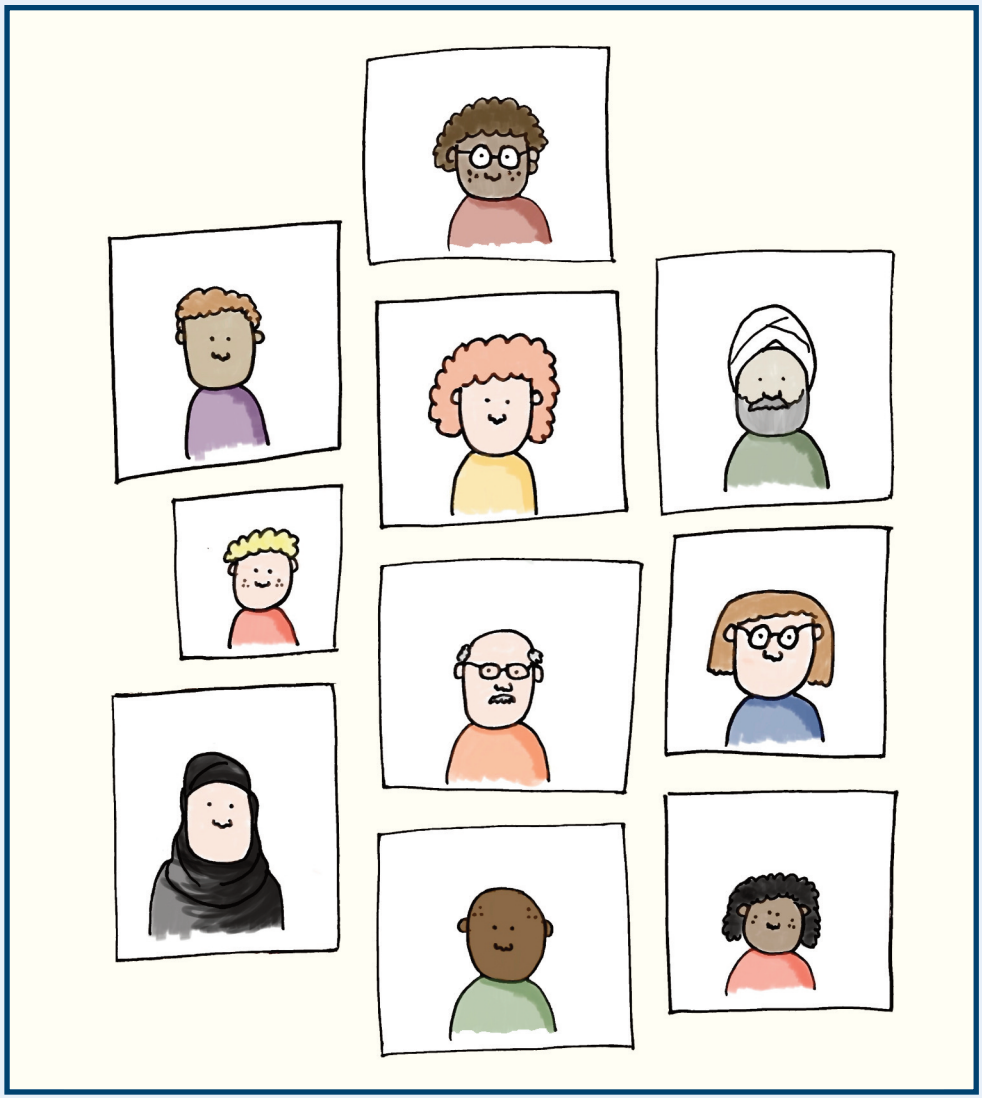
The Dyslexia Handbook 2021



Edited by **Helen Goodsall**

Managing Editor **Sue Flohr MBE**

British Dyslexia Association

The Dyslexia Handbook 2021

British Dyslexia Association

Dyslexia Action

Training and Professional Development

A leading provider of specialist online training courses in the field of dyslexia and specific learning difficulties for teaching and education support professionals.

A selection of our courses includes:

- Level 4, 5, and 7 CPD units, awards, and certificates
- Level 5 SpLD Teacher/Practitioner Qualification - Diploma Strategic Teaching Support for Dyslexia and Literacy Qualification (CPD or Fast-Track Route)
- Level 7 SpLD Teacher/Practitioner and Level 7 SpLD Assessor Postgraduate Qualifications
- Courses for International Education Professionals

dyslexiaaction.org.uk / 01784-222304

The Dyslexia Guild

LITERACY SPECIALISTS • TEACHERS • ASSESSORS

Professional membership body and forum network for specialist teachers and assessors.

- It is open to all those with a general interest in dyslexia and specific learning difficulties (SpLD)
- Access professional resources, support, education, and advice e.g. specialist library/ National Dyslexia Resource Centre
- Become listed in our 'professional' directory with designatory letters/membership grades
- The Dyslexia Guild is also an SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC) APC awarding body

dyslexiaguild.org.uk / 01784-222342

10% Shop discount

Applies to Guild members and Training delegates

Dyslexia Action Shop

A one-stop-shop to access the most popular psychological assessment tests and educational resources.

dyslexiaactionshop.co.uk / 01784-222339

British Dyslexia Association

Training that makes a difference

At the British Dyslexia Association, we strive to create a dyslexia friendly society. We have been experts supporting people with dyslexia since 1972 and we won't stop until everyone with dyslexia is supported to thrive.

Our Training

We are the UK's leading training provider in dyslexia, dyscalculia and other specific learning differences.

Whether you want support on how to spot the signs of dyslexia in your classroom or become a qualified assessor, we offer a range of **training that makes a difference.**

We have a huge range of online, bespoke and in-person training to increase knowledge and awareness of specific learning differences that will help you better support your students. You can also become an expert with our more advanced training at Level 5 and Level 7, so whether you would like to be an assessor or specialist literacy and numeracy teacher we've got flexible online options to suit your needs.

Becoming a Specialist

Are you looking to develop your specialist skills and become an expert in literacy and numeracy difficulties?

We offer accredited Level 5 and Level 7 training to help teachers to become qualified in dyslexia and dyscalculia intervention and assessment.

All training is offered in a flexible online format so you can fit it around your schedule.
Our programmes include:

- Level 5 Certificate in Dyslexia: Literacy, Support and Intervention
- Level 5 Certificate in Dyscalculia and Maths Learning Difficulties: Support and Intervention
- Level 7 Diploma in Dyslexia: Assessment and Intervention

If you would like to learn more about our accredited Level 5 and 7 training please contact **L5cert@bdadyslexia.org.uk** **L5dysc@bdadyslexia.org.uk** or **L7dip@bdadyslexia.org.uk**

CPD Opportunities

To increase your awareness of dyslexia, literacy skills, screening and dyscalculia and find out how you can build up to a Level 2, 3, or 5 qualification, take one of our virtual training courses, open now for bookings this term.

Find out more and book direct at
https://bit.ly/3e2a8TS

Can't make any of these dates? Study at your own pace through our eLearning courses:
https://bit.ly/3pTDoCC

We also offer group training for the whole team. Why not consider our onsite options, training on-demand to meet the needs of your team?

Contact our Onsite Training for expert advice on: **onsitetraining@bdadyslexia.org.uk**

British Dyslexia Association

Virtual Literacy Conference: Interactive teaching for the digital age

On 4 March we will be holding our annual literacy conference. This year our focus is on literacy for the digital age. With more and more teaching being carried out online it can be difficult to find ways to engage with pupils.

This conference is designed to give you the tools and the confidence to make online learning effective and engaging for all.

Find out more and book your tickets at
https://bit.ly/3nLtbWX

Virtual International Conference 2021: Advancing Dyslexia and Dyscalculia

Taking place **20-21 May**, the International Conference brings together hundreds of researchers and professionals from around the globe. It gives delegates the opportunity to learn from leading thinkers in dyslexia and dyscalculia research.

Find out more and book your tickets at:
http://bit.ly/3cwCAeT

The Dyslexia Handbook 2021

Edited by **Sue Flohr MBE & Helen Goodsall**

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British Dyslexia Association

The British Dyslexia Association

This handbook is available in accessible formats, for purchasers of the book only, from **bdashop@bdadyslexia.org.uk**. The BDA permits print impaired people to scan excerpts for personal use only.

The Dyslexia Handbook 2021

A compendium of articles and resources for people with dyslexia, their families and those professionals who support them

Edited by **Sue Flohr MBE** and **Helen Goodsall**

Published by
The British Dyslexia Association

Editorial Note

The views expressed in this book are those of the individual contributors, and do not necessarily represent the policy of the British Dyslexia Association.

The BDA does not endorse the advertisements included in this publication.

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of information given in this handbook, the BDA cannot accept responsibility for the consequences of any errors or omissions in that information.

In certain articles the masculine pronoun is used purely for the sake of convenience.

British Dyslexia Association.

The Dyslexia Handbook 2021.

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An introduction from the Chief Executive Officer

Nick Posford
CEO

Welcome to the British Dyslexia Association handbook for 2021

This is my first handbook since I started in September as CEO of the British Dyslexia Association. I have been highly impressed with the previous editions, which provided me with invaluable insight as I began my new role. It was a strange time to start, coming during one of the most unusual years in living memory. What has become increasingly obvious over the past year is that a lot of the old ways of doing things – working, shopping, learning – need to adapt to a future where technology will dominate. This opens up lots of opportunities, but it also comes with difficulties, and at the Association, we will be keen to respond to both.

Coincidentally, I share my birth year with the charity. Both born in 1972, we mark half a century next year. For the British Dyslexia Association, there is so much of which we should be proud. Our achievements have been remarkable, proven by the esteem with which the charity is held. I have also been overwhelmed by the large number of people keen to help, to share their expertise, experiences, stories and time. As this handbook goes to print, we are preparing our strategy for the future. Whatever the final version, we will want to make good use of the incredible generosity of spirit that we are shown every day.

We had our biggest and best ever Dyslexia Week in October, despite the pandemic forcing events online rather than in person. With coverage of Dyslexia Creates across BBC, Sky News, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook, we were able to get in front of millions of people, helping them understand that dyslexia

has very powerful benefits as well as challenges that can be overcome with the right support. This can be seen in the articles written for this edition of the handbook, and I highly recommend them. I know from those I have read as my colleagues prepared the handbook that they are fascinating and insightful.

In a year where everything has been turned upside down, the staff team at the British Dyslexia Association have managed to keep our support and services going, continuing their hard work to train teachers and employers, to offer a listening ear and helpful advice on our helpline, to raise awareness about dyslexia and to ensure our mission for a dyslexia-friendly society continues. Alongside them, the trustees, Chairs, volunteers and supporters have made our positive impact so much greater than it would otherwise be.

I hope you find this edition of the handbook enlightening, inspiring and most of all, really useful and practical. If the British Dyslexia Association can be all those things, too, we will be able to achieve great things over the coming months and years.

The British Dyslexia Association

Supporting the BDA

Nick Posford
CEO

> "People with dyslexia have so much to offer the world, but without the right systems in place, our talents are wasted"
>
> Claud Williams, *BDA Ambassador*

Children, young people and adults with dyslexia all need support sometimes. Dyslexia comes with challenges and anyone who is dyslexic or is someone close to them will know how a lack of support can have a massive, sometimes lifelong, impact. This is why the British Dyslexia Association was created and why we exist. As a charity, for nearly fifty years, we have been:

- offering information and advice through our helpline
- raising public understanding of dyslexia
- influencing government and education policy
- providing support to people with dyslexia of all ages
- training educators and employers

All with the ultimate aim of making a dyslexia-friendly society.

But we can only do this with your generous support.

In the tough economic times ahead, our work will be even more important. There is a risk of people with dyslexia being left out in a competitive jobs' environment or with public funding under intense pressure. But we also know that people with dyslexia are more likely to be entrepreneurs, more likely to set up more than one business and are likely to employ more staff, so dyslexic thinking can help drive economic recovery. In these difficult times, it is more important than ever that people with dyslexia get the support they need and that the benefits of thinking differently are also recognised.

Every day, our helpline receives calls to ask for support. Your fundraising and donations are vital to the work of the British Dyslexia Association, helping us to maintain our core services and work towards creating a dyslexia friendly society.

Where do these funds go?

The BDA is the voice for the 10% of the population who experience dyslexia. We aim to influence government and other institutions to promote a dyslexia friendly society, one that enables dyslexic people of all ages to reach their full potential. We campaign to encourage schools to work towards becoming dyslexia friendly; to reduce the number of dyslexic young people in the criminal justice system; and to enable dyslexic people to achieve their potential in the workplace. We produce and publish resources that empower individuals with dyslexia, as well as parents, carers and employers who want to support them. In addition to this, we provide the only national helpline supporting over a thousand people each year with dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties. Working alongside our network of Local Dyslexia Associations, we support people of all ages from across the country. We are very grateful for fundraising support, as we are heavily reliant on donations to achieve each one of these important aims.

Challenge yourself

Ever dreamed of climbing Mount Everest or swimming the English Channel? Or perhaps you're looking for a challenge closer to home? Whether you're an experienced ultramarathon runner or embarking on your first 5K, we are always eager to hear from potential challengers willing to expand the limits of their fitness and raise vital funds for the BDA. From years of experience supporting our ever-expanding Team BDA through a variety of key challenge events, we have witnessed first-hand how empowering it can be to complete a marathon in solidarity with a friend or family member diagnosed with dyslexia. Some of our recent and upcoming events include the London Marathon, Prudential Ride London, Great North Run, Great South Run, skydiving, and exciting overseas treks to name but a few!

Throughout the years, Team BDA has raised incredible funds to help those with dyslexia and we are so grateful for their hard work and dedication. Could this be you? You can find out more about our upcoming challenge events by visiting the BDA website: **www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/support-us/challenges**

Corporate partnership

Does your employer have a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) plan in place? Do they make reasonable adjustments for your colleagues with dyslexia and other learning difficulties? Why not join forces with your organisation to raise awareness of the impact dyslexia has in the workplace and take action to support change.

Volunteering

The BDA emerged from a group of parents and carers committed to expanding horizons for their dyslexic children – as such, enthusiastic volunteers are the lifeblood of our organisation. Whatever your skills and however much time you can spare, we're eager to hear from you. We have a variety of opportunities available and can also signpost you to local dyslexia support if you want to help your local community. In the past, volunteers have been helping with administrative support, designing resources for our online channels, providing one-off consultancies with our departments, providing specialist dyslexia knowledge on our helpline or supporting our Gala Awards flagship fundraising event. Increasingly, employers are supporting their employees to volunteer their time at a charitable organisation of their choice. Consider suggesting a similar scheme at your workplace or taking part in an existing CSR/volunteer programme.

Gala Awards Ceremony and Fundraising Dinner

At our annual Gala Awards Ceremony and Fundraising Dinner, you can expect a memorable evening of entertainment and inspiring stories as we celebrate the achievements of dyslexic individuals and those who support others to reach their full potential. We offer a range of sponsorship packages each year as well as a selection of awards in which the public can nominate an inspiring individual or organisation.

Dyslexia Week

Dyslexia Week is an annual event to raise awareness of dyslexia. Every year we produce resources and share information with teachers, employers and the general public to highlight a different dyslexia-related theme. In the past, we have looked at issues such as early identification, reasonable adjustments, and raising awareness and understanding of dyslexia. For Dyslexia Week 2020, the British Dyslexia Association petitioned the government to ensure there is funding for diagnostic assessments and targeted support in schools. Providing the opportunity for assessment, as well as the right level of expertise in every school, will lead to:

- An increase in early identification and diagnosis
- Appropriate levels of support for students throughout their education
- Students reaching their full potential

Nick Posford, CEO, British Dyslexia Association:
"We are shining a light on what dyslexia creates. It can create brilliantly creative minds that look at the world differently, giving us many artists, entrepreneurs and academics. But we know that dyslexia also creates a significant amount of challenges. 80 percent of people with dyslexia leave school without a diagnosis, which is simply unacceptable. For some, the only option is private screening which can be extremely costly. We need the government to do more, and that is why we're asking the British public to join our campaign."

You can still sign the petition at **www.change.org/bdadyslexia**

Individual Giving

Individual donations really can make a difference. Regular donations can also support us to plan ahead and achieve more for everyone with dyslexia. You can give a one-off donation or sign up to support us regularly at
https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/donate

You can now shop online with your favourite retailers and a percentage of the sales are donated to the BDA at no further cost to you:

- Give as you Live: **http://www.giveasyoulive.com**
- Amazon Smile: **http://smile.amazon.co.uk**

Now, over to you...Wherever you are and however you can, please consider how you might support our ongoing work towards a dyslexia-friendly society. We can't wait to hear from you!

Email: **fundraising@bdadyslexia.org.uk**

Tel: 0333 405 4588

BDA Engagement with Policy

Sue Flohr MBE
Head of Policy

As our cover story portrays, dyslexia is a hidden disability and knows no barriers. At the BDA we are here for everyone no matter their age, social background or cultural origins. We take forward to Government and decision makers, all of the issues that are brought to us which affect the lives of our dyslexic community. Our membership, and committees help to frame this work. And as we can see from Kim's article on page 38 our results help to address the many Helpline queries coming through.

We strive and lobby for change and while some small and immediate inexpensive adjustments can make a huge difference, others may take so much longer to achieve. We were reminded of this recently with the sad announcement of the death of The Lord Renwick, Chairman of the BDA 1977-82 and latterly a Vice-President. On looking back through Hansard, even many years ago, and like so many who followed in the intervening time, he highlighted the need for teachers to have specialist training in identifying and supporting dyslexic pupils. Nearly fifty years on we still continue to lobby for this to be mandatory, and so one might wonder what has been achieved. The introduction of the SEND Code of Practice has, as a minimum, paved the way and we are hopeful that the recent SEN Review will finally shift the change that is so desperately needed. We can already see that year on year there is a steady increase in the number of teachers taking our training courses and achieving specialist accreditation. Last year we saw a further 230 reaching this goal and gaining our AMBDA qualification.

The Equality Act too was a turning point for employers to take on board our advice. More than ever, organisations are reaching out to us to ensure that they are able to support their dyslexic employees in the workplace. Our Code of Practice for Employers also continues to provide guidance on how this can be achieved and at little cost. See the BDA Shop to purchase this and other publications: **https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/shop** Covid has definitely been a

poignant reminder that the dyslexic child or adult faces disparity. Dyslexic children, often with dyslexic parents, were left in lockdowns to fail even further without specialist support. The dyslexic student faced tackling a new way of learning on-line and often alone and without their support network. While dyslexic adults often faced the prospect of feeling as though they were first on the agenda for redundancy. These aspects were certainly ones that needed immediate action and have not detracted from, but rather reinforced our everyday continual engagement on lobbying in particular for early identification, fairer exam arrangements, and workplace reasonable adjustments.

The British Dyslexia Association holds the Secretariat for the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Dyslexia and other Specific Learning Difficulties. Over last year we met to discuss the final part of our research into the cost of dyslexia on society. The previous reports can be found on our APPG page on the website **https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/about/all-party-parliamentary-group-dyslexia-and-spld-appg** and here: **<http://bit.ly/APPG-human>** Human Cost of Dyslexia and **<http://bit.ly/appg-educational>** Educational Cost of Dyslexia.

As a follow up we are now looking into the experiences of people from diverse backgrounds with Dyslexia and other Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs), as well as the effects of Covid on all people with dyslexia and SpLDs.

Contact BDA Policy if you would like to personally attend an APPG meeting. Email: **policy@bdadyslexia.org.uk** Please also personally invite your local MP to an APPG meeting. You will find their email address in the Directory of MPs **https://members.parliament.uk/members/commons** Or follow our step by step guide on engaging with your MP **https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/support-us/writing-to-your-mp** We can see there the valuable difference that dyslexic people can make to society and how small inexpensive changes could make such a big difference. With this in mind we need to all continue to push for changes.

BDA Membership

Sarah Pither and Julie London

Membership

The British Dyslexia Association is a membership organisation with a 49-year history and reputation. We highly value our members, their opinions, their knowledge of and interest in dyslexia.

Members can attend our conferences, events, and training courses. We share the latest thoughts and insights surrounding dyslexia, and any new developments through these events and the Dyslexia Contact magazine

Being a member of the British Dyslexia Association directly helps the dyslexic community; supporting the BDA to lobby Government and be the voice of dyslexic people; training Specialist Teachers and Assessors and bringing the understanding of dyslexia and its effects to a wider audience.

We offer a range of membership types with exclusive benefits for our different members as detailed below:

<table>
<tr><th colspan="4">Memberships</th></tr>
<tr><th>Individual Supporter</th><th>Professional Memberships</th><th>Organisation Memberships</th><th>Overseas Applicants Memberships</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">£38 incl. VAT</td><td>Associate (AMBDA)
£70 PA incl. VAT
Professional
£68 PA incl. VAT
Affiliate Professional
£58 PA incl. VAT</td><td rowspan="2">From £168 PA incl. VAT</td><td rowspan="2">Additional £15.00 PA for postage & packing is added to all membership types</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Student Rate £25 PA incl. VAT</td></tr>
</table>

There are also around 50 Local Dyslexia Associations (LDAs) located throughout the country who run their own membership base. See page 195.

Individual Membership

Individual Memberships suit adults and students who wish to support the BDA in its work and campaigning. It is not suitable for those needing membership for professional or work purposes.

Individual Member benefits include:

- BDA Dyslexia Contact magazine, published 3 times a year
- eNewsletter
- 10% discount on eLearning training
- Consultation on key policy issues
- Invitation to the AGM Members Day and any council meetings
- Voting rights at the AGM
- Representation on the BDA Management Board via an elected representative

BDA Professional Memberships

Professional Memberships are specifically for those who have undertaken specialist training on a BDA accredited course or equivalent at Level 5 and above; or hold a qualification in an allied SpLD profession.

Professional Member benefits include:

- BDA Dyslexia Contact magazine, published 3 times a year
- Discount on BDA conferences
- Discount on BDA eLearning training
- Members' rate for the Dyslexia Journal, published 4 times a year
- BDA eNewsletter
- Invitation to the AGM Members' Day

- Consultation on key policies (via an elected representative)

Associate Membership (AMBDA) is for those who have completed an AMBDA accredited course or equivalent. AMBDA is also required for anyone applying for or holding an Assessment Practising Certificate (APC) with the BDA and must be in place for the duration of the certificate. Members are expected to keep their CPD up to date to keep this membership and submit to the BDA every 3 years.

