will include over 40 organisations that claim to specifically target disabled people with their programmes.

A researcher will be employed to look into work in photography being done

by, and with, people with disabilities throughout England and to consider a number of issues which might include:

- a) working with people with disabilities, and about the issues of concern to them
- b) exhibitions by people with disabilities, and about the issues of concern to them
- c) photography as a stimulus for discussion, reminiscence
- d) the value of the reading lists or other resources on representation of disabilities and stereotypes
- e) access to information, resources, training etc for people with disabilities either on a professional or non-professional basis
- f) darkroom and equipment design
- g) publicising the availability of equipment, facilities etc
- h) funding sources

A small steering group will be set up to establish the parameters of the research and to consider appropriate consequent action. Full consultation with disability organisations and disabled people will be essential at all stages.

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