- The CPD submission fee is now included in the annual AMBDA fee
- Holders of AMBDA can upload their details to the BDA online Tutor List
- Professional indemnity insurance is available at BDA Members' rate

Professional Membership is available to those who hold the awards of Accredited Teacher/Practitioner Status (ATS/APS); Accredited Teacher/Practitioner Dyscalculia (ATD/APD); Accredited Tutor Further and Higher Education (ATS FE/HE) and/or a Teaching Practising Certificate (TPC). Professional Membership is a requirement of a Teaching Practising Certificate and must be in place for the duration of the certificate.

- Holders of BDA Professional Membership can upload their details to the BDA online Tutor List
- Professional indemnity insurance at BDA Members' rate

Professional Student Membership is available to students studying on a BDA accredited course, for the duration of that course only.

Affiliate Professional Membership is available to members of the allied SpLD professions Educational, Clinical and Chartered Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists and Occupational Therapists. Applicants must be registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)

BDA Code of Ethics

Associate, Professional and Affiliate Members are expected to adhere to the BDA Code of Ethics which is available on our website.

BDA Professional Membership subscriptions are tax deductible as from 6th April 2017 and appear on the HMRC's Professional Bodies Approved for Tax Relief (List 3).

All professional memberships are administered by the Accreditation Officer at the BDA;
accreditation@bdadyslexia.org.uk

BDA Professional Memberships			
Associate	**Professional**	**Student**	**Affiliate**
£70 PA incl. VAT	£68 PA incl. VAT	£25 PA incl. VAT	£58 PA incl. VAT

Organisational Membership (OM) is suitable for businesses, schools, colleges, universities, and organisations that want to play a role in supporting the work of the BDA. We offer four tiered options: Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum, the benefits and fees are detailed in the chart below.

Our Organisational Members Award celebrates the work of an OM that has been particularly effective at raising awareness and supporting their dyslexic employees in the workplace. The winning organisation is invited to receive their award at the BDA Awards dinner in November.

The BDA hosts 'OM days' so that we can bring our organisational members together where they can share best practice and network with other organisations.

Organisational Memberships				
Benefit	Bronze	Silver	Gold	Platinum
Membership Fee per year	£150 + VAT (£90 vatable)	£250 + VAT (£115.38 vatable)	£750 + VAT (£321.42 vatable)	£1500 + VAT (£656.25 vatable)
eNewsletter	✓	✓	✓	✓
The Dyslexia Handbook	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dyslexia Contact magazine 3 per year	1 annual subscription	1 annual subscription	2 annual subscriptions	up to 5 annual subscriptions
Delegate discount on BDA Conferences (5%)	1 Delegate	2 Delegates	2 Delegates	2 Delegates
BDA Employer's Code of Practice	PDF Copy	PDF Copy	PDF or hard copy	PDF or hard copy
Consultation Including Annual Employer Survey	✓	✓	✓	✓
BDA membership pack	✓	✓	✓	✓
BDA OM logo and certificate	✓	✓	✓	✓
Donations and sponsorship opportunities	✓	✓	✓	✓
BDA OM Day	✓	✓	✓	✓
BDA website listing	Name	Name and contact	Name, contact & biography	Name, contact, biography & logo
BDA training discount *	X	✓	✓	✓
Discounted advertising rates in BDA publications and website	X	5%	10%	10%
Dyslexia Journal subscriptions at members rate of £55	X	✓	✓	✓
Discounted exhibition stands at BDA events	X	5%	10%	10%
Discount – BDA online publications (one PA)	X	X	10%	10%
Employee network support setup document	X	X	X	✓
Disability awareness presentation**	X	X	X	✓
Membership benefit consultation	X	X	X	✓

* 10% discount on one eLearning training course limited to two members of an organisation. Not available on accredited courses.

** Maximum two hours presentation (expenses to be paid by organisation).

To enquire about organisational membership please contact the Membership Officer **membership@bdadyslexia.org.uk**

BDA Training in Lockdown

Donna Stevenson
Commercial Training & Development Executive

These extraordinary and challenging times have not only changed our lives but brought some new words and ideas into everyday parlance, who honestly had heard of 'furlough', 'herd immunity' or 'the new normal' before 2020? Some of us, for the first time have worked consistently from home, are regularly using new technology for meetings and training and have brought work into our home and family life in a way that most of us have never quite experienced. We have had insights into countless colleagues' home décor, seen (and heard) their children and their pets! This year has certainly brought with it a 'new normal'. In times to come, the experts will no doubt review and analyse these changes and the impact on us all of the pandemic and its ramifications on our lives. What is apparent however, right now, is that those changes have already profoundly impacted on our working lives and practices.

These profound impacts are also apparent here at BDA Training. We are being asked to deliver more virtual training sessions than ever. It is heartening to witness how adaptable we are, we seem to have quickly got used to the idea of sitting in our bedrooms, living rooms and for some lucky individuals a 'home office' and having an expert 'beamed in' to upskill us! Long may this particular practice continue as this new normal seems to have made training even more a part of our working day; it keeps it real and moves it away from being an add-on that occurs in a different place at a special time which you then leave behind as you get back to the day job. Our Lunch and Learn sessions are particularly successful. As the name suggests our attendees can have a sandwich and a coffee, whilst engaging with a one hour session on dyslexia awareness. The informality of our Lunch and Learn sessions seems to lend itself particularly well to the times we are living in. We are not meal specific however! We are being asked more and more whether we can

deliver a Breakfast or Brunch and Learn – the answer is yes! The new normal has certainly brought some new ideas on how we can deliver, with requests for 'night schools' and we will run a Saturday school too. The technology and 'virtual-ness' of the sessions lends itself to an experimentation in this way. When we return to the old-normal, we will still run virtual sessions, we have certainly learnt a lot here at BDA Training during this time in terms of meeting the needs of our Training Clients, often in creative and inventive ways.

One of our aims at BDA Training is to make our sessions educational and enlightening, with doable and practical strategies that can be quickly adapted and absorbed into working practices. Making our workplace training as bespoke and relevant as we can for an organisation, seems to have become a lot easier for us during this new normal. Our attendees seem to be a lot more likely to share their stories, ask pertinent questions and be more open in these virtual training sessions – does being at home encourage people to be more open and honest? Does a virtual session bring down barriers in a way that face-to-face training does not? These are questions we don't quite have the answers to yet, but it's certainly interesting food for thought. Anecdotally the answer seems to be yes.

During these times we have also had to think about the challenges at work that this new normal has had on those with dyslexia. Our colleagues at BDA Helpline have been working hard to support those who are trying to figure out how their usual coping strategies and reasonable adjustments in the workplace can be of use, often in a completely different work experience and environment. Here at the Training Team we are being asked to deliver training with those issues as common themes. These challenges can range from use of technology and associated issues through to concerns about wellbeing and anxiety. This new normal at work, has for many, given us pause for thought on the effectiveness of some tried and tested strategies; practices we may have taken for granted pre-Covid,

now don't seem to work quite so well. Regular feedback we hear is that thinking about how we can support colleagues working from home, has certainly been a challenge at times. Exploring how we support colleagues returning from Furlough has also given us lots to think about. A long absence from our jobs can give individuals very particular challenges as they get back to work and their new normal. For some of our colleagues, even though they have returned, their job may have changed too, so this level of flux and uncertainly, can have a huge impact. I remember recently one member of a particular organisation shared that not only was he returning from Furlough after a long absence and felt 'Rusty' but it also felt like 'All my dyslexia is hitting me all at once!'. He went on to ask 'Why does my dyslexia feel really bad at the moment?! This is the last thing I need!'. Listening to him share in this way during the training session, gave his colleagues a profound insight into his experiences and sparked lots of conversations around how they can support all their colleagues who may be going through similar. We often find that it is these brave individuals, sharing their thoughts in that way, who can then be the catalyst for changes and adaptions to be made.

As this article is being written, for many of us we are about to go into a second lockdown with an uncertain winter ahead. The new normal as we have come to know it so far, may become something new all over again as we move forward into uncertain times. One thing that will remain we hope, is that, the resilience, adaptability and caring support that we have witnessed during our training delivery, will persist.

BDA Dyslexia Smart Award
An Outward Sign of an Ongoing Commitment

Donna Stevenson
Commercial Training and Development Executive

The Dyslexia Smart Department is one of the newest within the BDA; it was created due to an increase in requests from organisations looking to have recognition from us. This commitment can mean many different things to different organisations; we therefore purposely developed our Smart criteria to be as diverse and inclusive as possible. We encourage organisations to get creative and really take ownership of exactly what being dyslexia smart means to them and their teams. Now in its second year, we have a cluster of organisations that have renewed their Smart status and we have had the fascinating challenge to develop the next stage of the journey we wish to guide them through. Year One within Smart focuses upon raising awareness within an organisation; ensuring dyslexia training is cascaded across the organisation and sharing what changes in practice have occurred. We also ask that our Dyslexia Smart organisations celebrate Dyslexia Awareness week too. Year Two should then build upon this basic awareness, with an upskilling of in-house Dyslexia Champions. We often find that these 'Champions' or 'Mentors' can become resident experts for their organisations and colleagues and often become an informal 'go-to-person' for team members with dyslexia. These Champions not only help to reinforce good dyslexia friendly practice, they steer their teams towards enhanced goals and aspirations.

It has been very reassuring to see that despite these challenging times we still have our Dyslexia Smart Beacon Organisations making a commitment to dyslexia and supporting their neurodiverse colleagues. We recently welcomed a new organisation to the Dyslexia Smart family, and as is fitting of our current times, we congratulated them virtually; still celebrating the commitment and energy, and not allowing the current challenges to deter us from doing just that!

BDA Dyslexia Friendly Quality Mark

Karen Bartlett
Head of Assessment, Education and Professional Level Training

The BDA Dyslexia Friendly Quality Mark provides a framework of support and understanding to ensure that everyone within a school or organisation understands the needs of the dyslexic individual and that they provide appropriate support strategies and resources. The Quality Mark philosophy is that changing practice to accommodate dyslexic individuals results in good practice for everyone.

This award is only issued to schools or organisations that can demonstrate that they provide high quality education and/or practice for dyslexic individuals. Above all, holding the BDA Dyslexia Friendly Quality Mark is a positive statement that lets everyone know that the school or organisation is a good place for dyslexic people.

We offer the BDA Dyslexia Friendly Quality Mark for the following organisations and institutions:

- Schools (including schools in Northern Ireland)
- Further Education
- Higher Education
- Children and Young People's Services
- Post 16 Training Providers
- Youth Offending Teams and Institutions

All schools who have achieved the BDA Dyslexia Friendly Quality Mark are included on the register of Maintained Sector schools at CReSTeD (Council for the Registration of Schools Teaching Dyslexic Pupils).

Why Dyslexia Friendly?

We know through research, that at least 10% of the UK population carry the genetic background which makes them predisposed to Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD's).

Typically, we see about 4% with very serious issues and another 6% with mild to moderate difficulties. When placing this in the school context, that will equate to approx. 3 children in a class size of 30. A dyslexia friendly approach meets the needs of legislative obligations to support the needs of SEND learners and other stakeholders in ensuring we are making 'reasonable adjustments' to support learners with dyslexia.

Dyslexia Friendly and the subsequent BDA Dyslexia Friendly Quality Mark for Schools have been in existence for approx. 15 years. It first came into being through the work of the BDA alongside Neil MacKay; a dyslexia specialist with extensive teaching experience and knowledge of working with dyslexic individuals.

A 'wish list' of standards was constructed and once agreed they were issued out to 'pilot' schools across the country. The key questions being; did they present a challenge? Did they achieve the required changes to working practice? And were they realistic and achievable? Feedback from the pilot was collated before a final, polished version of the standards were published and issued out to schools across the country.

The mission statement of our Quality Mark is for schools 'to promote excellent practice by the school as it carries out its role of supporting and challenging its staff to improve accessibility for more learners.' There are four standards to evidence. Under the leadership and management standard, schools need to evidence that pupils with dyslexia are considered and catered for within whole school documents and policies so that everyone in the school knows how to provide effective support. As well as updating policies, schools will often tackle this by producing a dyslexia handbook or information sheet giving useful information such as a definition of dyslexia, signs and indicators, what to do if you suspect a child in your class is dyslexic and useful strategies to support teaching and learning.

The next area to consider is the learners' experience, in regard to the quality of learning within the school or institution. Staff would ask learners if the way they are being taught helps their

dyslexia or if there are other strategies that could be employed to support them more effectively. Supportive strategies for learners with dyslexia are:

- Multi-sensory teaching and learning:
  Pupils being taught using a range of learning methods such as Mind Mapping®
- Recording learning using a range of formats such as using bullet points, story boards and flow charts
- Provision for one to one and small group teaching
- Opportunities to use a scribe to record written work
- Use made of recording devices such as Dictaphones, talking tins and other such software

The next area to consider is whether the climate for learning is dyslexia friendly. Is diversity valued throughout the school via assemblies and displays? What reward systems are in place? Is praise for effort and achievement given in all areas, not simply academic ones? Does the school or institution promote strengths and what does the school do to promote self-esteem? Does the school provide opportunities for success away from academic activities and opportunities for individuals to share their successes out of school?

The final area to consider is the school's relationship with parents, carers, governors and any other stakeholders. How does the school involve parents in planning provision for the child?

What meetings are arranged with parents and how often do they take place?

What letters and information are sent home to parents? What is the format, is it dyslexia friendly? Have any workshops been run for parents to understand how to support their dyslexic child/young person at home? What are the procedures for parents to raise a concern? Is there an open-door policy?

Dyslexia friendly schools are effective, proactive, empowering, inclusive, and value adding schools that promote excellent practice in supporting and challenging staff to improve accessibility for learners.

This is Aravis 2020: The international dyslexia font

Aravis 2020 is the result of five years research and development by dyslexia specialists Crossbow Education to produce a font that is easy on the eye and meets accessibilty criteria for dyslexia and for visual stress. It is used throughout this page.

Every character has its own unique characteristics to make it recognisable for dyslexic readers, and the impact of every stroke is minimised for people who suffer with visual distortions or discomfort.

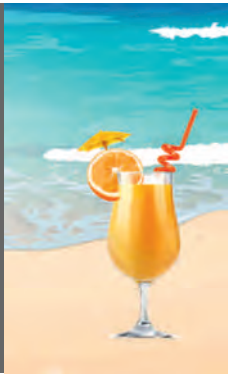
Aravis 2020 is an international font with over 1700 characters. All 72 latinate languages, plus Greek, are fully represented. Also included for every language are maths and other symbols, plus small capitals. The text here is Aravis regular, 10.21 pt.

The Aravis 2020 suite includes five font faces: regular, *italic,* **bold, *bold italic***, and **black**.

Aravis 2020 does not have a "special needs" look and is not a "bigger face font," so it is easier to make existing typefaces dyslexia-friendly, often without disturbing existing artwork.

Aravis 2020 is ideal for any document in any environment, printed or on-screen, where sustained reading is required - whether in the office, at home, or in school or HE/FE.

Whatever and wherever you are reading, Aravis 2020 will give your eyes a rest from the harsh environment of closely coupled geometric lines that are typical of most everyday lettering.
For information and to download visit www.aravisfonts.com



For coloured overlays, eye level reading rulers, tinted pads and exercise books, the "tint and track" app, and a wide range of dyslexia teaching resources, visit **www.crossboweducation.com**

Claro Software

"Installing ClaroRead on my PC was a literal game changer, being able to send written work without any extra help and knowing there were little or no mistakes was fantastic."

– ClaroRead User

Apps that help dyslexic people read, write, sit exams and achieve all they can.

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BDA Events at the British Dyslexia Association

Nicky Dinneen
Events and Conference Manager

Here at the British Dyslexia Association we cover a wide range of events to ensure we are providing topics to reach our National and International audience. Our aim is not simply to educate but raise awareness, offer support and fundraise for our charity. The year 2020, due to Covid has dramatically impacted not only the way we deliver our events, but also the types of events and support we now offer, including our, now virtual International conference where we bring together a network of professionals to advance our knowledge and understanding of dyslexia and dyscalculia.

We adapted promptly offering free webinars for parents, online training courses for educators, parents and diagnosed dyslexics. We are advising employers on how to support their dyslexic employees and co-workers in the workplace and those now working from home. We have converted our in-person annual events to easy-to-use comprehensive virtual events.

Here are just some of the statistics alongside this year's successes and why the BDA events are a vital part of raising funds and awareness for the dyslexia community.

- 10% of people are dyslexic. This means there are around one million young people in education with dyslexia and up to 10 million people across the UK
- 80% of people with dyslexia leave school without a diagnosis or receiving the support they need to succeed
- 58% of parents said their children try to avoid discussing their dyslexia
- 84% of parents said their child suffers from anxiety relating to their dyslexia
- 40% of self-made millionaires have dyslexia
- 29% of students at the Royal College of Art have dyslexia compared to 10-15% of the population.

Free Parent Webinars

Our first free parent webinar during lockdown achieved over 1000 registrations and 945 attendees.

Thanks to funding from The JJ Charitable Trust, we have been able to launch a new series of free webinars for parents. We'll be hosting a series of sessions dedicated to helping parents and carers who are supporting children at home with dyslexia.

Dyslexia Week 2020

Dyslexia Week is an annual event to raise awareness of dyslexia. Every year we produce resources and share information with teachers, employers and the general public to highlight a different dyslexia-related theme. This year our focus was on 'Dyslexia Creates'. Dyslexia creates artists, entrepreneurs and game changers, but we know that it also creates challenges, inequality and prejudice. Throughout the week, schools, universities and local organisations hosted events among their communities to raise awareness, alongside our campaign to call for a vital increase in assessments and targeted support in schools to help every child receive the support they need. Our petition received incredible support, and thousands of signatures from people across the UK. Our messages reached over 76 million people through PR channels including BBC Breakfast News.

Webinars and Conference for educators

We offer webinars, conferences and seminars to support and educate those working in the neurodiverse community. We work with experts in their field, spanning a range of topics covering all SpLDs, sharing their knowledge with teachers, educational specialists and assessors. We also host annual conferences on broader topics including literacy and dyscalculia.

International Conference 2021

The International Conference is our flagship event taking place 20-21 May, featuring innovative research and expertise in dyslexia and dyscalculia. This year our conference is going virtual, making it more accessible than ever before.

As with traditional face-to-face International Conferences, over the two days we bring together hundreds of researchers and professionals from around the globe with presentations, specialist speakers and keynote addresses. Our delegates will also have the opportunity to participate in Question & Answer sessions, interact with exhibitors, and network with a global community of experts.

BDA Helpline: The role of the BDA Helpline during the pandemic

Kim Brown
Specialist teacher/Diagnostic Assessor, Workplace Needs Assessor, Helpline Advisor

The BDA runs a free, national, dyslexia helpline welcoming enquiries from parents, students, teachers, adults, employers, employees, professionals and any organisational body. The phonelines ring almost continuously and a high volume of emails are answered every day.

People reach out requesting information about equipment, accessibility aids, software and hardware, teaching and learning strategies, good practice in education, in work and from service providers, diagnostic assessments and screening tools, teaching tools and software to help with studying, reasonable adjustments in all settings, accessibility and service provision and designing websites and resources.

Helpline also remains a lifeline to many who are struggling to cope.

At the start of Covid-19 the content of the Helpline enquiries quickly shifted.

Suddenly parents were faced with home schooling, coupled with fears that their dyslexic children's specific needs could not be met, and they would fall behind. They wanted to know exactly how to help their children's spelling, how to help them focus, how to find tools and strategies that even worked, but mostly they wanted to know when the schools would open again. Some were shocked at the extent of their child's challenges and confessed to it being the first time that they had really observed the impact that dyslexia can have. The majority seemed to embrace the challenge, wanting tips, ideas, tools, webinars and diagnostic services to help them build a supportive home learning environment.

School, College and University teachers turned to Helpline wanting tools, strategies and equipment for meeting the needs of their dyslexic learners within online forums. Concerns were expressed ranging from technical issues and what platform to use, to how to share a screen, with teaching and learning materials, and how to support students who are struggling to read, learn and concentrate through a monitor. Many dyslexic learners were struggling with fatigue, with tired eyes, adding to the strain of eyes that may not be tracking a text efficiently; students who were used to screen tinting or screen-reading software needed this for studying at home. Others who relied on printing facilities to support manually highlighting and annotating a text (to help consolidate information) didn't have access to printing at home. Suddenly educators were faced with needing to support their learners in a completely different way.

Assessors and tutors who had suddenly lost large portions of their income from the removal of face-to-face diagnostic assessments and tutoring, approached Helpline requesting training courses to update their computer skills, webinars to decipher the best platforms for teaching, and to ask whether multi-sensory learning can be delivered online. People's incomes were suffering. Here again Helpline tried to be a source of support, information and up-to-date advice.

Students wrote to Helpline worried about organising study routines and managing volumes of documents delivered across multiple platforms. Many found that the shift to online learning meant that the entire family was sharing a device or a laptop and the dyslexic learner, who usually requires additional time on technology, was falling behind with their studies. Students found that the quick access to support was removed and they were left at home without their peers or teachers for immediate contact and help.

Then predicted grades came into the mix, inducing concerns from educators, students and the parents of vulnerable learners. Many questions arose: 'how the effect of a hidden disability could be factored in; how could the impact of an access

arrangement on a hidden disability be factored into a "prediction"?'

The tide changed when parents and students were faced with anger and disappointment at teachers on receiving their grades; feelings that hidden disabilities had not been appropriately factored in and that had they sat in the exam room with their access arrangements in place, their grades would have matched their true standard. Parents, learners and teachers contacted Helpline to sound off, wanting to appeal to schools and exam boards, or to open up discussions about just how to manage the testing of a learner, with hidden disabilities and complex learning needs, within the 'new normal'.

There has been an ongoing sense that these vulnerable learners may well be being additionally disadvantaged for what feels like an indefinite length of time.

Employees contacted Helpline regarding a range of new challenges caused by working from home. People's reading, writing and organisational skills were suddenly not supported; specialist software, printers or larger screens were 'back in the office'. The colleagues who gave ad hoc help throughout the day were abruptly removed on March 24th. Everything was migrating online and the strategies that employees with hidden disabilities relied on were not at hand. The Helpline staff began painstakingly describing how to use a smartphone as a reader, how to change the settings on a PC to be able to dictate an email, or where to go to get emergency free downloads of specialist software to cover them until their reasonable adjustments 'caught up'.

Since March 2020, perplexed but keen employers began requesting information on how to support neurodivergent staff in online meetings, with organising their tasks, with proofreading, with reading, with using new platforms, how to help employees who were stressed like never before, or who were furloughed. Many were given detailed guidance about adopting a different management style, helping employees to prioritise and set

targets, allocating a mentor to support the employee or simply sending them an additional screen to support their working memory or funding a workplace-needs assessment to find the right equipment and responses to the 'new normal'.

The Helpliners had to keep on top of the responses of broader society to the Covid-19 crisis. Assessors anxiously waited to be allowed to perform online 'access arrangement assessments', and 'evaluation of needs' assessments to support pupils and students in exams and with their studies; specialist teachers suddenly needed to 'upskill' and keep in line with a new set of complex rules and regulations. Publishers needed to reconsider copyright and release digital test materials. Software companies began to quickly catch up with the concerns of the dyslexic community and began giving free downloads to support home schoolers and employees. A company, who provides comics adapted for dyslexic readers, with storylines that inject the curriculum into the content, gave these away freely to help with the effects of the pandemic and the crisis of home schooling.

Over time concerns changed again. Employees wrote in expressing their difficulties with returning to work after being furloughed. People found that their reading and writing skills were now 'out of practice' and that they were overwhelmed by an inbox containing thousands of emails.

The mood changed when neurodivergent employees began finding themselves in performance-review situations or heading towards redundancy. Many had a sense that they were being discriminated against because reasonable adjustments had never caught up or even entered the new 'home' work environment. Their support had abruptly disappeared. There were others who had managed in the office without adjustments but the new normal threw up new challenges, many never discovered what support could have helped before returning to the office and being faced with criticism about their work performance during lockdown. People were frequently discussing the spirit of the Equality Act, the good practice that surrounds it and what that all means within the 'new normal'.

Since March 24th, the flood of new concerns turned Helpline into a microcosm of what was taking place in the wider world. These concerns continue and continue and continue; as they continue, they evolve and change alongside the fluctuations of the pandemic, the responses from central government, multiple policy changes and the many shifts and alterations that have embedded into our society.

The relationship between neurodiversity and stress has always been witnessed daily by the Helpline team. The volunteers and staff constantly strive to give each form of contact equal care and attention. Long calls from distressed adults and learners can require considerable care and sympathetic responses as well as practical tips and ideas. Advice remains impartial while striving to include factual up-to-date information with signposts targeted at useful tools, resources, websites and services.

Helpline receives emails of gratitude. People explain how the advice and a sympathetic ear enabled them to take positive practical steps towards resolving what initially felt like an intransient situation. This feedback reassures the workers on Helpline that they are on the right track and are touching and changing for the better the lives of numerous individuals. That parents get the reassurance they seek; that teachers get access to information to better support their learners; that students and pupils are reassured and given tips and tools; and that employers and employees find a way of working that enables them to retain their jobs, maintain their work standards and achieve their potential.

The impact is positive and immense.

Dyslexia for Parents

Helping Children at Home: Five ways to support your child with dyslexia at home

Karen Bartlett
Head of Assessment, Education and Professional Level Training

Due to COVID-19 school closures, parents and carers became home-educators in ways they hadn't planned or prepared for. Some have undoubtedly experienced extraordinary learning adventures with their children, others have found it frustrating and felt ill prepared for the responsibility that lay on their shoulders. In addition to all the work they were already doing to support their children emotionally, those parents of children with additional needs also had to become specialists in their area.

In 2019, a survey found that 95 percent of parents and carers felt they lacked the skills and knowledge to support their dyslexic child. So, if you struggled with your new role, the most important thing to remember is not to worry, you are not alone and it's perfectly normal to find supporting a dyslexic child's learning difficult.

At the British Dyslexia Association, we have been working with parents and carers for over four decades and whilst you aren't going to become a specialist in teaching a dyslexic learner in a few weeks, there are some simple ways you can make home schooling more effective and enjoyable for you and your dyslexic child.

Here are our top five.

1. Get a routine

For most people, routine is important but for learners with dyslexia and other neurodiverse conditions, it is even more critical.

A good starting point is the creation of a visual timetable for each day, which will create structure and enable your child to have a clear vision of the day ahead.

Once a timetable has been prepared, it's time to think about where the learning will physically take place. For some learning, you may need a table, but an outdoor space or floor space may also be useful for certain situations – the location of these should be outlined in the timetable.

2. Decide what to teach

The next step is to spend some time getting to know what learning level your child is at. The work should challenge them but not be inaccessible to them.

Bear in mind that every child is different, and even more so for a learner with dyslexia who is likely to be at different stages in different subjects. Also, remember their ability may be reflected in spoken rather than written work.

When deciding on what to learn, your child's interests and strengths should be a large factor. Yes, there are things your child will have to learn, regardless of whether they enjoy it or struggle with it, but don't fixate on these. Give opportunities to learn about topics that your child enjoys and can do well, as this will help them stay motivated.

3. Teach using a 'multisensory' approach

Multisensory simply means using more than one of child's senses at a time. Because of the way the dyslexic brain works, learning that way is far more effective.

For example, if your child just reads a book they are using once sense, sight. But if they read along with an audiobook, they are using two senses, sight and hearing. This would be multisensory learning and would mean your dyslexic child absorbs and retains the information in the book far better.

An activity should include at least two senses – which are, seeing something (visual), hearing something related to what is seen (auditory), some form of related movement of muscles, for example speaking or writing (kinaesthetic), and touching or feeling something (tactile).

Here is an example of how you might apply multisensory learning if your child needed to so some alphabet work:

- Lay out an alphabet arc
- Sing the alphabet song while touching each of the letters in turn
- Discover the letter being introduced by taking items out of a bag that begin with the same letter
- Let the learner feel the objects, name them and pull them out to check if they are right
- Identify the target sound and letter name
- Demonstrate how to form the letters on a whiteboard
- Let the learner explore forming the letter in sand, shaving foam, wiki sticks or similar

Multisensory learning is useful for children of any age. For an older child, multisensory teaching can be as simple as, instead of getting them to read a book about Ancient Egypt, do a virtual tour of the British Museum and discuss the topic with them as you take a virtual walk through their Ancient Egypt galleries.

There is lots of information out there on multisensory teaching, but if you're looking for a good place to start, there is a webinar on multisensory teaching by Dr Susie Nyman which can be found on our website.

4. Embrace technology

Nowadays, there are so many free features embedded in our computers, tablets and smartphones that can make a huge difference to young people with dyslexia.

The particular ones to look out for are text to speech features, which read out written words on the device, speech to text, which allows your child to dictate their work to a device, and advanced spelling and grammar checkers. All the big technology companies have these features now and you will find lots of information out there about how to use them to support dyslexic learning.

Learning to touch type is one of the most important skills that helps young people with dyslexia in education and then moving on into the workplace. There are many great touch-typing programmes out there. There are both free and paid options available including ones that teach reading and spelling of keywords at the same time. We recommend starting touch-typing from age 9 as before then children's hands are too small to physically use the keyboard effectively.

Young people with dyslexia, whilst they might not enjoy reading books, often take to listening to audiobooks and find a love of literature that way. With many audiobook companies now offering free children's books it is a good opportunity to try audiobooks with your child.

5. Don't overload your child

If you have been trying to do a full school day at home, you will have realised that this is not a good idea. Learning one on one or in small groups is much more intense than a normal school day. This is exacerbated for a dyslexic learner as, because of the way the dyslexic brain works, they tire faster.

It's much better to get a smaller amount of quality teaching time in each day, than fight to hit a six-or-seven-hour day because you feel you should match the school day.

Don't ignore that home schooling is a psychological challenge for all of us. Learning will inevitably be different and it is likely that at times you will need to prioritise mental health over keeping up with schoolwork. That is absolutely the right thing to do.

If you're looking for more on dyslexia and how to support your child, the British Dyslexia Association website is full of practical information and includes the latest information on the support we have available for parents.

Learning to Read
Supporting parents and carers in developing their child's reading skills

Kelly Challis
Consultant Teacher at the Driver Youth Trust (DYT)

Kelly is responsible for resource development at the DYT and delivers CPD and speaks at events and conferences across the country. She is a qualified specialist teacher and has experience of working in both the state and private sector as well as managing learning support departments in schools and Further Education. Her passion is to improve the access to education for learners with literacy difficulties.

The valuable skill of reading

"So, Matilda's strong young mind continued to grow, nurtured by the voices of all those authors who had sent their books out into the world like ships on the sea." Roald Dahl's Matilda

Reading is the cornerstone of all literacy abilities and for those with dyslexia and literacy difficulties it can be the most challenging and persistent difficulty which may result in their options in later life being limited. On the surface it improves vocabulary, makes punctuation easier to understand and exposes the mind to high frequency words making them easier to spell. Within the pages of a book a child/young person can explore emotions which might be too much for them to deal with directly or allow them to see another perspective on life impossible to experience first-hand.

Current research by the National Literacy Society highlights that reading frequency has a real impact on a child's ability to read. A positive attitude to reading improves reading ability and a negative attitude can be turned around with intervention.

Reading improves all literacy skills, and those children who enjoy reading do better at school overall. Stanovich (1986), a professor of Psychology used the term the Matthew Effect to

describe how confident readers feel happier reading, and therefore engage more and gain a larger vocabulary. A virtuous cycle, which in turn supports their cognitive development. Meanwhile some children/young people, who may struggle with reading, develop vocabulary at a slower rate and are less likely to form a reading habit. Furthermore, it is important to note that this knowledge gap between readers and non-readers grows over time.

How do we begin to support this key skill at home?

The first step is to perhaps understand how children learn to read and for teachers to share with parents what is involved in the reading process. Successful reading is not simply the decoding of words. It is the combination of language processes, word recognition and the developing fluency and understanding of the individual reader. Fluency is related to understanding the sounds of words and this can be a particular difficulty for a child or young person with dyslexia. As well as following the steps below it would be beneficial to know the phonemes/sounds your child is learning and practise them as much as possible at home.

Knowing how to support a child when they are reading aloud is important, especially at home. Reading practice should be kept short and sweet. It is also helpful to stick to a regular time of the day that works for everyone. This way you are developing reading into a habit (a good one) that you undertake on a daily basis. Hopefully, you will inspire the young reader to continue with this habit independently.

Whilst the following suggestions have been separated into three categories many of the ideas are interchangeable and would work for any age.

Support for young, emergent readers:

When a child is learning to read it can be a slow, faltering process and one which, for both the parent/carer and the child can become a chore rather than a pleasure. Some schools

encourage children to read five times a week which, in reality, can be a tall order for some parents.

Help your child become lost in the story to the point where they are desperate to read on. They need to see reading as a pleasurable experience that you enjoy as much as them. Try to choose books which interest you both.

- Know which phonemes/sounds your child has been learning and practise them before they start to read
- Look at the cover and make some guesses/predictions about the book's plot
- Use echo reading if they are really struggling to read fluently (echo reading is when you say a line and your child repeats it straight after. This will help with expression as well as your child hearing themselves read fluently.) This will also take some of the pressure off reading aloud
- Read the same book more than once so they can start to get a feel for being more fluent when reading
- Make a note of the words which they found tricky but worked out and praise them the next time they read that word without faltering
- When they tire, stop. The most important thing is for them to enjoy reading
- Find out which reading scheme your school uses and ask for suggestions of other books which might be available in the library or book shops for reading through the school holidays.

For free readers:

Many schools refer to children that have achieved all the book levels in a set as free readers meaning they are given the choice of books rather than being limited to their reading level. Some schools are now continuing with levelled books throughout primary school which is better for those children with dyslexia or literacy difficulties as reaching the level of a free reader may elude them for a lot longer than their peers.

Becoming a 'free reader' can be a real achievement, however without the safety net of the levelled books finding appropriate reading material becomes much harder. To be a free reader you must complete the reading levels, and this can become more about decoding and the quantity of books the child has read rather than understanding the text.

Furthermore, a free reader is not necessarily a fluent reader and they may still need to use their finger to keep their place and misread words affecting their comprehension. They may have become used to reading the words but not enjoying the story.

- Use the five-finger rule when choosing books – if your child makes more than 5 errors on an average page in a new book it is too hard for them
- Whilst the proven best way to improve a child's reading ability is through reading fiction (Jerrim and Moss 2018) with some children and young people a book can be intimidating. Therefore, use a way in through websites, newspapers, magazines, and blogs which relate to their specific interests or hobbies
- There are several short story compilations too which enable a child to have the sense of achievement which comes with finishing a story
- Give your child a realistic expectation of how many pages they should read, rather than a chapter, one or two pages will be enough, if they choose to read on, fantastic!
- Encourage reading out loud to check their accuracy as poor reading habits are hard to break
- When they do come across a tricky word remind them of the decoding skills they used before they became a free reader, they still need to use these from time to time.

For an older child/young person:

As a child gets older, the amount of text they are required to read in school increases and if they continue to struggle with decoding and fluency, it is perhaps worthwhile considering using text to speech software. There are several free options on

Microsoft, Google, and Apple (have a look at their accessibility add-ons) The focus in schools also shifts to comprehension and analysing text. As they reach secondary school they will also be presented with archaic texts and the challenges that they bring.

- It's important to still hear them read, if they continue to struggle with fluency but keep it to a minimum or adopt a different strategy such as asking them to summarise the chapter, they have read to themselves whilst you flick through it yourself
- Encourage them to make predictions about what will happen next. This ability to read between the lines or make judgements about what isn't written is called inference and deepens the understanding of the text
- Get them to elaborate on the characters, would they choose them as a friend? What characteristics do they admire/dislike in the character?
- Use quick reads of the classics to support reading a set text in class
- Try to get them to summarise the main points of what they have read and discuss the book with them sharing your observations.

Shakespeare: to read or not to read?

Young people in secondary school will study Shakespeare at some point in their education and this should continue as he is, after all, one of the greatest writers of all time and responsible for so much of the language that we use today (even if it has evolved over time).

The key to teaching such complex language is to explore the story as a whole. To read and digest the plot in the most accessible form for the young person. This could be a short story, which can be read alongside the main text. It could be a graphic novel, ideally with snippets from the original text or the film or play version. Young people are still getting access to the essence of the story without the aspects that might otherwise inhibit them from being able to engage.

- **Summarise**

Ensure the young person understands the order of events which can become confused as Shakespeare tended to pack in a lot of action and change location frequently. You could also establish a timeline highlighting key events and developments.

- **A character web**

This will also help with confusions like in Twelfth Night where characters take on the role of the opposite sex or in Macbeth to highlight who has killed who.

- **Contemporary comparisons**

How have the plays of Shakespeare been interpreted over the years? Can we draw comparisons from today's society?

- **Represent it differently using for example, HipHop Shakespeare**

There are several, freely available videos of this charity using the language of Shakespeare in a contemporary context and the result is it becomes accessible and hopefully more relevant.

Continuing to share a story and hearing books being read

Sharing a book even when your child is able to read fluently to themselves continues a habit which is comforting and enables a shared interest. It also allows your child to hear a story which they might not currently be able to read independently.

- Consider audio books for long car journeys or a way to get to sleep at night
- Support reluctant readers that might not be able to read the same books as their peers by suggesting they listen to it as an audiobook. Most libraries have copies to borrow which are free for children and young people
- Continue this sharing of a book by recommending and reading the same book as your older children
- Read books which have accompanying films and either watch then read or vice versa

- If you find a book which is a favourite, buy the series and work your way through them. This gives you the opportunity to talk with your child/young person about how characters evolve and change over time, another great example of supporting the skill of inference
- Combine the audio version with the written text for children and young people that struggle to read quickly.

Suitable strategies for any age:

- Wait five seconds before jumping in with the correct word
- Model the sounding out of words, this can also help with decoding
- Check for understanding and chat about the book
- Use prediction: What do you think might happen next?
- Check vocabulary. What does that mean? When would you use that word?

In conclusion there are several things which you can do as a parent/carer and as a teacher to support the skills of reading whilst hopefully, nurturing a lifelong love of reading.

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From A to B and all the way to Z, but what do you do when they can't get there?:

Supporting your child at school

Helen Ross
Helen is a Specialist Assessor, SEND teacher and Independent Researcher and founder of Helen's Place Educational Consultancy

In this article, I will draw on all the different elements of my work to offer parents some suggestions in helping to support their dyslexic children. I have written and spoken extensively over the last 3 years, in various settings, on different ways that young people may be supported and how parents can engage with this. Common to all settings was that parents sometimes felt powerless to support their children, schools could feel impenetrable, and jargon blocked their access to documentation relating to intervention and support.

My child is wobbling: what's happening?

There are many signs that a young person may have dyslexia and a lot of them relate to literacy or working memory. Most of these signs are perceptible from a very young age, such as letter reversals, difficulties with phonics, or left-right confusion. However, they may also be developmental, which means that some young people will grow out of them. When difficulties persist, despite support and good quality teaching, this may indicate that young people have dyslexia.

Difficulties with phonics can show up as children having difficulties articulating or repeating words they've heard; they may know letter sounds but be unable to blend them when reading to form words; they may find segmenting words very difficult, which impacts on their spelling or they may not be able to discern rhyme, syllables or elision of sounds.

All of these are fairly 'obvious' signs of dyslexia. However, dyslexia also affects working memory. In the classroom, this can show in various ways. It may be that young people have

difficulty remembering and following instructions. They may forget what they were asked to do and need support to engage actively with tasks. Some young people find organising their work very difficult: this could affect their spelling of individual words; it may be at sentence level, or paragraph level. Young people may be able to articulate their ideas very clearly verbally but then experience a 'block' when putting pen to paper. Some young people find maths problems very challenging, as their working memory isn't strong and they find sequencing the steps needed in complex calculations demanding.

Wherever young people seem to be finding these elements of learning difficult, whether at primary school, secondary school or Further Education, tutors and teachers should be communicating with the learner and their families. Good communication of difficulties (and strengths!) paves the way for identifying and tackling root-causes of specific learning difficulties.

Is my child dyslexic: who do I talk to?

Class Teacher

When a child is finding learning difficult, usually the first 'port of call' is their class teacher in primary school or their form tutor in secondary school. The class teacher or form tutor has an overview of young people in their care and generally know them better than other teachers; this is particularly the case in primary schools. Tutors and class teachers have access to children's progress, attendance information and see them every day for at least their registration periods. This places them in a unique position to be able to 'check in' with learners and talk about any difficulties they may be having. Tutors and class-teachers are therefore often the best-placed professional to keep parents/carers informed about their children's progress, strengths and difficulties in school. In primary schools, they can discuss the support measures that are implemented to mitigate young peoples' difficulties in learning. In the case of secondary schools, tutors can articulate to parents what 'should' be happening to support their children. Although they may not teach

children in their group, they should be able to give parents/carers a précis of how their child is supported in class and any specific instruction they receive.

If your child's class teacher or form tutor cannot answer questions you have, it may be that you wish to speak with the school's inclusion team. Oversight of all provision is handled in school by the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo in England and Northern Ireland), the Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNCo in Wales) or the teacher with responsibility for Additional Support for Learning (in Scotland).

SENCo (ALNCo)

Each of the devolved UK nations has its own specific legislation relating to special educational needs. Terminology and frameworks for assessment differ, and administration of support varies according to nation, and in England according to Local Authority. However, there are also commonalities. In each nation, there is a member of staff in school whose role includes monitoring, assessment and planning of interventions for young people. Identification of need is usually overseen by the SENCo (or equivalent) through formal and informal assessment, as well as in discussion with teachers, your child and you.

If your child's teachers have noticed that they have dyslexic tendencies, then the SENCo should be monitoring your child's progress and ensuring that teachers implement dyslexia-friendly, high-quality teaching. It may be that your child needs personalised, specialist support outside of the classroom, to develop their phonics, reading, writing or spelling skills. Should this be the case, the SENCo (or equivalent) should outline what provision is in place, how your child's progress is monitored and, in liaison with you, what the objectives of the intervention are.

A key role of the SENCo is to build positive, productive working relationships with parents/carers, so that their views are considered in decision-making relating to support for young people with SEN. It may be that in your child's school they have not adequately identified difficulties your child is experiencing, or

that they are unsure of root causes of their barriers to learning. In that instance, it may be that you decide to seek formal assessment of your child's needs.

Assessment of need: what and who for?

In school pathways:

The first port of call in any needs assessment/identification process is the school's SENCo or equivalent. Good practice involves assessment of need, planning and implementation of intervention and then review of a learner's progress. SENCos and class teachers make use of frameworks such as WESFORD, various online dyslexia screeners as well as phonics testing and standardised reading/writing tests to evaluate attainment and progress. Where a learner's attainment is lower than their peers, or their progress slower, schools should carefully monitor progress. They should keep parents/carers informed of where young people are having difficulties and how they are supporting that individual. Parents should be party to communications and included in discussions.

Where discussions move towards formal, diagnostic assessment of need, it is likely that informal assessment and screeners have been undertaken in school. It may be that school provision has not fully identified need and parents/carers wish to pursue more formal identification of need. Many schools do not have in-house capacity to undertake diagnostic assessment and so external expertise is likely necessary. The routes for assessment in-school are varied across the devolved nations and differ according to Local Authority in England. However, referral to external specialist assessors or educational psychologists is usually costly and schools may be reluctant to refer a student for dyslexia assessment. Other needs often eclipse specific learning difficulties and schools may prioritise more visible needs over hidden impairments. As such, it may be that you decide to work with an educational psychologist or specialist assessor to identify your child's needs.

Private Assessment

Private assessment for dyslexia and/or other specific learning difficulties can be undertaken by either Educational Psychologists or Specialist Assessors. The process usually takes several hours and is very intense for young people. Assessment identifies strengths and weaknesses that may make accessing learning tricky for young people. Recommendations are also made which can be implemented in school to support young people.

There are several ways to find appropriately qualified private practitioners able to do diagnostic assessments. The British Dyslexia Association offers formally qualified assessors. There are also lists of assessors available from the Specific Learning Difficulties Assessment Standards Committee (SASC). Educational Psychologists should be registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). The HCPC has a list of professionals, which can be organised according to profession and/or name.

Assessment by an Educational Psychologist is usually more costly than with a Specialist Assessor. They have access to a broader range of psychometric tests and can consider complex profiles and learning needs. In contrast, Specialist Assessors are often classroom practitioners, whose experience means that they can make practical, tangible recommendations to support young people effectively at school.

There are advantages and disadvantages to assessment being undertaken by Educational Psychologist versus a Specialist Assessor and the option you choose depends on the needs of your family, your resources and which practitioners operate in your area. It is worth contacting several professionals and discussing your family's and your child's situation with them to see whether they are a good fit for your child and family.

Once an assessment has identified any learning needs, the next steps are to share it with your child's school and develop a plan of action.

We've been assessed: what next?

Sharing Information

Schools should share their assessments and information with you and, wherever possible, your child. Reports usually suggest numerous strategies to support young people. Which strategies are implemented depends on the resources available in the setting, what has already been put in place and also what your child wants. A key phrase that you can refer to is 'reasonable adjustments'. All settings must make 'reasonable adjustments' to curriculum structure and delivery so that children with diverse needs can access it appropriately. Strategies suggested in assessment reports usually bear this in mind so that many of the potential support mechanisms are low-cost and high-impact for young people. Other strategies may be more resource-intense for schools and may not fall within 'reasonable adjustments', but are provision above and beyond that in place for other learners. Where this is the case, it may be that extra funding and/or resources are requested by the school or that an EHCP (or equivalent in the devolved nations) application is pursued. Processes involved in this differ across nations and vary by Local Authority in England. Discussion of these is outside of the scope of this article, but your Local Dyslexia Association would be a good source of local information.

IEPs and Provision Maps

Although the devolved nations have different frameworks for provision relating to learning needs and difficulties, within each context, it is expected that parents'/carers' views are considered and included in planning for children. Children's experiences and views should also be included in developing provision so that they have ownership and are empowered in their own learning journeys. You have a right to ask what school is doing to support your children. Either the SENCo or your child's class teacher should be able to answer that question.

Schools use a variety of methods to track progress and impact of interventions. Two common ways this is done are IEPs

(Individual Education Plans) or Provision Maps. Vital to monitoring progress and impact of interventions, is the identification of clear entry and exit points. That means that schools should carefully assess skills levels at the start of an intervention programme and then monitor levels carefully during the programme against clearly identified outcomes. These outcomes should be defined through discussion with professionals, parents/carers and young people, and then adapted as young people's skills develop and they move along their educational journey.

Closing thoughts

Key to all successful provision is identification of needs and ensuring that appropriate support is implemented to mitigate dyslexic-difficulties experienced by young people. Many measures are low-cost and high-impact for dyslexic learners, and also benefit other learners. Meeting the needs of dyslexic learners ultimately benefits them, their peers and the school overall. Where your child's dyslexia is identified early, the negative impacts on their self-esteem, their sense of identity and engagement with learning can be minimised. Your child's strengths can be celebrated, and their areas of need supported through adjustments made to curriculum delivery, personalised interventions and supportive input from professionals.

This should be done through constructive, supportive communication with parents/carers, inclusive discussions where their views are taken seriously and ongoing dialogue about what best helps your child in the classroom. Needs must be identified carefully, efficiently and accurately by qualified professionals and their recommendations implemented. Where this does not take place, support may be lacking, inappropriate or non-existent. In that instance, contacting your Local Dyslexia Association for support can be an important step in addressing problematic provision or inadequate identification of need.

Dyslexia, Inclusion and Diversity

Humara Abidi
Parent, Specialist Teacher

As I sat at the back of the class listening to my lecturer introducing the discrepancy model, I began thinking about the words of Jim Rose from his 2009 report, 'Dyslexia occurs across a range of intellectual abilities…… It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut off points.' I pondered over these wise words, but I couldn't help but feel that there are many caveats attached to this which would need to be explored.

Questions started firing up in my mind, such as, 'which intellect is being discussed based on which continuum?' Coming to this as one of the few Asians in my class, my wealth of experiences were distinct, equally important, and valuable. However, this wasn't enough as I hadn't experienced first-hand, at that time, how difficult it was, and still is, to break down professional barriers. I knew that it was imperative that I ensure that my children, the next generation, join the ranks of the professionals of tomorrow, shoulder to shoulder. This would only be achievable if I modelled hard work and good ethics, instilling the importance of education, integration and equality.

Diversity has many facets and I will be looking at it from an ethnic and social deprivation point of view. When testing for dyslexia we have to perform many cognitive and diagnostic assessments, then compare these to the individuals underlying ability using the WRIT. This is a really useful test but questions do arise as to whether the WRIT has certain cultural biases which favour the white middle and upper classes. I have used this on many occasions and there is one particular question which is asked of the testee which I find particularly perplexing. This is pertaining to the verbal analogy's subtest; the question being, 'what is a tuba?' Unless the testee has been educated in the west within a middle to upper class setting, it would be highly unlikely that they would correctly describe or identify that this is

a large brass instrument which one blows through to create a sound. Now, swap tuba with sitar and a testee from the east would have an advantage over his/her western counterpart. So my question…..how is this a fair test? How does this test, test the potential of an individual's ability to apply mathematical computation or apply the mechanics of the English language to reading and spelling? Therefore, if the system is geared towards the upper echelons of society, how do the majority of the population move up the social ladder and break through the unbreakable proverbial glass ceiling? This I tried, breaking many times, but never stopped chipping away at, until finally I did break through.

I have always been a confident individual who has the ability to mingle with people; as a northerner this came easily to me. So once I had settled into my home, as I was new to London, I started taking my son to local playgroups – my first barrier – so that I may become part of the local community, and my son, and by this time my daughter, would have some social interaction outside the home. I knew language development was crucial as I came from a household where my mother tongue was spoken mostly – I was always at a disadvantage at school, support or interventions were unheard of at the time; this had a major influence on the way I would bring up my children.

Time flew and it was time to enrol my son into nursery. My husband is a great believer in the concept that a child will do well anywhere as long as the support is solid from home and school; it's a partnership. He looked around the local schools and met with various educationalists, in the end he was smitten by one school, a school with staff which respected all who came through its gates. The school which I went on to work in.

Not knowing much about the area or its inhabitants, I decided to join the parent group. What an experience! I was welcomed, but only to a degree. Slowly, I began to understand my limitations and decided that there is no way that I will allow such barriers to cloud my children's future. I began to wonder if I, a British citizen who was born and brought up in this country, finding

myself constantly intimidated by society and the system due to many factors: no degree; not the right colour; poorer vocabulary than my southern counterparts, and economically within the working classes, how on earth do those people who do not speak English cope? With what courage would they bang on doors? And when they do, just to be turned away and ignored? This only made me more determined to fight harder.

My son was bright and walked into nursery already way ahead of everyone else as he had an incredible memory and would absorb information like a sponge. A few years later, it was my daughter's time to join. I knew at that point something wasn't quite right as I had my son to compare to. She couldn't string a sentence until she was 5 years old. Yet, she was cheeky, bright and made up for her weakness through tactile activities. I was left wondering as to what I should and where I should go. No matter how articulate I was, I wasn't taken seriously, perhaps I was too nice. My husband would push me to go to the school or the Dr's to alleviate my concerns, but I think that he felt that all will be well, eventually. I couldn't be as blasé. I started knocking on doors. I was told by the school that not to worry, that she would eventually be ok. Yet I wasn't satisfied. It took a good few meetings with the school before any sort of intervention was provided, but no formal assessment with speech or language was offered. I went to the Dr's and they too said the same, again no further investigations were offered. I then took it upon myself and decided to invest in a course. It was a new way of teaching phonics, especially to those children who were falling behind. It was created in the USA and named the 'Phono Graphix Programme'. This was my first step into the world of education, from the other side, as I was then employed by the school.

I was working hand in hand with teachers who knew me as a parent but not as a colleague; there is much distrust in the system and boundaries must never be crossed or blurred, but did this stop me? No. The results began speaking for themselves and the department went from strength to strength. A few years later, Jim Rose published a report in 2009, this was

the beginning of Xtraordinary people and my next step to becoming a specialist.

Being a specialist came with its challenges, but none the less, it has been extremely rewarding. Having the background knowledge and the contacts would place one at an advantage, would it not? However, this was not the case. My daughter now at secondary school was doing ok, until it came to exams; the results were not consistent with the time and effort she was putting into the revision and therefore not showing a true reflection of her ability. I made an appointment with the SEN department. After speaking with the SENCo and giving all the background information, I hit a wall. I knocked and knocked many times. The sound from the knocking became louder and louder, reverberating around me, but no-one could or wanted to hear. The SENCo did not even entertain the idea of performing a dyslexia screener on her. I hired a tutor to support her through her GCSE's; I was lucky that I could but what about those children who miss out because their parents cannot afford private tuition? She managed to get 10 GCSE's A-C!

Next step, A levels. She tried and tried, 2 years of hell and failing. Again, a trip to the SENCo office. Oh, the same spiel again! Rest breaks were the only solution, despite my saying to collate evidence throughout the year. My working in the industry, being a specialist, having the knowledge and the know how came to no avail when dealing with my daughter's difficulties. She broke after the 2 years, repeating the first year twice. Her tutor was in shock as he was convinced that she would get nothing less than an A, every time he tested her, her subject knowledge was incredible. By this point all confidence, character and her chirpy essence had completely disintegrated. She had become a shell of a being. This almost destroyed me, I was angry and confused, I wanted blood! It took us 3 years to rebuild her confidence; she left London and studied baking and cake decorating, becoming fully qualified. This was when I said to her that now she needs to think about university and to enter she must complete an access course. As a tiger mum, I had to

push her through those challenges as I knew it was imperative that she may overcome the emotional distress that she had encountered previously. She did and passed top of her class with distinctions. Within the first term of her entering university I advised her to go to learning support and ask to be tested; the screener showed that she required a further in-depth assessment. She was sent onto the Dyslexia Association for a Diagnostic Assessment Report. Conclusion? Classic dyslexic. She went on to achieve a BSc (Hons) degree from a Russell University – this was my proudest moment; she struggled and conquered, despite having a learning difference, she achieved and broke through that ceiling! To this day, I still chuckle at the text messages she sends me whenever I see homophone difficulties or general spelling difficulties, yet she reads scientific papers and now works as a technologist.

Nothing was left to chance, yet why did we have to go through this? I see on a daily basis how certain races are privileged to jump the queue, why is this the case? I was taught the mantra that 'Every Child Matters', yet this was not the case when it came to my daughter, she wasn't even allowed to join the queue. Her resilience, tenacity and determination has made her a stronger person who is now unstoppable.

I now have the privilege of working in both the primary and secondary sector; a secondary school with a very high level of SEN. As a British born Muslim, who wears the Hijab, I have achieved the PG Dip-Dyslexia, and I will do all that I can to help those that are diverse in any shape or form.

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Dyslexia Assessments – Pre 16

Karen Bartlett
Head of Assessment, Education and Professional Level Training

Difficulties with reading, writing and spelling are the most common reasons a parent would be alerted to book a dyslexia assessment. However, a parent may have also noticed their child/young person is becoming disillusioned with school, is finding school harder than their peers or appears verbally able and articulate but can't get what they want to say down on paper. A parent, or the young person themselves, might notice difficulties with remembering information or just have a gut feeling that something isn't right and that their child/young person isn't performing as well as they could be. What a parent doesn't normally ask for an assessment for is to find out their child/young person's strengths, however often following an assessment they will have a very good understanding of these and how they can be harnessed to support any difficulties.

A diagnostic assessment is the only way to really understand if your child/young person has dyslexia and where their strengths and weaknesses lie. Let's start with those strengths as believe it or not many children/young people (and parents) come out of an assessment full of confidence having found out what they are good at. This is the feedback from the parent of a child I assessed, 'I left the assessment with gratitude for the support and advice I had received, my son left the assessment with his head held high and with a boost to his self-esteem'.

The assessment process is actually quite an enjoyable process. I think the reason for this is the assessment is varied in delivery, most tasks are short and there is a multi-sensory element to them in terms of some practical, visual and auditory tasks as well as the necessary reading, writing and spelling. The full assessment takes approx. 2.5 hours. One aspect of the process that children/young people often get a boost from is finding out how their underlying ability compares to their peers. This can be particularly rewarding

if they are found to be on a par or indeed above their peers as often learners with dyslexia can feel like they aren't performing as well as their classmates and often consider themselves to be in the lower groups (even though they know they are more capable than the group they may be working with in class!). This can be particularly relevant at secondary school where some subjects are streamed based on individual's performance in literacy – usually their written ability – which doesn't reflect oral ability. A 14 year old boy I assessed some years ago commented that he 'found all learning at school too easy' he said, 'I understand everything but I'm in all bottom sets because I can't spell or make my sentences make sense when I write them down'. This is a frustration shared by many young people.

The purpose of an assessment is to find out what barriers are preventing the child/young person to progress in line with their peers and/or their own perceived ability. A diagnosis is made if the assessor's professional judgement is that the cause of the difficulties match elements as detailed in the most commonly used definitions of dyslexia such as the Rose Definition (2009) or the BDA Definition (2010):

> Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling.
>
> Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed.
>
> Dyslexia occurs across the range of intellectual abilities. It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut-off points.
>
> Co-occurring difficulties may be seen in aspects of language, motor co-ordination, mental calculation, concentration and personal organisation, but these are not, by themselves, markers of dyslexia.
>
> A good indication of the severity and persistence of dyslexic difficulties can be gained by examining how the individual responds or has responded to well-founded intervention.'

In addition to these characteristics, the British Dyslexia Association (BDA) acknowledges the visual and auditory processing difficulties that some individuals with dyslexia can experience, and points out that dyslexic readers can show a combination of abilities and difficulties that affect the learning process. Some also have strengths in other areas, such as design, problem solving, creative skills, interactive skills and oral skills.

In a typical assessment the assessor will put the child/young person at ease and often discuss their interests and hobbies and where the child/young person perceives themselves to be doing well or needing extra support. Prior to the assessment the assessor will have looked at the background information and decided on the tests to use. This will include tests of underlying ability which are a mixture of verbal and visual tasks with a practical element included. There will be some single word reading - both timed and untimed, reading of non-words is usually included as well as text reading to assess fluency, accuracy and comprehension. There is an assessment of spelling ability using single words as well as within a longer piece of writing where we can also assess handwriting, punctuation, grammar and organisation. Through the writing task, the assessor also looks at the individuals' speed and ability to copy as this is a core requirement in schools. We test phonological processing (phonological awareness, phonological memory and rapid naming) as well as short-term and working memory. There will also be a test of processing speed.

At the end of the assessment the assessor will have a good idea of whether dyslexia is present or not and what the strengths and challenges are but will want to go away and score up the tests and make comparisons between them before making a final judgement, in terms of a diagnosis in their full report. Knowing whether a child/young person has dyslexia or not empowers the parent and the child/young person as it enables them to understand the needs. Parents can then find support and work in partnership with the school to support weaknesses.

Possibly the most important part of the report is the recommendations section as this outlines what can be done to support the child/young person going forwards, based on the findings of the assessment. These recommendations will be based on whether the individual needs access arrangements for exams (such as extra time, a reader or a scribe), how they can be supported to improve their literacy (and numeracy) skills and what adjustments can be made both at home and at school. Whilst the report itself can't be used to apply for access arrangements for exams, it does help the school gain a better view of the individual's needs and it will encourage them to assess the individual in the school setting. It also empowers the parent to broach the subject with the school if the school have been reluctant to assess the child/young person.

In 2019 the DfE made the decision that a report conducted at any age can be used as evidence, if required, for Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) to support a student in higher education, as long as it was written by someone with an Assessment Practising Certificate (APC). Previously an individual would have required a further assessment at age 16 to apply for DSA.

The British Dyslexia Association offer diagnostic assessments. The cost of an assessment is £450 (+ VAT) with a specialist teacher and £600 (+ VAT) with an Educational Psychologist. Assessments are conducted by Specialist Teacher/Assessors with current Assessing Practising Certificate (APC) or Psychologists registered with the Health and Care Professional Council (HCPC).

For further information, or if you wish to book a diagnostic assessment, please download the relevant Information Sheet and Booking Pack from our website or contact BDA Assessments on **assessments@bdadyslexia.org.uk**

Due to Covid 19 and changes to Government guidelines; please see BDA website for latest information on BDA Assessment Service.

Access Arrangements for GCSE and A Level: Form 8 Assessment

Catherine Salisbury
AMBDA, APC Specialist Teacher Assessor

Many parents/carers are unaware of the process that needs to be followed in order for a student to be allowed access arrangements (reasonable examination adjustments such as extra time) in GCSEs and A levels. They may also never have heard of the term 'Form 8'. For those in education it is a familiar term and a process set up by JCQ (Joint Council for Qualifications). The Form 8 is the means by which schools record a pupil's picture of need and normal way of working; their assessment scores which provide evidence of need; and which access arrangements are to be applied for. The background information gathered by the educational institution regarding the student's normal way of working and learning needs, including any previous test scores, need to be completed by the educational institution in Part 1 of Form 8 before the student meets with the assessor. The assessor, who must be known and approved by the Centre, must have access to this information before they carry out any assessments in support of the application.

It is important for parents / carers to be aware that a privately commissioned assessment which has been conducted without consultation with the school or college cannot be used in an application for access arrangements. It is equally important to be aware that a diagnosis of a Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD) such as dyslexia is not required in order for a pupil to be awarded exam access arrangements. Nor does a diagnosis of SpLD automatically entitle a pupil to access arrangements, although such a diagnosis must be taken into consideration by the school or college.

Some parents/carers and students can be confused as to whether a Form 8 provides a diagnosis of an SpLD.

The purpose of a Form 8 assessment is only to provide evidence for the access arrangements requested by the Centre, in the light of the pupil's needs and normal way of working. As such, it does not include a comprehensive battery of tests and a diagnosis of a disability such as dyslexia cannot be drawn from its results. A Form 8 assessment cannot confirm the presence of a disability such as an SpLD; thus, it is possible to be awarded access arrangements for GCSE and A level examinations but not qualify for access arrangements at University, as the evidence requirements at University level differ from the requirements at GCSE and A level.

Will my Form 8 Assessment entitle me to future support?

A Form 8 assessment is solely for GCSE or A level access arrangements and is not a diagnosis. Universities usually require evidence of a disability, such as dyslexia, via a full assessment before they will put any support at all in place. This means that students without a full assessment report may not be granted access arrangements or support at university even if they have been awarded these previously. Additionally, evidence in the form of a full assessment report will be required in order to apply for Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) for higher education.

Full details on access arrangements for GCSE and A Level can be found here:

https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/

Education

The role of assistive technology in literacy education

Malcolm Litten
Member of the BDA Technology Advisory Committee

This chapter is full of good news! Everything your child needs in the way of assistive technology is now widely available. Thanks to the growing awareness of its importance to many people, tech 'giants' like Microsoft and Google are now fully on board by integrating the tools in their software. Plus numerous specialist software firms offer high quality tools to meet the needs of anyone who struggles with acquiring literacy.

There is a "however," unfortunately. In UK education there remains a vast gap between what is possible and what is done when it comes to integrating assistive technology into the system. Parents remain vital advocates for their dyslexic children.

So, equip yourself with the necessary knowledge, gird your loins and ensure your child's school does what the law requires: follows the requirements of the Equality Act of 2010.
[The UK Equality Act 2010 requires schools 'as far as is reasonably possible', to ensure that a disabled individual can benefit from what is offered to the same extent that an individual without disability can.]

I shall look specifically at two areas of use of assistive technology: its adoption as help for learning readers and its utilisation in exams at GCSE and 'A' level. What I say will be relevant to all the intervening years, but these are two key stages where it can make a vital difference for your child.

Assistive technology and learning to read

Current practice in UK schools puts enormous emphasis on the teaching of reading through phonics. This was advocated by many in the world of dyslexia and widely welcomed. This might suggest that difficulties in learning to read should have greatly

reduced for most children. However, in 2019, only 82% of children met the required standard in the Phonics Check at the end of Year 1 and this had only risen to 91% by the end of Year 2.

How many schools employ assistive technology in these early years? I do not have a statistic to give you, but from my own anecdotal experience the answer is precious few, which means we normally wait for entrenched failure before considering this form of help.

What kind of help am I thinking of? The use of text-to-speech software should be an integral part of helping learners to help themselves from the very beginning. A computer can read aloud any text using text-to-speech software. Having a digital assistant who will tirelessly and without judgement confirm what words sound like is better than having a human assistant who has very limited time, does tire and is, inevitably, an authority figure. A child using the digital help is in charge, works at their optimum pace and can reinforce their learning as many times as is necessary.

I have been involved in its use in a school in Goa, India, where, with proper integration into the class teaching, they have routinely ensured that every child is an independent reader by the end of Year 3. These are children learning to read in a second language, not their mother tongue. The intake to this school is not selected by ability in any way.

This help does not replace quality teaching, instead it provides time for the learner to reinforce their learning independently. Empowering a learner in this way is a key factor in maintaining their self-confidence and self-belief.

Text-to-speech software is available increasingly widely. It has always been built-in to Mac computers and iPads; is in recent versions of Microsoft Office and Google Chrome; can be added to older versions of Word by using a free add-on called WordTalk available from Call Scotland (an excellent source of information about assistive technology) and is a central feature

in such specialist software as ClaroRead, Clicker and Read&Write.

In addition, a free app I have developed with Claro software is designed to enable the learner to reinforce their knowledge of phonics. It is called Phoneme Reader and will read out the phonemes in sequence while highlighting them in any word in its 10,000 word dictionary. It is intended to provide the opportunity for this independent, self-paced reinforcement of learning, co-ordinated with what is being taught in class.

Early reading texts on the computer are available free to all schools from RNIB Bookshare so there is no shortage of reading material (for any age group). Some publishers, for example The Oxford Reading Tree, provide online access to many of their titles with built-in text-to-speech.

Assistive technology and access arrangements for exams

If your child is eligible for access arrangements in external exams, it is vital that you ensure their school is on the ball about providing these access arrangements using assistive technology. Many are not.

Eligibility for access arrangements is established through formal testing and by any arrangement being part of a pupil's "normal way of working" in school. Arrangements must reflect the type of support the pupil normally receives in the classroom or when completing homework, school tests, or mock exams, and may vary according to the subject being studied

Testing needs to be conducted no earlier than the beginning of Year 9, so a clear picture of the pupil's "normal way of working' needs to be established during years 7-9. This means that, as a parent, you need to be aware of what the school is providing as early as Year 7.

The main provisions will be a reader (not subject to assessment, although the school must still apply to the awarding bodies in order to give this arrangement), extra time, and a writer (both

subject to assessment). The reader/writer can be human but can also be assistive technology. Individuals will have personal preference as to which they want. If your child is to use assistive technology they must become a confident, effective user well in advance of using it in an exam.

The software is now so good that I would expect an effective user to suffer no disadvantage from using assistive technology rather than a human.

While a human or a computer can be used according to choice (and the school's ability to deliver), there is one key situation where only the computer can be used. In sections of exams which assess reading, including GCSE English Language, GCSE Welsh Language, and Modern Foreign Language exams, a human reader is not allowed. This is because it is difficult for a human reader to read passages without expression, so providing a degree of interpretation which may inadvertently help the candidate. In contrast, text-to-speech software is unable to understand what it is reading so cannot help the candidate in this way. It merely efficiently decodes – a skill not being tested in this exam.

Therefore, every candidate entitled to a reader should be provided with the assistive technology in GCSE English Language, a key qualification for progress to further and higher education courses.

The fact that so many schools fail to provide this support is bewildering, given that schools are judged by many by the quality of their exam results. They simply do not prioritise this opportunity for success for their SpLD students.

Speech-to-text, or speech recognition software, is far more widely available now. It is built-in to Mac computers and iPads, to Office 365, and to Google Chromebooks. Dragon Home speech recognition software is available for use on Windows computers and, in my opinion, is arguably still the most user-friendly version for dyslexic users.

It requires some persistence to become a confident, effective

user and it may be best to seek out training to avoid early frustration and consequent abandonment. For some individuals it can be transformative, finally enabling them to get their thoughts, their understanding and their creativity on to paper.

I have focused on two key tools – text-to-speech to support reading and speech-to-text to support writing. I believe firmly that these tools should be made available at the point where there is any evidence a learner is struggling. Waiting until later simply introduces time for failure to distort a learner's self-perception and make the learning process much harder.

I have listened to parents and teachers express their anxiety that early use of these will discourage the learner from developing independent reading or writing skills. Superficially this sounds plausible, but I believe it is the opposite of the reality.

I do not know any reading teacher who refuses to help a child with a word they cannot read. This is precisely what text-to-speech offers. The computer is the learner's paired reader, helping when asked. Fluent access to text is a pre-requisite to understanding. If a struggling reader cannot provide this for him or herself, they are denied the opportunity to learn from that text. Only if I expect to learn or be entertained by text will I be willing to read.

As for writing, there cannot be anything more frustrating than being unable to record your ideas when asked to by a teacher. I have heard teachers declare, "I never knew he knew that," when a student is given speech-to-text as a tool. Why would we choose to deny this tool to a learner who needs it? Would we deny a partially-sighted learner help?

There are many other ways computer software can help dyslexic learners. Perhaps the most obvious is the spell checker. This tool, that every working person uses automatically, is sometimes denied to children!

Mind-mapping software can assist in the challenging process of ordering and structuring longer pieces of writing. Organising

software can help with reminders of what needs to be done and when. Note-taking software can help older students manage their learning from lectures and reading. There are well-designed programs to help you learn to type. The list can get longer and longer.

But for any learner affected by dyslexia, mastering reading and writing is key. It is the door that opens up to all the rest of your education – or slams in your face. Unless we enable such learners to succeed, it is us who fail, not them. But they will be the ones to suffer the consequences.

As I said at the start, the good news is that all that you need is there, waiting to be used. As a parent, an educator or a friend, it is our job to make sure the tools are put into the learner's hands, that we ensure they know how to use the tool and then we can step back and watch them learn that they can understand text, they can record their thoughts, and they can join in with everyone else.

Rebuilding Self-Esteem:

Unlocking the potential of our dyslexic children during our 2021 recovery

John Hicks
Blogger, Parenting & Neurodiversity Coach

Introduction: What nobody expected about 2020

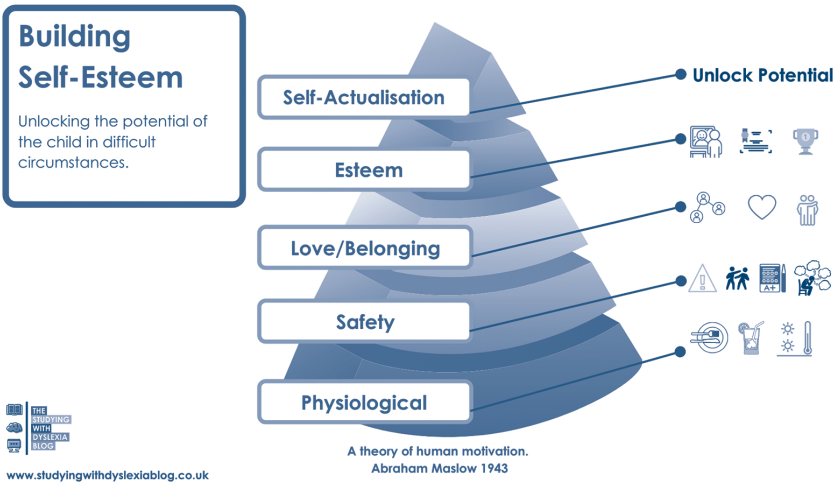
At the time of writing it is November 2020, so far this year has brought about huge challenges for the whole of the UK, within education and within family units all over the country.

With the announcements of vaccines coming, there is hope for a return to a more familiar sense of normality, but for all of us we will have been affected by enforced change that will have had an impact both physically and mentally for all. For us as parents, we need to help our children and young people with dyslexia recover from the impact of COVID-19 on their lives as they move into 2021.

I would like to outline a useful model that we can use to help us to meet the physical, social and emotional needs of our children so that they can repair positive self-esteem and naturally seek to unlock their potential.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: Old psychology but a handy model for us now as parents

In 1943, American psychologist Abraham Maslow developed a simple model, called the hierarchy of needs. This model allowed us to understand the process through which by meeting a range of needs, we can perhaps start to reach a state that he called self-actualisation, my preference is to call this unlocking potential. The base of the hierarchy is needs associated with physiological well-being such as food, water, warmth, the essentials for living. The next level up refers to safety and so often we can think about physical safety, but this also refers to emotional safety. When we start to feel safe amongst our peers and we feel accepted for who we are, we can start to openly



express who we are and then we can start moving through the level of love and belonging. When we feel a part of something greater than ourselves we can then move through the level of esteem. Naturally if our self-esteem is positive and we feel respected by others, we feel open to exploring opportunity. When our self-esteem is low and we feel unsafe, we can only focus on protecting ourselves, thus seeking to reduce participating in risk taking activities. We, perhaps, look more inwardly and engage less outwardly with others. For the dyslexic child, being asked to read out in class to their peers could be the one thing that causes a child to focus on protecting themselves rather than open up and learn more about themselves and develop opportunities for themselves.

Equally for children learning from home, the sense of isolation could keep a child from progressing up the hierarchy as they feel disconnected with outside life.

The child's path up the hierarchy of needs will be unique to them according to their needs.

So often as parents we can make assumptions about what our kids' need; 9 times out of 10 there's a good chance we may know what our children need, but we shouldn't make assumptions. Given that at the moment, our judgement might

be shaped by our own emotional response to life affected by COVID-19, we need to take extra care to understand the needs of our children so we can help them to unlock their potential. This model can be useful in helping us to visualise that process.

What I love about the hierarchy of needs is that this is set up as a triangle. There is a point at the top of it. For me, I see an arrow indicating a direction, something to strive for. The reality is that our needs and that of our children will be met and unmet as time goes on. We cannot possibly always be progressing up that hierarchy towards unlocking potential nor can our children. There will be times when it might feel like the process is two steps forward and one step back.

For me, this model, gives direction at a time of uncertainty. To unlock our potential and that of our children, we need to diagnose the needs of our children as well as ourselves and use the resources available to us to help meet those needs and thus progress towards the top of the triangle.

Good self-esteem unlocks potential

For anyone with dyslexia, to a greater or lesser extent, there will be a feeling of being different that can impact on one's feelings of self-esteem.

In the UK we have some conflicting statistics where 40% of our most successful entrepreneurs are dyslexic compared to the estimated 30 to 50% of the prison population being dyslexic in some way too.

There will be lots of different reasons behind the outcomes of individuals with dyslexia, but I believe that self-esteem is key in steering 'the ship'. Another American psychologist, Carl Rogers, believed that with the right resources being in place, everyone has a natural tendency to make the best decisions for themselves (aka the actualising tendency).

I believe that a person with good or poor self-esteem asks themselves the same question "What can I do?" What makes people different is how they ask it.

A difference between feeling empowered versus that of disempowerment.

Let us all, as significant adults in the lives of our children and young people with dyslexia, use our empathy to help our young ones to articulate what they need so as to become the best version of themselves as we seek to recover from 2020 and explore the possibilities of 2021.

John can be contacted via **https://linktr.ee/DyslexiaBlogger**

Neurodiversity

Professor David McLoughlin

David McLoughlin is an HCPC registered educational and occupational psychologist at Independent Dyslexia Consultants, London and Visiting Professor of Professional Practice in the Psychology Department, University of Buckingham.

Introduction

One of the most important skills a dyslexic person can develop is how to advocate for themselves in a constructive way. Shaywitz et. al (2016) have written that 'Self-awareness and self-knowledge, gained by an accurate diagnosis of dyslexia, brings in the light and allows the person to understand himself, to know how he functions and learns, the nature of his difficulties, and how to help himself' (p283). The language and terminology we use to describe dyslexia is central to this. It has been referred to as a difficulty and sometimes a disability, but increasingly the emphasis has been on difference. 'It is a different way of learning' having become common parlance. There is nothing new in the idea of people having varied abilities; one of the branches of psychology being the study of individual differences. It is why not everyone is a labourer, a lawyer, a doctor, an engineer, an artist, or an architect.

More recently in practitioner reports, guidelines for adjustments, educational literature as well as the press there is reference to the neurodiverse, neurodiversity, and neuro-minority. Popularity does not, however, mean that the concept is sound, despite being attractive to those who would prefer to be considered different rather than disabled. Nevertheless, to access resources and adjustments, as well as be afforded protection from discrimination under the terms of the Equality Act (2010) it has to constitute a disability. That is, a mental impairment that has an impact on day-to-day functioning. There is no reference to neurodiversity.

Whenever I come across new terminology, the question I ask myself is if it will lead to improvements in understanding,

whether this be individual self-understanding or that of those people will encounter socially, in education and the workplace. Any reference to 'neuro' makes a concept intriguing and attractive, but does not mean that people will be better understood, particularly as we have a long way to go before neuroscience provides clear explanations for the challenges faced by dyslexic people.

Neurodiversity and disability

The term neurodiversity originated amongst the more articulate within the autism advocacy movement and much of the literature addressing the concept focuses on autism. It is thought to be preferable to disability, although there is debate as to whether it should be applied to all individuals on the autistic spectrum or just those who are considered to be 'high functioning', the latter not being representative of the autistic population as a whole. It has been generalised to those who have specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia. The same issue arises; accomplished dyslexic adults might prefer to be thought of as different rather than disabled, but I am not convinced that someone who is functionally illiterate and has to rely on others to deal with the most basic of literacy tasks would see themselves as being neurodiverse.

Neurodiversity is influenced by the social model of disability which attributes the problems experienced by people to society. It belongs to identity politics rather than scientific practice in education and psychology. It contrasts with and developed as a rejection of the medical model that views disability as a feature of the individual which requires treatment. This dichotomy has been much criticised, and some writers have acknowledged that both individual and societal factors must be considered. It has also been suggested that the social model creates an 'Us and Them' mentality, that is an antipathy to those who are referred to as neurotypical, and does little to help the cause of ensuring that people are properly understood. Research into factors that contribute to the success of people who have specific learning difficulties has acknowledged that it is a result of both internal

and external factors. The former includes accepting that some things are more challenging than they are for others, as well as addressing this through the development of skills and strategies; the latter relates to having supporting families, teachers and colleagues. One without the other leads nowhere.

Neurodiversity is a confused concept and there is no clear definition or criteria for it. It seems to rely on exclusion, those who are neuro-diverse are considered to have different neurocognitive functioning from a typical or neurotypical cognitive profile. I struggle to understand what constitutes neurotypicality, but it seems that if you are not neurodiverse it describes you.

Neurodiversity and neuro-mythology

To support the concept of neurodiversity, proponents use evidence selectively. It has, for example, been argued that the neurological organisation of a dyslexic person's brain leads to them having stronger functioning in some areas. Much of the evidence for this is based on anecdotes, and speculation about creative and gifted people, including Einstein, Leonardo da Vinci and Antonio Gaudi, but there is little evidence for such claims. There are many living actors, writers and artists who have been identified as dyslexic, and there are disproportionate numbers of dyslexic students in art colleges, as well as entrepreneurs who are dyslexic. Whether this reflects innate abilities or a reaction to experience is open to question, and there is a false logic in assuming that the success of scientists, artists, architects and entrepreneurs is attributable to them being dyslexic. Studies of successful entrepreneurs, for example, have identified factors such as a high need for achievement and a strong inner locus of control. In his autobiography Richard Branson, 'a famous dyslexic', attributes his success to his ability to delegate rather than being 'made by dyslexia'.

There are some systematic studies that have explored the notion that dyslexic people have visual strengths, but the

results have often been contradictory. Increased right hemisphere functioning associated with dyslexia has led to the conclusion that they have superior global visual spatial processing ability. But other studies have found little support for the view of dyslexia as a deficit associated with 'compensatory visual-spatial talents', and suggested that the disproportionate number of dyslexic people in jobs requiring good spatial skills might be the result of them having chosen an occupation by default. That is, dyslexic people might deliberately choose creative courses and occupations as a way of avoiding reading and writing, which allow them to deploy the abilities they have. The critic A.A. Gill, who dictated all his articles as his spelling was so bad, wrote that the main reason dyslexic students do well in Art is that it is the only Department in which they are not 'remedial'.

The increasing number of studies that rely of fMRI brain scans to support the argument that dyslexic people have unique strengths, or in fact to explain difficulties, are often based on a misunderstanding of neurological and cognitive functioning. The efficiency of the brain is determined by connectivity; right to left, front to back, up and down. Whole brain analysis has shown that more than just language-based components are involved in skills such as reading.

To focus on interactions in one or more specific regions or simplistic divisions between left and right hemisphere functioning is naïve to say the least. It promotes neuro-myths and leads to inappropriate practices. Simmonds (2014) conducted a survey of teachers which demonstrated that they are inclined to believe a significant number of neuro-myths such as the idea that students learn best when they are taught in their preferred learning style, that they can be classified as either left-brained or right brained, and that motor coordination exercises can help integrate right and left hemisphere functions. Programmes such as Brain Gym have remained popular despite being based on scientific falsehoods and a dearth of evidence for their efficacy.

Conclusion

A google search reveals several papers suggesting that the time to talk about the notion of neurodiversity has come. I agree but would suggest that until the concept has been clearly defined beyond its use as a slogan, it is probably an idea that is premature and must be clarified before being promoted. I am not averse to the idea that some dyslexic people might have particular abilities which enable them to make a unique contribution in many settings. Nevertheless, I remain unconvinced that creating a mystique by referring to neurodiversity contributes to understanding, either self-understanding or that of others. There are many successful dyslexic people in all walks of life. Some have capitalised on their strengths; others don't have any outstanding talents other than the perseverance that has enabled them to work harder than most and pursue realistic goals.

During the course of a career in educational psychology spanning more than forty years, I have worked with individuals who have been variously described as atypical, exceptional, extraordinary, having learning difficulties, whether these be specific or general, learning disabled, as well as those who have been identified as having a variety of syndromes. I have never ceased to be amazed by the way in which new terminology is adopted without critical evaluation. I am reminded of Kauffman's comment that 'people soon figure out the euphemisms we use for the phenomena we call disabilities and they fool no one for long, but they do confuse communication for a while and ultimately make whatever we are referring to appear more negative or less worthy of respect than the original term'. (Kauffman, 2008: 246.). New terminology is too easily adopted without clearly thinking through the implications, and I fear that neurodiversity is another one of those euphemisms and it fails to 'bring in the light'.

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Dyslexia and Neuroscience

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University of Cambridge

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Neuroscience is the science of the brain and the nervous system. Our brains are super complicated. And one of the most complicated skills that brains learn is reading. So as you might expect, there are a variety of things that can go wrong during learning to read, any of which may cause dyslexia. Multiple brain mechanisms are typically involved.

Here I focus on one set of neural mechanisms, drawing on our studies at the Centre for Neuroscience in Education at the University of Cambridge. We are studying the way that the brain learns spoken and written language. When a baby is born, there are already 100 billion cells in the brain alone, and it is estimated that another million brain cells grow every minute. This means that there are trillions of potential connections ready to support learning – and it also means that if early oral learning is a bit different compared to other brains, this will have lifelong consequences.

Neuroscientists have shown that our experiences present predictable statistical patterns that our brains learn automatically. These patterns are the basis of perception and cognition[1]. Babies love being talked to, and BabyTalk contains some very important *acoustic* statistical patterns that aid language learning. The acoustic statistics that yield speech rhythm are greatly exaggerated in Babytalk[2]. The brain automatically records these acoustic statistical patterns, thereby creating *linguistic structures* – networks of cells that, when active, represent phrases and words. When we speak, we are creating sound waves, moving energy through the air. The brain records these energy changes, which are speech rhythms. The brain does this by aligning intrinsic brain rhythms to the rhythm

patterns in speech. In essence, our brain waves are surfing the sound waves. Just as for a successful surfer, the accuracy of this alignment is key to catching the peak of the wave. While real-life surfers have to make accurate judgements about waves, for babies' brains this alignment process is automatic, it is part of language acquisition for every baby. This automatic learning is also the foundation for the speech processing skills that are crucial for learning to read. Decoding and comprehending the alphabet, or Devanagari, or Kanji, or any other spelling system is recognising speech when it is written down. To become fluent and automatic, a reading system needs to develop from a good spoken language foundation.

Neuroscience studies

Our neuroscience studies show that children with dyslexia have difficulty in perceiving the rhythm patterns in speech[3]. In effect, the dyslexic brain is not computing these particular acoustic statistics as accurately as other brains. This has been shown for Spanish and French as well as for English. Some of the electrical rhythms in parts of the dyslexic brain – the brain waves – are out of time with the sound waves. We can think of the dyslexic brain always coming in either slightly too late or too early. The dyslexic brain waves are not very accurate surfers. Consequently, the sound structure of language is being encoded slightly differently. Oral language processing is atypical in dyslexia, even in infancy, because these automatic brain processes are working a bit differently. Children with dyslexia are trying very hard to learn to read. However, learning is much more difficult for them, because they are relying on a speech processing foundation that is working slightly differently from everyone else's.

This doesn't mean that children with dyslexia cannot learn language. Even though speech rhythm patterns are more difficult to hear, other aspects of spoken language are consistent within that different perceptual framework. Typically, children with dyslexia comprehend and produce language without notable differences to other children. Perceiving some of the

energy changes in the speech signal differently is a bit like being colour blind. If you are colour blind, you can still see and you can still navigate your environment. But your sensitivity to certain wavelengths of light is reduced. You cannot really distinguish reds, greens, browns and oranges, they look very similar. So if you were learning something at school where you were continually forced to make red/green distinctions, you would be struggling. You would be trying as hard as the other children, but somehow the whole process would be a much bigger effort. In dyslexia, you can still hear and you can still learn language, but you cannot really distinguish syllable stress. So when you have to process speech written down, that is to read, it is a big effort. The letter sounds do not seem to add up to words (they do not match your linguistic structures) in an easily-recognisable way. Reading is always a big effort, even when you have learned by heart the individual letter-sound correspondences or the individual characters in Kanji or Devanagari. It is a big effort because your brain encodes the sound structure of language (phonology) in a subtly different way to the brains of the people who invented these writing systems.

Genetic risk infants

For babies, learning the sound structure of language is automatic and unconscious. The infant brain learns the acoustic statistical patterns in speech from hearing BabyTalk. But infants who are at genetic risk for dyslexia do not experience such efficient unconscious learning for speech rhythm cues. Our longitudinal research shows that babies in families with dyslexia already show difficulties by 10 months[4]. They are poorer at discriminating the acoustic cues that help the brain to “lock on” to the rhythms in speech, the special cues that ensure that the brain catches the peaks in the sound waves and surfs them successfully. So already in infancy, the dyslexic brain is learning language differently. Indeed, the at-risk babies in our study are showing slower word learning and reduced vocabularies as toddlers[5]. By the time they reach school, they seem to have

"caught up" regarding vocabulary, but now they are slower at learning letter-sound correspondences. Here in Cambridge, we are now measuring what happens when the electrical rhythms in typically-developing babies' brains – their brain waves - are out of sync with the sound waves. We are measuring how this impacts their language acquisition as toddlers. Once we understand the neuroscience underpinning early language acquisition, we should be able to create new tools for supporting language learning in dyslexia.

One way to help infants at risk for oral language difficulties seems to be to put exaggerated emphasis on the rhythm patterns in speech – to amplify BabyTalk. Similar methods work for children with dyslexia[6]. Rather than practicing and practicing the letter-sound level, the dyslexic brain is helped by teaching the sound structure of speech at the levels of syllable stress, syllables, rhymes and rhythm patterns. One way to help to develop good phonological skills is to emphasise rhythm and rhyme in early learning settings, for example by incorporating lots of poetry and music. We also emphasise rhyme in our learning App, GraphoGame Rime, which teaches English letter-sound correspondences through rhyme families[7]. Rhyme families are statistical patterns in the English spelling system, rhyme-based spelling patterns like *night-fight-right,* which are highly consistent and predictable.

Amplified speech

The current focus of our dyslexia research is aimed at amplifying the speech signal using targeted acoustic engineering, so that the cues to rhythm are greatly exaggerated. We expect that hearing this amplified speech will improve children's phonological awareness. By helping children to process the sound structure of speech more like other brains do, the language system in the brain should be more attuned to the writing system that the child will learn at school. However, it is worth stating that having a brain that represents speech slightly differently could bring processing strengths as well. As noted by Rod Nicolson and Angela Fawcett in last year's BDA Handbook,

dyslexia can bring cognitive strengths as well as cognitive weaknesses. How strengths like creativity and big picture thinking may be related to atypical neural processing could prove a very interesting area of investigation for neuroscience.

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Why seeing print properly is so important for reading

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Professor Stein is Trustee & Chair of the Dyslexia Research Trust; Scientific Adviser to the BDA and President of Oxfordshire Dyslexia Association. His research focuses on how vision controls movement in animals, patients with movement disorders, dyslexic children and antisocial offenders. He collaborates with Dr Sue Fowler on visual dyslexia, and in 1995 they co-founded the Dyslexia Research Trust.

In this chapter I will discuss: 1) why seeing print properly is so important for sequencing letters accurately; 2) how a high proportion of children with reading difficulties fail to develop accurate visuomotor associations, which explains their difficulties; 3) how, if you identify these problems, you can help these children quite easily.

A worrying 20% of 18 year olds leave school without even being able to read as well as an average 11 year old. This leaves them cruelly ill prepared for modern life for which fluent literacy is essential. Most people with an interest in children's reading believe that their failure is the result of an inability to grasp the phonological structure of spoken words. Quite apart from the fact that over 50% of English words do not follow phonological rules, this 'phonological theory' is not really an explanation; it merely redescribes their problem, since translating letters into the sounds they stand for is what reading is. What we need is to find out is why these children fail to discover the phonological principle and in particular why they have such difficulty remembering the visual form of words.

Sequencing

When a child first looks at a word she sees it not as a string of letters, but as a whole object, like a caterpillar or mouse. Likewise, she hears the word when spoken as a continuous

sound, not as a sequence of more elemental sounds – phonemes. And it is not until she has learnt that a written word can be broken down into a sequence of letters, that she begins to grasp that the continuous sound she heard before, can actually be heard as a sequence of the phonemes that its letters represent. So visual analysis of a word's letter sequence primes auditory analysis of its sound sequence – its phonological structure. Thus visual analysis comes first, and it is fundamental for acquiring the phonological principle that underlies reading. Therefore, if children cannot see the words they're trying to read accurately, they'll have great difficulties with both visual and auditory sequencing.

Visuomotor integration

However, many studies have claimed that children with reading difficulties see words just as clearly as their more successful peers. This is because the standard clinical tests of vision only look for common eye problems such as short sight or astigmatism, not for the higher level abnormalities of visuomotor integration which cause most of poor readers' problems. These include unstable fixation, incoordination of the two eyes working together binocularly and defective focusing (accommodation).

Precise visuomotor integration is crucial for reading. When a beginner reader looks at the word 'D' 'O' 'G' in large print, she will first move her eyes to fixate the 'D', then the 'O' and so on. In order to register where the eyes were pointing when she fixated on the 'D', the posterior parietal part of the cerebral cortex - PPC needs to tag the letter with where it was in the sequence, by associating signals about the preceding eye movement with the letter it captured. These signals are provided by large retinal cells (often known as 'magnocells') and the associations enable the PPC to build up an accurate representation of the sequence of letters in a word.

Prevalence of visual symptoms

Because these visuomotor associations are complex and such linear sequencing is not required for most activities in life, many children have problems with developing them when they first

start learning to read. In a recent study we found that 10% of nearly 1500 unselected 9 year olds had frequent double vision due to breakdown of binocular coordination; 6% experienced periodic blurring of the text due to faulty control of accommodation; and 5% found that letters and words seemed to move around on the page, suggesting unstable fixation. Many other studies have reported similar prevalences. But unless you ask, many children will not volunteer them as symptoms, because they think everyone experiences them.

Magnocellular neurones

There is now overwhelming anatomical, physiological, neuroimaging and interventional evidence that children experience these visuomotor deficits because their visual magnocellular neurons do not develop properly. These magno- (large) cells are responsible for timing visual events, hence they signal when images move across the retina; and this underlies the ability to sequence them correctly. They do not signal colour, although they are most sensitive to yellow light. Nor do they provide the fine detail of letters, such as the tiny differences between an 'o' and an 'a'; these are provided by the much more numerous 'parvo' (small) cells. Instead the magnocellular neurons' main function is to mediate the visual guidance of movements by rapidly signaling when visual events occur, together with their velocity. This information is projected throughout the visual 'transient system' to the PPC and frontal lobe eye fields to guide eye movements: stabilising fixation on letters; computing balanced eye muscle contractions for binocular saccades; or converging and changing the eyes' focus for near vision. Hence their impaired development expresses itself in disorders of this visuomotor control.

Visual Stress

Visuomotor symptoms are frequently lumped together with eye discomfort symptoms, such as glare, eye strain, pain around the eyes or frank headache (asthenopia), as 'visual stress', since they often go together. Such stress is particularly provoked by the pattern in books of dark lines of text in stark contrast to the

white page. But beginner readers are seldom confronted by such blocks of text. I prefer the term 'visuomotor' because this word points to the ultimate causes of the symptoms that most impact on beginners. But whatever we call them, these children still need help.

Dyslexia

Note that I haven't used the word 'dyslexia' so far in this Chapter. This is because visuomotor symptoms are common in children, and they're not confined to those diagnosed with dyslexia. And in some true dyslexics their visuomotor deficits are less important than their auditory processing ones. Moreover, dyslexia is now very difficult to identify satisfactorily. The dominance of the phonological theory has made it almost impossible to diagnose it reliably. The crucial criterion that used to be employed was that the child's reading and spelling should be significantly worse than that expected from his oral and non-verbal ability. However this 'discrepancy' test has been abandoned in the last 20 years because, it is argued, both discrepant and non-discrepant poor readers have similar phonological problems. But this is simply because phonological analysis underlies all reading, so naturally it is impaired in all poor readers. Difficulty learning to read can be due to poor teaching, lack of family support, truancy or generally low cognitive ability, as well as to true dyslexia. But it is claimed that there is no fundamental difference between all these causes because they all lead to a phonological deficit; so all poor readers, or none, should be regarded as dyslexic, and discrepancy between general ability and their poor reading should not be used to specially identify dyslexia.

In my view abandoning the discrepancy test was a mistake, since that idea was central to the original concept and now diagnostic criteria are very unclear. Actually, one doesn't even need the diagnosis now to obtain concessions such as extra time in exams, and many LEAs are not bothering to test for it. Of course that doesn't mean that dyslexia doesn't exist, as claimed by some. But there's a real danger that the visual

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...and all of a sudden, nothing is impossible.

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causes will be forgotten, and since many dyslexics are supremely talented in other respects, not nurturing their unusual abilities would be a disastrous mistake.

Treatment of Visual Symptoms

The bottom line is that if you want to help children overcome visual difficulties, you first need to know whether they have any. They may not volunteer them without prompting. Teachers report that the children often say they can't see words properly: they blur, fuzz, fizz or move around, split in two and they're always losing their place on the page. Clearly such children with these problems will have difficulty memorising visual word forms, and they suggest that coloured filters might help them.

Coloured Filters

Retinal magnocellular neurones respond best to yellow light. In addition, the visual transient system as a whole is selectively enhanced by blue light via the suprachiasmatic nucleus in the hypothalamus. Thus it is reasonable to suppose that children with visual reading problems might be helped by viewing text through filters that transmit either yellow or blue light. However the use of colour filters is highly controversial. It is particularly criticised by those wedded to the phonological theory because they mistakenly believe that it contradicts this theory. It does not; it merely offers an explanation why some children fail to grasp the phonological principle, as discussed earlier.

The hypothesis that only yellow or blue light might help is also challenged by alternative theories that suggest that one of a whole range of colours might help individuals according to the different patterns of visual sensitivity each may demonstrate. Especially if the latter is true, it becomes difficult and expensive to design a watertight randomised control trial (RCT - the gold standard for proving causality and efficacy) to show that they work. So there is as yet little strong evidence that colour filters really do help. Nevertheless, what little there is, together with their own experience and many thousands of individual testimonials extolling their virtues, convinces most of those

who've actually tried them, that colour can help some, but not all, children. So whether you believe the magnocellular explanation or not, teachers should be encouraged to see whether children with visual symptoms can be helped by viewing reading material through coloured overlays. If they are helped, then wearing appropriate filter spectacles colours the whole visual field, and is more convenient for school work. The blue or yellow filter spectacles specially developed by the Dyslexia Research Trust are the simplest, but there is an array of other options as well.

Conclusions

Sequencing the letters in a word visually is the essential first step in learning to read, not only to memorise the visual form of the word, but also to prime phonological analysis of the word's sounds. Impaired sequencing is dependent on accurate association of the letter that the eye is seeing with the change in eye position just beforehand that pointed it there. This process is dependent on input from the visual timing, 'magnocellular' neurons that are often inadequately developed in poor readers. Because these are most sensitive to blue or yellow light, the children can often be helped by using blue or yellow filters. So teachers suspecting visual problems should be encouraged to seek the opinion of an eye specialist experienced with these filters, who can provide filter spectacles for help with reading.

Further Reading

Dyslexia Research Trust: **www.dyslexic.org.uk**

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The importance of screening tests for children and adults

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For many years now, I have been passionate about the need to develop and apply screening tests for dyslexia for children and adults, and I am proud to have published tests across the age range, with my colleague Rod Nicolson, including the first test to screen for dyslexia in very young children, the Dyslexia Early screening test, for ages 4.5 to 6.5, which was so novel it featured in the BBC TV national news in 1994, where I worked with a fantastic 4 year old, happy to pretend we had just met, for take after take by the cameras.

It is particularly crucial to identify areas where children are struggling in the early years in school in order to cut into the cycle of failure and low self-esteem, which can devastate the learning of children with dyslexia and other learning difficulties. Torgesen (2001), for example noted that 67.5 hours of individual intervention would be needed for a child if support is delayed beyond the age of 8. As many of you will know, our son Matthew was diagnosed as dyslexic at the unusual early age of 5½ by a psychologist using an IQ test. At that stage he was given nine blocks to complete a pattern, with the warning this is really difficult, to which Matt replied this sort of thing is easy for me, before completing the task successfully. The infant school were extremely sympathetic to his difficulties (at this time he could not recognise a single letter after a year at school), and he worked with the Head teacher and another boy with pervasive developmental differences on simple 3-piece jigsaws. This illustrates for me the importance of teachers fully understanding the profile of the individual child, and being empowered to provide materials that are stimulating and slightly challenging in order to help each child achieve their potential. Of course, we are talking here of the situation nearly 40 years ago now, and I am confident that awareness of the strengths and weaknesses

of dyslexia and other learning disabilities is much richer now than it was at that stage. In some part this must relate to the availability of a wide range of screening tests, with the best, those that take a broad approach to evaluating skills, considering not only weaknesses but also strengths, in order to provide a complete profile of the child. Understanding of these strengths and weaknesses can empower not only the teachers, but also parents, children and adults with dyslexia themselves, because we all tend to focus on the areas with which we struggle rather than being aware of working to our strengths.

Screening tests

I am naturally focusing here on our own screening tests, because these are the ones with which I am most familiar. However, I have also worked with the CoPs and Lass battery, from Chris Singleton (1995) the Do-it-Profiler from Smythe and Kirby, The GL Dyslexia screener and portfolio, and the more targeted phonological screening tests such as PhAB (Phonological Assessment Battery) (Frederickson, Frith and Reason) 1997; and the Phonological Abilities Test (Muter, Hulme and Snowling 1996). This is in addition to the screening for 14+ from Quickscan and Studyscan from GL. All of these tests are research based and can contribute to our understanding of dyslexia.

In terms of the research background, our early work was based on an analysis of skills in pre-school children conducted by our PhD student Sue Pickering, including a group of children with family history of dyslexia. Out tests for older children were based on a large-scale analysis of performance across a broad range of skills in children aged 8-16. In all these cases, we were able to identify tasks that could differentiate children who were developing normally from those who were diagnosed with dyslexia. This has ensured that all of our work is firmly embedded in science. By contrast, in terms of the media, possibly my most interesting experience in using these tests was to work with Robert Winston on Child of our Time for BBC TV, assessing 2 of the original cohort for dyslexia using the

DEST, and following up with the DST when they were old enough, even becoming friends and staying with one participant in their own home.

In earlier research, (Nicolson, Fawcett and Nicolson, 2000; Nicolson, Fawcett, Moss, et al.,1999) we established that screening children in school at age 6 (using the Dyslexia Early Screening Test, DEST, Nicolson and Fawcett, 1996) followed by targeted short-term intervention can significantly assist most children at risk of reading failure. The screening test at this stage is based on pre-reading skills, motor skills, verbal and spatial memory, letter and digit recognition, phonological skills and a measure of sound order, taking about 30 minutes to administer and then compared with national norms for the age range. A recent evaluation was undertaken by Carroll, Solity and Shapiro (2016) of the usefulness of the DEST-2 (Nicolson and Fawcett, 2004) in predicting difficulties, in conjunction with subtests from other screening tests. 267 children were tested in reception and followed up 2, 3 and 4 years later to check on their reading ability. 47 children (18% of the sample) were identified as reading disabled on the basis of scoring 1 standard deviation below expected level. Interestingly, in line with Pennington's (2006) multiple deficit model, no single deficit identified all these children, but 52% showed between 4 and 7 deficits. Print knowledge explained 54.7%, phonological skills 51.8%, verbal short-term memory 66%, and motor skills 53% of the variance. This article from Carroll, Solity and Shapiro, (2016) confirmed the usefulness of a broad test in early screening. Possibly the widest use of the DEST-2 derived from my work at Swansea University.

During this period, a system of screening and free linked intervention was set up, which continues to this day, with the successful use of the approach with over 1,000 children in reception reported in a recent article (Fawcett and Jones, 2019). The study was conducted over several phases, in phase 1 targeting only the children teachers were concerned about and moving over 50% of 375 children out of the risk band, following

just 12 hours of explicit targeted support in the form of games. In the 2nd phase whole classes were screened to identify the quiet children who might normally be overlooked, 670 children in all, identifying 25% at risk before intervention, falling to only 7.6% at risk post intervention. Finally, 306 at risk children were supported, including reception, 1st and 2nd year. 57% of these children were no longer at risk, after intervention, with the most satisfactory outcomes for those who received support in reception. The system is continuing, and is currently being extended to Birmingham, although inevitably delayed by the corona virus pandemic.

Measures of literacy

The DST-J and DST-S were based on revisions of the original DST (Dyslexia screening test) which included measures of literacy, including 1 minute reading, 2 minute spelling, and nonsense word reading, with different versions for junior and secondary respectively. A similar approach to screening and intervention was adopted with 36 junior school children aged 7, and 51 controls, and followed up their performance at pre-test and 6 months later (Fawcett, Nicolson, Moss, et al., 2001; Nicolson, Fawcett, Moss, et al., 1999). Interestingly this study found, that although significant improvements were made of 3.4 on standard scores, which persisted over time, the lower starting point of 79.9 standard score meant that they were still lagging behind expectations for their age. The DST-S has also been used extensively in studies funded by the Leverhulme foundation into the usefulness of screening and intervention with children with English as a second language, using both traditional and computer-based approaches (Fawcett and Lynch, 2000, Lynch and Fawcett, 2000).

The potential for use of the test with other disabilities was illustrated by Action Duchenne, (Hoskin and Fawcett, 2014) whose screening and intervention programme identified a profile of difficulties amenable to support (the charity won the National Lottery Education Award for this study, in November 2011). A key strength of the DEST and DST-J has been the outstanding

interest in translating these tests for use internationally, originally for use in research, but also for wider commercial use. The most successful screening test, the DST-J for ages 6.5-11.5, has been translated into Dutch, Spanish, Welsh editions and normed and published by Pearson Education, in addition to an Indian edition published in 2012. The screening tests have also been translated into other languages, including Bosnian, and normed for research use in many countries, including Greece, Israel, South Asia (2009 on), the USA, and the United Arab Emirates. Currently, there is continuing interest from a broad range of countries including Croatia, Hungary, Malaysia, and Brazil.

The DAST was developed based on findings from an earlier questionnaire evaluation of the usefulness of screening for adults with the late Tim Miles (Nicolson, Fawcett and Miles,1993). The DAST has been widely used in the UK for screening adults prior to referral for full WAIS-III assessment. It has been used in Higher education, adult education, by the Department of Employment, the Army, and the prison service. In a study of adult education, (Lee, 2004) 177 basic skills adults were tested on the DAST, with 75.5% found to be at strong risk, and the remainder at mild risk, with around 40% showing evidence of dyslexia and the rest more generalised difficulties. In higher education, the University of Sunderland tested 199 students on DAST between 2001 and 2004 (Surtees, 2004 personal communication), finding 155 at risk, all of whom were confirmed to have evidence of dyslexia at diagnosis.

The DAST has also been used as a research tool, in conjunction with other experimental measures. It has been used to demonstrate continuing problems in adult students with dyslexia (Buchholz and McKone, 2004). It is also used as an index of improvement in response to remediation (Liddle et al, 2004). In 2004, subtests selected to be deliverable in 8 minutes were used with 10,000 adults as part of the current phase of the UK National Cohort Study. ‘A series of tests which both cohort members and interviewers appear actually to be enjoying’ Butler, 2004 personal communication.

So why is it so important to identify dyslexia in adults? I have worked over the years with adults from many backgrounds, in most cases using a full IQ test coupled with tests of literacy to evaluate performance, basing diagnosis on the discrepancy definition that characterised earlier approaches to diagnosis. This approach is now more controversial, because it means that a bright child with no evidence of greater difficult than others of the same age can be identified as dyslexic. For myself, I have typically worked with children and adults who fall into the category of reading or spelling significantly below their chronological age. However, it is not always easy to obtain access to a full diagnosis and the costs are high, despite the introduction of accredited teacher-based assessment. For me, the important aspect is to share their profile with those I have either screened or diagnosed. I shall never forget my husband after his diagnosis at age 55, realising that his ability fell into the superior range, when he had suffered all his school life from reports that noted 'fair or only fair, very pleasant member of the class'. Despite this, he had been extremely successful in his career in technical sales management, although he never felt that he had achieved his ambitions in life, and might have taken a different path if he had that knowledge earlier. So, in my view, it's never too late to be screened and to develop a deeper understanding of your strengths, as well as your weaknesses, and this applies across all levels of ability.

It remains to discuss how well the screening tests have survived the test of time, given that greater awareness of the importance of phonology for example now informs the curriculum for young children, whereas there is likely to be little impact on older children and adult performance. In work with Wales, I was fortunate enough to be given the full profiles of 91 children who had undertaken the DEST-2 screening. An analysis of the results showed that all the subtests of the DEST-2 continued to successfully individually differentiate between children at risk for dyslexia and those developing as expected for their age. This means that teachers can have confidence in the ongoing usefulness of these tests. One of the most striking aspects for

me of the work that I have undertaken in Wales, was the interest and excitement palpable in the teachers who came to our meetings to learn more about how to empower themselves to work with children with difficulties, with many being surprised by the importance of skills such as rhyming for this age group, and sharing anecdotes and tips on how they worked with the screening system. Their willingness to become engaged with this system has meant that this is now built in to the early years framework for the whole of Pembrokeshire. It has been a delight for me to witness this process in action, and I look forward to working with Birmingham again once conditions allow.

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Reflections on digital technologies and dyslexia

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Dr Yota Dimitriadi is an experienced, innovative teacher-educator who specialises in the field of digital technologies and computer science education with passion around inclusion and diversity.

I remember when I used to give out to all my students with dyslexia a Franklin spellchecker. For those of you who may not remember or know of the wonders of this pocketful little resource, let me share. It is the size of a calculator and looks like one or it may resemble a very small tablet. We type in words phonetically and it predicts quite accurately the correct spelling of them. In some versions of the Franklin spellchecker it also offers and reads out the definition of the word. The more expensive versions even translate the word in other languages. It was an innovative resource, a portable answer to the phonetically structured spellchecker and predictor apps that at the time would have to be installed extra on the computer, as an answer to the once limited Microsoft Office spellchecker.

It is also worth sharing that very few of the young people I shared this resource with took it with them to school or openly used it at school. Of course, there were several factors that influenced this decision, including school perceptions around dyslexia. However, one of the key reasons was that it was not cool! Those young people did not want to stand out by openly using a clunky resource that would only show that they needed support in spelling or reading.

Fast forward a few years later, and the advent of tablets as well as campaigning for accessibility, has supported a more integrated approach towards inclusivity by design rather than as an add-on or an afterthought. As a result, it has supported more acceptance of assistive technologies as the norm and a

preference rather than as a deficit approach for those who cannot access script easily. Think for instance, of opportunities that free apps like the Microsoft Immersive Reader offers. It supports the users' reading experience by adjusting the onscreen script format (font size, font style, letter spacing), reads out the text (from websites, PDFs, etc) highlighting words as the text is being read out per line or per three lines or per paragraph. It also offers grammar options identifying verbs, nouns, syllables and in that way becoming a versatile tool for a wide range of users who will benefit from this support, including learners with English as an Additional or Foreign Language. This is just an example. No technology is perfect but it is a step towards the idea of an accessible digital world for all. Other integrated Office features include the 'Editor', which is part of a new generation of spellcheckers (can be found under the 'Review' ribbon in Word or PowerPoint), or the option to check for accessibility errors under 'Inspect Document'. In addition, more and more users of Outlook opt in to signpost and remind message recipients to share 'accessible content'. These features bring to the forefront the idea of accessible design for all.

Such developments to acknowledge diverse classrooms, and then as an extension workplaces, and the need to engage and include all, shift the focus to a Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL allows enhanced control over the learning and communication process through flexible and multisensory ways of 'providing multiple means of representation, action and expression, and engagement' (CAST, 2018). For instance, the option to convert digital inking (digital handwriting) in OneNote and work on Mathematical equations in more inclusive way or the option to 'Dictate' (under the Home ribbon) attempt to address possible barriers that users may face when typing or using the keyboard to communicate. These options expand user input choices and promote opportunities to communicate ideas via digital pen, voice or touch as an input device. In this way these options become mainstream rather than alternative and the emphasis on disability discourse moves towards

acknowledging that some disabilities are invisible rather than hidden.

These accessibility features extend beyond Microsoft, of course. Chromebooks have also a built-in text reader and if we are using Google more widely on an Android device, Chrome Vox and Select-to-speak are part of the accessibility suite, while Apple also supports spoken content via the Voice Over screen reader.

Inclusive communication extends to social media, where user-generated content is shared at a wider and international scale. We see a shift towards encouraging and promoting awareness of inclusive communication more explicitly as users compose their messages and share visual assets. For instance, by adding alternative text for image descriptions.

Companies like Microsoft taking the 'Made by Dyslexia' pledge, develop and promote digital Learning Tools that support communication, and promote themselves as an inclusive and diverse company. These campaigns also offer opportunities to reimagine the classroom and the workplace and as an extension inspire future generations for career opportunities in the field of digital technologies that can have inclusive social impact. Part of the current work for big technology companies is training and testing algorithms to offer personalised user support. As the increased focus on Artificial Intelligence and machine learning produces screening apps like Dytective or communication apps like Seeing AI, it also provides a fertile landscape to promote the strengths of neurodiverse individuals and encourage career pathways where problem solving and visualisation are key. Take for instance, computer programming, software development or system analysis. Career pathways such as these where visualising the big picture and problem-solving are central skills. are some of the areas that neurodiverse individuals can thrive (Stein, 2018). With changes and developments in digital technologies, contextual challenges individuals may face with coding 'spelling' errors can be overcome and their strengths in seeing connections and offering solutions that can support productivity and creativity can be celebrated.

We have come a long way in the evolution of digital technologies in an attempt to offer all users the right for participation and expression. We still have a way to go but by encouraging neurodiverse individuals to be part of the digital workforce and openly discuss challenges and opportunities they faced along the way it will be inspiring for all.

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Working online in music – and other subjects

Sally Daunt
Chair, BDA Music Committee

Some comments and suggestions for good practice with neurodiverse students

2020 has seen an enforced move to meeting, teaching and generally interacting online. Although this article has music students in mind, many of its comments can be applied to other situations and subjects and 'students' can refer to individuals from the age of 5 to 100.

Many of the points here can also usefully be applied to 'live' face-to-face working.

Various online/remote platforms can be used for online/remote working. These include

- **Skype** where you can share and send documents. It has a subtitles feature. See **https://www.skype.com/en/get-skype/**
- **FaceTime** which is the Apple Mac equivalent of Skype. See **https://apps.apple.com/us/app/facetime/id1110145091**
- **Zoom** is a popular video app. See **https://zoom.us/download**

  You can run webinars and group sessions by sharing the meeting link with whoever needs to be included. You can share your screen and annotate it. Calls can be recorded. There is a Tips and Tricks document for teachers at **https://zoom.us/docs/doc/Tips%20and%20Tricks%20for%20Teachers%20Educating%20on%20Zoom.pdf**
- **Microsoft Teams** which is part of the Microsoft Office 365 package. See **https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/microsoft-teams/download-app**

It is most important to remember that when working with individuals under the age of 18, or vulnerable adults...

1. 1:1 online activity **MUST** be agreed with parents or carers prior to any sessions taking place.
2. The 1:1 must then take place only at the days / times agreed; parents and carers or another responsible named adult should be present in the house at the time.
3. Session protocols must be agreed with parents / carers and learners.
4. You should keep a written record of any such sessions to safeguard yourself and the learner.
5. Being filmed or recorded without giving consent is a legal breach of General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and both students and teachers need to ask for consent to film or record any session.

Some positives

You might think that the situation of 'resorting' to online/remote working is a bit of a disaster with difficult technology and lack of 'real' contact. However, there **are** positive features to this.

- Some shyer students (or/and those on the autistic spectrum) may gain in confidence through online work. The fact that they are having lessons in their home and don't feel worried about being in a room 1:1 with an adult may help some individuals.
- Students can show a greater level of independence.
- There can be increased (and useful) contact with parents.
- It can be useful to be able to observe students working in their own homes. In the case of piano/keyboard lessons, seeing the sort of stool/chair that is being used can be a revelation, although the resolution of problems may need to be handled tactfully with parents.

- It is possible to be **flexible** in terms of timings of sessions, both in terms of days and times and also length of sessions.
- For dyslexic/neurodiverse children (and very young children), splitting a 30-minute instrumental lesson into two smaller 15 min. lessons and doing back-up 5min tutorials if something is very poorly understood can be really useful.
- Online work can be a real opportunity for imagination and thinking outside the box.
- Gradually students become more confident – and so does the teacher!

And a few negatives

- Remote work using computer screens can be **very tiring**. Do ensure that you have adequate breaks between students and build in time during the day for yourself. Make sure that your students are not going straight from one online session to another.
- There can be poor **sound quality**. This is particularly difficult when working with more advanced music because Zoom evens out dynamics and has an aversion to bass notes and sustaining pedals. It should be fine for speech though.
    - It can be useful to purchase a good USB microphone. This will enable you (the teacher) to hear things clearly and stops dropouts as the microphone is directional.
- Synchronisation with another person (or a group) can be difficult, though there are plenty of examples of online choirs and instrumental groups to show that it is possible. If it's difficult for the teacher to help with a section of tricky timing by clapping the rhythm as the student plays, or even counting aloud, try playing the passage for the student who can then copy the rhythm, even if it is just a bar at a time.

- Encourage students to download an app metronome and sometimes to play with it while they are being taught. This could even be used in other subject areas for chanting or rapping information – see the further section on multi-sensory approaches.

Things to remember

- It is important for both teacher and student to be prepared in order to avoid distractions during the lesson.
- Because participants will be relying much more than usual on verbal clues, speak clearly and perhaps more slowly than usual. You will have to listen more carefully than normal, too. Don't talk too much and give visual confirmation of the things you're talking about, where possible.
- For younger students, it may be useful for parents to sit in on sessions just in case assistance is needed with writing tasks etc.
- Try taking notes yourself, scanning them and sending them to parents to print or copy, who will then stick them into the pupil's notebook or file.
- For older students, encourage them to take their own notes. Allow time for this and help them to know what to write. Have a look at what they've done (they can hold the note book up to the screen or share their screen if they've been writing on a Word document).
- Keeping **concentration** on a screen can be tricky, so aim for a situation where online sessions are in a room/area where nothing else is going on – including the TV!
- To aid concentration, visual **background** should be un-cluttered and ensure that there is nothing on show that shouldn't be!

- Remember that neurodiverse students and particularly students with mental health difficulties may find new ways of working particularly stressful and difficult, so be prepared to be extra supportive and patient.
- However, your familiar face may provide a constant when 'live' face-to-face interaction is difficult. So, be (extra?) positive and present a 'cheery' atmosphere.
- There may need to be even more than normal emphasis on **encouragement**. Be imaginative about ways of doing this with systems of rewards, for example.
- As always with neurodiverse students in particular, don't overload sessions with too much information or new things.
- You will probably need to have a second copy of the music or other material involved in a lesson. This can be done by taking screen shots of the computer screen, for example.
- It's not always easy to point to things on the music (or other material). Turn this into a positive by encouraging students to take responsibility for writing information on music themselves during lessons.
- Used **with permission**, videos can be useful.
- Students can record their music performances (or other comments on other areas of work) and send the video to the teacher for feedback, if the parent consents. Videos need to be stored sensitively and securely in a password-protected area.
- It can be useful, particularly with neurodiverse students, to send them videos or recordings of any new music to be learned (or information about topics in other subjects). Consider focussing on tricky 'bits' of a piece/subject.
- Have a whiteboard and pen handy for explanations as well as flashcards.

- Consider using a **WhatsApp group** to communicate instructions following 1:1 lessons with pupils and family members.
- Use apps (unless the student has had enough of learning from a screen). In music, the ABRSM apps work ok when shared in Zoom, for example. This allows an opportunity to apply some aural skills.
- Use online working as positively as possible. For example, the screen-sharing facility on Zoom or Microsoft Teams can be used to share a piece of sight-reading, a recording, a game, a YouTube performance, an aural app or GCSE anthology listening exercises.
- Use the record facility on your phone or computer or an app such as Simple Recorder (Mac) to send piano accompaniments or the other half of a duet for pupils to play along to or recordings of pieces. The student could sometimes play along to the recording at home.
- Hold your phone over your hands to demonstrate technique or to illustrate pattern on the piano/keyboard.

Multisensory work

is particularly useful with neurodiverse students but should benefit all.

It can include any of the following in online situations

- Clapping or playing rhythms (on pan lids, for example) or repeating information in a ‘sing-song’ way. Some students may like to create a rap about chemistry or number bonds...
- Do similar things using **movement**.
- Play games. In music, this could be ‘I-spy with my little eye a bar that looks like (or sounds like) this…’.

Technology

- If you experience technical problems, keep calm! If necessary, ring your student’s home to reinstate the session.

- Avoid having multiple tabs open as this can affect how well your connection works.
- Check your internet connections are as good as possible. The site Netspot: 'Top ways to boost your wi-fi' may be useful. See **https://www.netspotapp.com/top-10-ways-to-boost-wifi.html**
- Avoid working via wi-fi if possible. The bandwidth (internet power to devices) will be improved a lot if you (and your student) link direct to your router using an ethernet cable. The cable colour doesn't matter (some are different), it's the connector that counts and it's possible to buy really long cables that can go from one end of the house to another and be packed up at the end of a session.
- If you have to use wi-fi, consider changing your phone contract so that you can have unlimited data and then use your phone as a hotspot to boost the wi-fi.

There are many suggestions above which can continue to be used in face-to-face lessons. The advent of a new way of working (remotely, via computers) can be a real stimulus to more creative teaching generally.

*For further information about working with neurodiverse students in music, including more on **remote learning** please contact BDA Music at **bdamusicdyslexia@gmail.com***

Dyscalculia and Maths Anxiety

Making sense of number – dyscalculia, mathematics anxiety and flexibility with numbers

Pete Jarrett

Pete Jarrett is a specialist teacher and assessor with an interest in dyscalculia and maths learning difficulties. He is Chair of the British Dyslexia Association Dyscalculia Committee and writes and lectures on maths learning and maths learning difficulties throughout the UK.

"I just felt I could never get it right and was too scared and embarrassed to ask for help for fear of being called 'thick'" Emma (named changed), reflecting on her appraisal of maths learning.

When I am explaining dyscalculia to people, I often start by asking the question "Can anyone learn maths?". The reply, especially from people who have learnt maths, is generally, yes. I then reframe the question as two further questions. Can anyone 'do' maths? And can anyone learn? I do this purposely, as I want to reflect on the cognitive abilities needed to 'do' maths and separate these from the environment in which maths is learned.

In November 2019, the SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC) and the BDA Dyscalculia Committee published new guidance on the assessment of dyscalculia and included in this guidance was a new definition of the condition (SASC, 2019):

> *Dyscalculia is a specific and persistent difficulty in understanding numbers which can lead to a diverse range of difficulties with mathematics. It will be unexpected in relation to age, level of education and experience and occurs across all ages and abilities. Mathematics difficulties are best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and they have many causal factors. Dyscalculia falls at one end of the spectrum and will be distinguishable from other mathematics*

issues due to the severity of difficulties with number sense, including subitising, symbolic and non-symbolic magnitude comparison, and ordering. It can occur singly but can also co-occur with other specific learning difficulties, mathematics anxiety and medical conditions.

This definition takes the construct of number sense, the ability that allows fluidity and flexibility with numbers and the sense of what numbers mean (Gersten and Chard, 1999), as the root of dyscalculia. Dyscalculia impacts on abilities such as numerosity discrimination, the ability to distinguish between sets of differing magnitudes, both symbolically (numbers) or non-symbolically (sheep, sweets, counters, or the hairs on your chinny-chin-chin); number naming; estimating and ordering numbers. These difficulties particularly impact on arithmetic and can be disabling in many aspects of day to day life. People with dyscalculia can have difficulties with handling money, accessing essential services and travel alongside the more obvious difficulties in education and work.

Low achievement

Whilst we are clear about what dyscalculia is, it does not explain the rate of low achievement in mathematics. Around 35% of young people fail to achieve a Grade 4 pass at GCSE year on year. The percentage of these learners that achieve via resits is consistently low. The most comprehensive study of the prevalence of dyscalculia (Reigosa-Crespo et al., 2012) identified 3.4% of people with the condition, whereas around 10% of the population were recognised as having arithmetical dysfluency.

So, what are the common barriers to learning mathematics? Dyscalculia has a significant impact, as we have established. In addition, inefficiencies in working memory, fact retrieval and speed of processing create significant challenges. These difficulties can occur in other Specific Learning Difficulties and impact other areas of learning, so the SASC guidance refers to them as domain general difficulties. Other Specific Learning Difficulties can impact maths learning in a range of ways, from

difficulty coordinating thought, through problems maintaining attention to problems as fundamental as holding a pencil or using a ruler. Literacy abilities cause problems with both the language of instruction and the language of mathematics. Many people have problems extracting the mathematics from the 'Numglish', that strange conflation of number and English in 'Real World' maths questions involving someone with 24 watermelons that are unevenly distributed around their friendship group. But the most commonly occurring barriers relate to our beliefs about what we can do, and how anxious we feel about doing and learning mathematics.

Discomfort

Around 45% of the population express some level of discomfort around mathematics. Greg, a student of mine, once said that "Maths is like getting chewing gum in your hair! It's really annoying and difficult to get rid of". Greg speaks for many people (which is not surprising given the amount of speaking he did in class). However, alongside his skills as a raconteur, he demonstrated real ability with maths, he could, when in the right place, with the right support, 'do' maths very well. Greg was really expressing his frustration with the act of learning maths and the fact that maths kept rearing its head in the most unusual of places – the chemistry lab, the gym and on Duke of Edinburgh expeditions. Mathematics and the need to calculate pervades life and learning, and often creates an emotional response, frequently negative. There is a strong evidence base (See Equals Vol. 22.3 for an overview) suggesting that this emotional response is often created by the environment in which learning is done rather than the maths itself. Indeed, the mathematician and educator Paul Lockhart describes Maths anxiety as 'actually caused by school' (Lockhart, 2009).

When people report what they are uncomfortable about, having to work at speed and having to work and answer in front of people are commonly cited. As a person with dyslexia, this is something that resonates with me. Working quickly and manipulating information in my head are not my superpowers.

In fact, I was listening to a podcast recently (**https://festivalofthespokennerd.com/podcast/ Episode 5**) in which Steve Mould, the broadcaster and youtuber (very 21st Century) eloquently described his difficulties around rote learning of times tables. Steve found it difficult to recall the words of the times table poems. Indeed, he did not realise that this was something that needed to be learnt by rote and assumed that he was supposed to calculate each item. He became very fast at these calculations but was still slower than his peers who were repeating the rhyme. Steve began to feel that he was poor at maths because he was slower than his peers. He had developed excellent fluidity and flexibility with numbers – an excellent sense for number.

Conversely, the students who had learnt their times tables facts by rote had these useful nuggets of information at their fingertips but would have had to acquire the levels of fluidity and flexibility with numbers another way. Many would have done this, but equally, many would have found the process difficult, and in an absence of an aptitude for number that allowed Steve to develop his skills, would have both struggled with rote learning and failed to develop flexibility. Feeling that they were failing, it in natural that they would develop a perception of being bad at mathematics, disengaged and become fearful of engaging with number.

Lack flexibility and fluidity

This means that many people with maths anxiety may lack flexibility and fluidity with numbers. In other words, they display symptoms that are those we may expect to see in dyscalculia. This presents a complication in an assessment of need and is best resolved by making an assessment around the level of anxiety experienced by a learner first. This can be done with some well targeted questions. There are also scales that are focused on identifying understanding. For a UK English audience I would recommend the work of the Mathematics Anxiety Research Group at the University of Derby led by Dr Tom Hunt (**https://marg.wp.derby.ac.uk/about/**). You will find

access to the Mathematics Anxiety Scale UK, the Children's MAS-UK, and the Mathematics Calculation Anxiety Scale. These scales can (and should) be used as part of both formal and informal assessments. There is also an excellent introduction to maths anxiety.

In building a picture of maths anxiety be mindful of appraisals of previous experiences, as these will help identify suitable interventions. If well considered, interventions that are targeted at reducing anxiety will lead to an improvement in flexibility with number. If the intervention is well meant we would expect to see quicker improvements in the apparent dyscalculia symptoms than we would in someone who has dyscalculia. This is important, and fits neatly with the graduated response and Assess, Plan, Do, Review cycle that teachers are familiar with. As a first response, manage anxiety, assess the impact of the information, and move on from there.

Maths anxiety

There is no universal approach to managing maths anxiety. Teaching that works for the learner is an obvious place to start, as does supporting the individual's appraisal of their learning. Where appropriate, the anxiety can be managed directly. Writing down worries is a useful tool and has been shown to reduce anxiety before doing maths. Thinking about mindset is helpful as it challenges your own beliefs and begins a process of cognitive restructuring. Jo Boaler's book 'Mathematical Mindsets' (Boaler, 2015) provides an excellent overview. If you believe that you will never get better at maths, you display a fixed mindset. If you believe that with struggle and resilience you will get better, you have a growth mindset. It is important to believe that work brings improvement and reward.

Reducing pressure and freeing up cognitive load can both improve anxiety and performance. Our engaged brains are like a mobile phone battery. If we have lots of apps open the battery runs out quicker. If we focus on small chunks of learning, keeping just one app open, perhaps an explicit learning

objective, our battery will last for much longer and we will enjoy success and then have space to build the Taj Mahal in Minecraft as well.

The approach to teaching and learning will help as well. A recent report from the Nuffield Foundation, written by Jeremy Hodgen and colleagues (Hodgen et al., no date) identifies 12 strategies that improve outcomes for low attaining maths learners. Of these, some stand out as being helpful. The use of heuristics, strategies that will help solve a range of problems provide a scaffold that allows learners to access content they may previously have felt unable to do so. The use of manipulatives that provide a multisensory route to understanding help to build conceptions that improve the strength of memories and develop fluidity with numbers. These should then be linked to representations, ideally made by the learner, and explicitly linked to the abstract knowledge and skills needed to approach these concepts in more formal, traditional ways. Finally, and perhaps the most important message in this whole article, is the use of student-centred approaches. These allow the student to describe their understandings and then to be guided to greater depth. By placing the learner at the heart of the learning experience, they gain control and confidence.

Cognitive barriers

We have arrived at a place where students have become anxious around doing mathematics. Some of these students will have cognitive barriers to doing and learning such as dyscalculia, inefficient working memory, and below average speed of processing. Other students will have struggled because of the lack of explicit teaching that builds fluidity and flexibility with number, and an over-reliance on rote learning of abstract processes. To help understand learners we need to address their perceptions of mathematics first, building resilience, and only then begin to unpick the cognitive barriers.

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Learning a foreign language

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Introduction

The prospect of learning a foreign language can be a daunting one for anyone who has found difficulty in learning to read and write in their native language. In both children and adults, the challenges of dyslexia generally mean that learning a foreign language is more difficult. However, it does not mean that it is impossible. With the right attitude, help and support, it is quite feasible that language learning can become a rewarding and worthwhile experience. In this article I consider some of the challenges that we know are likely to occur for those with dyslexia, contemplate how these apply to individual learners, discuss how these relate to the nature of the language being learned and then importantly summarise what can be done to help meet the presenting challenges and conquer them. I conclude by reflecting on how recent research is contributing to our knowledge of foreign language learning and how we can relate this to dyslexia.

Challenges of foreign language learning

It has been recognised for many years that dyslexia not only presents difficulties in native language learning but that these difficulties often re-manifest themselves when it comes to learning a foreign language. Generally, those with dyslexia do not learn as others do, so what works for others will not necessarily work for them. Difficulties with phonology and accurately perceiving and manipulating the sound system of one's native language can mean that novel sounds and syllables can seem to blend together and be difficult to distinguish. The

differing appearances of the native written language and a new language can be very puzzling, particularly if you have already struggled to learn your native language. Together with unfamiliar sound combinations, words in a new language can be difficult to reproduce correctly. Breaking down the unfamiliar words into their constituent sounds may be equally problematic. Combined with visual perceptual challenges reproducing words and sentences can result in confusion regarding letter order, sequence and positioning of words within sentences.

The speed with which we are able to store and retrieve elements of our native language affects our ability to master a foreign language. Verbally answering questions in a foreign language requires us to understand a sequence of spoken words, translate those words into our native language to give understanding, think of our response in our native language, translate those words into the new language and then respond – a time consuming process which requires considerable patience from the questioner or teacher. It is only once we are able to think in the new language that we can speed up the process. Fluency involves gaining automaticity in both languages.

Short-term and working memory are, of course, required to enable recall of vocabulary and the blending of that vocabulary into coherent statements. Word-finding difficulties and slower processing speed can exacerbate other problems making conversations more challenging, causing frustration to the individual and to the listener.

No two people with dyslexia will have the same profile of strengths and weaknesses. Common to those with dyslexia however are difficulties with reading, writing and spelling in their native language. The difficulties that a person with dyslexia had in learning their own native language can affect the learning of a new language. Seeing, hearing, speaking and writing interact in successful language learners. Eliminating reading and writing in the new language therefore, as some linguists previously thought, does not help as this forfeits major channels of

learning; without any visual images or kinaesthetic processing to help as an aid to memory, learners are likely to struggle even more.

How the challenges relate to individual learning and the specific language

It has been argued that some languages are more suited to those with dyslexia than others. Spanish, for example, and German, are often considered preferable to French. 'Transparent' languages have a clear phonic correspondence between letters and sounds – each letter (grapheme) corresponds to a single sound (phoneme). While transparent languages are generally easier than opaque languages where there is much less correspondence between graphemes and phonemes, there are other considerations that are important.

For school pupils, there is often very little choice as the languages on offer are limited. However, if there is a choice then it is worth considering the languages in more detail. For example,

1. Many European languages use a script similar to English and though a few letters may vary, this is not usually a big issue as the number of new letters to be learned will not be overwhelming.
2. Word order however can vary. In German for example, learners will find the position of the verb is dependent on meaning.
3. German too has cases. Words will vary depending on whether the word is the subject of the sentence, the direct object of the sentence, genitive (belonging to) or the indirect object of the sentence.
4. For those who speak English as their native language, Italian is often considered to be similar, and this is true in many ways, but in Italian adjectives vary depending on the gender of the noun they are describing. In Italian, too, as in other European languages, the position of the adjective may be different from the student's native

language and may be dependent on the nature of the noun it describes.

5. Accents are generally unfamiliar to English-speaking learners but rather than being a complication, once mastered, these may serve to help with pronunciation. However, if more than one foreign language is being learned, the same accent may result in a different pronunciation depending on which foreign language is being used.

These factors could potentially put an additional load on memory and understanding. However there are many ways in which foreign language learning can be made more accessible to those with dyslexia.

Making foreign language learning accessible to all

Key to teaching and learning for those with dyslexia are a few principles:

- Learning should be multisensory – hear, see, say, write (or type), act out. Ensure visual, auditory, oral and kinaesthetic material together whenever possible (picture cues, photographs, foreign language videos with subtitles in native language, avatars with speech bubbles, cartoons with auditory material in target language, real materials (food, objects in classroom, office and/or home for example).
- Teach/learn the phonology of the new language from the start.
- Ensure overlearning and aim to achieve automaticity (but not to the extent of boredom!). Use innovative ways to encourage learning.
- Adopt a metacognitive approach ensuring that the learner understands what works best for them and can experiment with different ways of learning. Individualise learning as required to ensure success. Allow learners to organise their own learning notes (illustrations,

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vocabulary, cartoons, cut-outs from magazines etc) as they find best enables effectiveness of learning. Younger children will of course require guidance.

- Group size is important. Learners with dyslexia can be good at hiding in large groups and can easily mask their difficulties. Learning a foreign language is about learning to communicate in that language so regular speaking and listening is needed with responses being recognised and gently corrected when necessary.
- Make use of digital assistive technology. The range of material available is huge. Assistive technology can not only reinforce learning in fun ways, but can help with reading, writing and the full range of challenges which dyslexia may present in learning a foreign language.

Print in a new written language (even when both languages have similar scripts) looks different and can be puzzling, so it is important to use a clear font and type size. If the student has visual stress it may be important to adjust the background colour. Whenever this is possible this should be discussed with the learner.

If you are dyslexic, then speed of processing is generally slower, at least to begin with. The aim is for automaticity - to enable thinking in the foreign language and for that process to become automatic. However, this is likely to take longer if you have dyslexia than it will if you don't, so this time has to be allowed for. If you are dyslexic, then be kind to yourself and don't think you can't do it! You can, it might just take longer and be more effort!

Motivation is a key factor in any form of learning – "Why am I learning this language?" If the answer is simply that the school says I have to learn a language, this may not be enough to stimulate the individual. If a learner is likely to holiday in a country it can be motivating to be able to communicate with local people in their own language. If friends in school are from another country it can be motivating to be able to speak to that

friend in their language. As with almost all learning, if the learner can see the reason why the learning is important, then they are much more likely to learn successfully.

Fear of making mistakes and getting it wrong can be very real and cause distress to the learner. Having a 'learning buddy' who is a speaker of the foreign language can provide purpose and motivation, but only if the buddy is patient and happy to pace the speed of conversation to suit the learner with dyslexia. The 'buddy' need not always be present so could participate digitally. To begin with there needs to be a clear agenda and some key vocabulary needs to be understood. We wish the learner to gain a 'can do' attitude and not be afraid of making mistakes. An empathic teacher, whether a peer or qualified tutor, can make a huge difference and build confidence in an otherwise diffident and reluctant learner.

Accepting the main principles of learning it is down to the ingenuity of the teacher/tutor to ensure that learning is made accessible in a variety of interesting and fun ways and make sure that learning is not a 'grind'. The table that follows in the appendix suggests some ways in which that might be done.

Further insight from research

Recent research into learning a foreign language, though not confined to dyslexia, gives us further insight into what can help the learning process. For example, we now know that passive exposure to a specific language can help us in the learning of that language. It was previously believed that this only affected young children but more recent research has shown that hearing language sounds while engaged in a different task (provided tasks are not particularly cognitively demanding) can help sound differentiation and receptiveness to the language. (Kurkela et al, 2019) This could be particularly beneficial for older adults in the task of vocabulary acquisition in the new language, so playing back recently learned vocabulary in the background later could help reinforce learning of words without specific concentration on that vocabulary.

As most have believed for some time, children are more receptive to learning a new language than adults, but this receptiveness continues longer than was previously believed, going beyond puberty and is particularly pertinent to learning the grammar of a new language. (Hartshorne et al, 2018). Denying a child or young person with dyslexia the opportunity to learn a foreign language at a time when they are most receptive, because they have difficulty with their native language therefore, is to deprive them of an opportunity to participate with their peers in what may prove to be a very worthwhile experience. If, after some time, the learner is not making progress then further consideration may be required. Young children do not have the inhibitions that older children and adults have, so the younger children understand about language learning the better it is likely to be. Effective foreign language learning generally needs much more effort and takes longer if you have dyslexia. However, with suitable support and strategies in place, for most, the foreign language learning experience should be enjoyable and result in a useful knowledge of the language and culture of another country.

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Appendix

For conciseness in the table below, the following contractions have been used: L1 – the learner's native language, FL – the new foreign language being learned. Whether these strategies are useful or not will depend on the learner, the language and the stage of learning the learner is at.

Table adapted from Crombie (2018), pp.199-201.

Possible challenges (The learner)	Possible challenges (The language)	What helps?
Weak phonological knowledge – sound/ symbol correspondence Alphabet and letter knowledge Pronunciation Character-based languages	• Sound/symbol correspondence different from L1. • Script may differ from L1. e.g. Hebrew, Arabic. Accents may help or confuse – e.g. ñ, ç, ü etc. • Common nouns may need to be capitalised – e.g. die Schule. • Learning entails matching meaning and sound to a character – e.g. Mandarin.	• It may help to choose a language which is transparent – i.e. has consistent sound/symbol correspondence – Spanish for example. • Make teaching and learning multisensory – hear it, see it, say it, write it, act it out, smell it (if possible). Make use of music, rhyme, rhythm, graphics etc to aid learning.
Reading Reading of longer texts are likely to take much more time even when vocabulary has been mastered. Word lists alone don't help.	• Reading may still be a problem in L1, and even if mastered it is likely to be less fluent and take more time. • Words have unfamiliar sounds. • Abstract words present particular difficulties. With these words, visualisation isn't easy. • Grammar and syntax are different from L1 – e.g. splitting parts of verbs so simple translation is not word for word. • Reading and understanding of grammar explanations from L1 textbooks can present difficulties.	• Restrict vocabulary to single words and short phrases to begin with. • Practise word cards with picture on one side, and word in both L1 and FL on other side so these can be checked and practised regularly. Number these and whenever possible have an aural version available. Look, say, check, check pronunciation. • Label common items with Post-it notes in FL. Use visual cues whenever possible. • When learning verbs, do the action, act out. • Visualise, associate words with pictures, draw the pictures. With abstract words, make association with meaningful objects or places. • Explain grammar and syntax points clearly in L1. • Use an Easy Learning version of grammar textbooks. • Make use of technology to help pronunciation, adjust speed – e.g. Clicker, scanning translator pens, Google Translate, Lingoes, text to speech will help with pronunciation.

Appendix continued

Possible challenges (The learner)	Possible challenges (The language)	What helps?
Writing	• Written version doesn't look like what it seems to say. • Spelling is a problem in L1. How the FL is spelled is not how it sounds! • Sometimes the learner knows it is wrong but doesn't understand how to sort it.	• If it is not necessary, don't formally assess written work. • Use technology to help – e.g. Clicker. • Allow additional time for explanation. Explain in L1 and expect this to have to be repeated.
Auditory discrimination/ perception Unsure of sound which has been heard Difficulty in perceiving the difference between similar sounds.	• New phonemes that don't exist in L1 will be harder to hear and produce. • Unfamiliar sounds may seem to run together, difficulty in knowing where a spoken word ends and the next begins • Unfamiliar vocabulary and pronunciation	• Train students to listen for where in words they hear specific FL sounds – Beginning, Middle or End. • Slow down the speed at which the language is presented. • Allow extra time for learners to respond. • Vocabulary cards when new words and phrases are introduced with picture on one side and word/phrase on other with additional technical support from digital vocabulary on mobile, tablet or other digital aid to allow extra practice. • Digital programs that give reinforcement (e.g. DuoLingo).
Visual discrimination/ perception Ability to discriminate and or differentiate between words Weak memory for words previously learned Visual stress, sensitivity to contrast in print colours	• Differentiation of words which appear similar • Differentiation between accents affecting pronunciation • Confusion between languages, e.g. pain (French word for bread and the English word).	• Picture cues for association. • Practice cards for daily reinforcement and revision of common words and words with accents. • Highlight accents in colour – be consistent about which colour. • Use coloured paper for photocopying, work sheets etc.
Understanding of grammar and syntax – Sequencing difficulty Difficulty remembering rules	• Nouns in some languages have gender – e.g. French – le, la, un, une. • May need to take account of case – e.g. German accusative, genitive, dative etc • Word order may vary from L1 – e.g. Robert hat das Buch gekauft. Robert hat es gekauft. • Adjectival agreement may be required in FL – Ein schönes Haus. • Position of adjectives may vary – e.g. une robe noire, une jeune fille.	• Use different coloured highlighter pens to help emphasise definite and indefinite articles, key parts of words that show gender, case, adjectival agreement etc. • Write rules onto small cards which can be used for reference and for revision. • Provide frequent practice through a variety of approaches. – games, songs, rhyme • Have lists/diagrams/mind maps on the wall for reference. • Use L1 for explanations.

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Possible challenges (The learner)	Possible challenges (The language)	What helps?
Memory – short term memory may be weak, working memory could be limited, may be inaccurate representations in long-term memory	• Words may not sound as they look to the learner causing difficulty in remembering the visual image and auditory pattern of words. • Learner may have difficulties pronouncing and/or recalling multi-syllables. • Word retrieval difficulties	• New information should be presented in bite-size chunks with realistic targets being set. • Use additional channels of learning – music, rhythm, rhyme, actions, graphics etc while saying target words and sentences. • Break words down. • Repetition and overlearning (in fun ways). • Use visual imagery. • Mini flash cards with target vocabulary on one side and picture and L1+FL words on other. • Allow extra time for recall. • Technology – Podcasts etc.
Speed of information processing Processing speed slow **Directionality and sequencing** **Emotional**	• Speed of natural speech in FL makes words indistinguishable. • Some languages are written in a different direction – e.g. Arabic, Hebrew. • Word order varies according to the FL being learned and the rules of that language. • Fatigue and lack of motivation and/or concentration • Lack of confidence • Feeling 'stupid'.	• Slow down speed of presentation • Break big words and sentences down into manageable chunks. • Allow more time for answering and extra time to complete work. • If exams are being undertaken, ensure classroom arrangements and examination arrangements are in place to allow additional time and any other accommodations needed. • Visual cues, pictures, arrows as well as text. Indicate physically when speaking. • Rules of specific language require to be taught and learned with lots of practice in interesting and fun ways. See above – grammar and syntax. • Use technical aids – computer, mobile, tablet etc. • Use mnemonic approaches for memorising. • Visualisation strategies. • Empathic listening to learner. • L1 explanations of concepts. • Avoid giving assessments a 'mark'. • Use technology to encourage independence to solve problems. • Discuss individual needs.

It may be useful to make a blank copy of the above table and complete it for particular students – so think of a specific student who is dyslexic or is finding language learning challenging and complete the table with that student in mind.

Supporting multilingual dyslexic learners with their English language and literacy development

Dr Anne Margaret Smith

Dr Anne Margaret Smith has taught English for 30 years and is also a dyslexia specialist tutor and assessor. She founded ELT well to bring together best practice from the two fields of ELT and SpLD support, and offers materials and training to teachers, as well as assessing multilingual learners for SpLDs.

In the UK, there are over a million children in schools who use English as an additional language. Some of them are as proficient in English as their monolingual English-speaking peers, but many will be at different stages of English language development. They may speak one other language at home, or they may be exposed to many languages and not have a clear 'first language'. Whatever their personal situation is, the fact of growing up multilingual means that their brains are developing in a way that is different from monolingual people's brains.

Those multilingual people who are neurodivergent (i.e. have a specific learning difference such as dyslexia) form a small but important subset, and as dyslexia professionals, we need to be aware of how we can make our practice more effective for them. We cannot make assumptions about their linguistic or cultural knowledge when we are assessing or supporting them, and although many of the same principles of best practice will hold true, our materials and methods may need to be different.

In last year's BDA handbook, I wrote about the key issues to keep in mind when assessing EAL users for dyslexia, and here I would like to consider the best ways of supporting learners once their SpLD has been identified.

Identifying strengths and areas of challenge

The process of assessment should ideally have identified the learners' strengths, which is a good starting point when deciding what kind of intervention is likely to be appropriate. For some, these may include phonemic processing skills, especially if they have been exposed to a wide range of sounds from different languages. If the assessment process did not explore what the learner can already do in their own language that is a useful starting point. We can ask them to read a short age-appropriate text or perhaps write something in their own language, purely as a qualitative evaluation of how well their literacy skills are developing – if they have had the opportunity to access education in that language. Even if they are not able to read or write, this could start a conversation about how they feel about literacy.

It is helpful for dyslexia professionals to find out a little about the structures of the learners' other languages. One useful resource for this is 'Learner English' (Swan and Smith, 2010) which covers about 40 languages which are commonly spoken in the UK, and highlights where they are different from English: features which possibly lead to confusion or difficulty. So, if a learner's main language has only open syllables, it would not be surprising if they are not processing the final consonants in closed English syllables, and this is something we could work on explicitly.

When we get to know our multilingual learners, we will probably find that they face many of the same challenges as our dyslexic monolingual learners, and so many of the strategies that we use to work with them will be similar, albeit slightly modified to take into account their linguistic and cultural starting points. Whatever areas of strengths we find, we should keep in mind that all multilingual people have a super-power: the ability to speak more than one language, and thereby to see the world through different lenses. Chalmers (2019) explores the advantages of using the learners' first languages in education and outlines how we can make the most of this background knowledge; below I suggest some ideas of how we can use it when putting interventions in place.

Multisensory activities

Music, drama and art provide multiple channels for learning which are not dependent on English language proficiency. They also offer opportunities to demonstrate talents which may otherwise have lain hidden; every chance to boost the learners' self-esteem should of course be welcomed.

For reluctant readers, comics and graphic novels provide a great alternative to daunting pages of text. Dekko Comics (**www.DekkoComics.com**) have produced a series of comics aimed at 9 – 12 year-olds that cover curriculum topics in a fun and easily accessible way. For older learners focusing on academic writing, a European project ('Comics for Inclusive English Language Learning' - **https://ciell.eu/**) will be providing some free resources to encourage the discussion of essay structure, as well as boosting reading comprehension. Students can also be encouraged to make their own comic strips to help them remember new information, or to demonstrate what they have learnt.

Memory

Many of our learners will experience difficulty with remembering new information, and so this is very often an area where we help them develop good strategies. The assessment may have revealed whether visual or auditory memory is stronger than the other, but if not, it is useful to observe them working, or set little tasks that the learner can do (without using English) until we can determine which, if either, is stronger.

We tend to remember better the things we notice, understand, make connections to and repeat often. We may have to draw attention to things that our learners have not registered; particularly if they are based on cultural conventions (e.g. the dots in English text actually denote the end of a sentence). Learners who are using English as an additional language may need help with vocabulary development, and this can be supported using their stronger languages to help them understand concepts. There are many bilingual resources

available, such as the dual language books or the Pen Pal by Mantra Lingua (http://www.mantralingua.com/) which cover many languages, providing opportunities to notice and compare features of the texts, as well as to understand unfamiliar words. We should also take every opportunity to remind learners of words they have come across in different contexts, so as to make connections across subjects and domains. The more connections we have to a word, the more likely we are to retrieve it when we need it.

Repetition is also key, but in order to achieve sufficient repetition without it becoming tedious, we may need to wrap it in a game or a song. We could ask the learners to teach us a simple song from their country (or use a song that they already know in English) and then use that tune to sing the new words (or information) they need to remember; for example, they could sing some colour terms to the tune of 'Happy Birthday'.

Organisation and time management

These are common issues for dyslexic learners, and for our multilingual students, cultural differences may also play a role. We may have to not only encourage them to use a diary, but first also explain how a diary works. Punctuality is a peculiarly northern-European obsession, so students from other parts of the world may well need the importance of time-keeping explained to them, before they can start to put into practice the strategies we might commonly recommend to learners (e.g. setting reminders on a phone, aiming to arrive 10 minutes early, working out how long a journey might take etc.).

With older learners, essay structure will need to be explicitly demonstrated, to make clear the expectation of a linear progression. In some cultures, a more cyclical structure is taught, which is not usually well-received in UK academia. Again, comic strips are a great resource for focusing on the sequencing of ideas, without overwhelming the learner with too much text.

Phonological awareness

Even if our multilingual learners have compensated for their potentially weaker phonemic awareness, there are many aspects of English phonology that may not be obvious to them, or not come easily. These include features such as intonation patterns (changing the pitch of individual words to signal different intentions of an utterance), conventions regarding appropriate volume and tempo, and the rhythmic structure of words and sentences. These are all elements of music, which can be isolated, explored through musical activities, and then applied to language, making the acquisition and development of these features much more accessible and even fun!

For example, if we first play (or sing, or whistle) some notes and ask the students to say if the notes are rising or falling, we can help them first to become aware of pitch change. Then we can apply that to a simple sentence (e.g. “It’s the blue van.”), and see how the meaning changes if we raise the pitch of one word, so as to draw attention to it. There are many more examples and activities in the ‘Language Learning and Musical Activities’ collection (Evens and Smith, 2019).

A weakness in cognitive timing has been demonstrated to hinder literacy development in dyslexic students, as it affects their perception of speech rhythms and phonological processing (Overy, 2003). Taking part in activities designed to boost the perception of rhythm was found to improve spelling, which is invaluable for English language learners. Not only will their written English be more accurate, but their listening comprehension skills will improve as they become more aware of which syllables or words are the most important to focus on.

Assessing progress

Dyslexic learners are often disadvantaged when it comes to assessing their learning, as are students using English as an additional language. Multilingual dyslexic learners are at even more risk of not being given a fair chance to show what they know and what they can do. When setting classroom tests or

quizzes, it is important to monitor the linguistic load of the questions being asked, as well as recognize the cultural assumptions that underpin the questions. In more formal assessment situations, it is possible to apply for access arrangements. The procedures and requirements will vary, depending on the exam board and the type of exam being taken, but the assessment tool described in last year's BDA handbook *('Cognitive Assessments for Multilingual Learners')* can be used to demonstrate that the difficulties are not just due to the use of English as an additional language.

All dyslexic learners are individual, and there is nothing that works for everyone. In order to implement the most effective and appropriate interventions, we need to get to know our learners well. In the case of our multilingual learners, that should include exploring their linguistic repertoires and their cultural backgrounds, as well as their previous educational experiences and their aspirations.

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Adults

Assessments for Adults (Post 16 Years)

Catherine Salisbury
AMBDA, APC Specialist Teacher Assessor

Why be assessed?

Invariably, it takes courage to come forward for an assessment. As a child, the decision to be assessed is taken for you, whereas an adult will need to take deliberate steps to book an assessment. Placing yourself in a position where you will need to demonstrate, face and understand your profile of strengths and weaknesses takes determination and courage. But the results can pave the way to a greater understanding of yourself, as well as providing formal evidence to access support in your work or educational setting. So an assessment for a Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD) as an adult can, in effect, give you much better chances of achievement at levels that properly reflect your ability and knowledge.

The decision to be assessed is often driven by a particular event or circumstance. In deciding which type of assessment to undertake it is important to consider the reason why the assessment is being requested; whether or not you have previously been diagnosed with an SpLD and whether you have a copy of the assessment report to evidence this.

What happens during an assessment for SpLD?

Your assessor will use a range of tests to identify your profile of strengths and weaknesses, and from the results will be able to see whether you have indicators for an SpLD such as Dyslexia, Dyspraxia/DCD or ADHD. The assessor will write a report detailing the results from the tests and making recommendations that will support you appropriately.

You will be asked about your experiences with literacy and numeracy, memory and concentration and attention, both during your time at school and as an adult. You will probably find some of the tests are in areas you will find challenging, which you

would usually try to avoid, but it's important to face them and find out exactly how the things you find so challenging build into your profile.

Your assessor will see how you manage the tasks and will be able to ask you about the strategies you currently use. Your assessor wants to see your usual way of working and tackling tasks, warts and all, so don't feel embarrassed or put in any practice. For example, when you spell words incorrectly during your assessment, your assessor wants to see errors! That is how they will be able to analyse your difficulties and make recommendations for the right kind of support for you.

Booking your assessment is the first step in this process. It is important to be aware of the different types of assessment you can choose to have.

Types of Assessment

Full Diagnostic Assessments for Adults (Post 16 years)

A full diagnostic assessment is used to identify indicators for an SpLD such as dyslexia and is the only way to confirm a diagnosis. It would be recommended if you suspect that you may have an SpLD, but have not been diagnosed during childhood; or if you need to provide evidence of your SpLD and you do not have a copy of your previous report.

If you are a student and wish to apply for Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) you will need to provide evidence of a diagnostic assessment. If you were diagnosed as a child, you can use your pre-16 report to support your application and to receive reasonable adjustments at university as long as it was completed by a suitably qualified specialist assessor or psychologist.

If you are an adult looking for reasonable adjustments in the workplace, to help you carry out your specific job role, you should not need formal testing to receive these adjustments. Your employer may agree to fund a diagnostic assessment for you if they, or you wish to confirm that you have an SpLD.

If you are asked for an update to your original assessment report (for example for professional examinations), you can approach your assessor to ask for an addendum to your report.

Assessment for Exam Access Arrangements

A reasonable adjustment is the name used for concessions in examinations or in the workplace; for example, extra time or the use of a laptop.

In order to receive reasonable adjustments in examinations, most examining bodies will require evidence of test scores to demonstrate the need. This type of assessment will not confirm a diagnosis of an SpLD, but will include tests which will determine whether or not you meet the criteria for a reasonable adjustment such as extra time, or a scribe.

For GCSE and A level examinations this is often referred to as a Form 8 assessment. The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) set out particular rules relating to this type of assessment. Further information about this can be found in the Parent's section of this handbook on page 73.

If you are taking examinations or timed assessments as part of your job, you may need this type of assessment so that you can receive reasonable adjustments. You should check with your employer or the examining body to understand what evidence they require.

Remote Assessment

The Covid 19 pandemic reduced the advisability of face to face assessments and in some instances made face to face assessment logistically impossible or inadvisable for health-related reasons. Remote Assessment was introduced to help overcome this, and many would like to see this continue after the pandemic when face to face testing will again be permissible. Some tests cannot be carried out remotely.

Your Assessment Report

Your report can be very long! It will include details of your performance during the assessment, a profile of strengths and weaknesses and the presence of any indicators for an SpLD such as dyslexia.

The body of your report will include your background information, the areas tested and the tests used so, the most relevant parts will probably be the summary and conclusion. In these sections you will be able to pinpoint your areas of strength and of weakness and match these to tasks you have always found difficult or tasks that you have always found easier than others seem to. Reading your report can be very helpful in explaining why you have had difficulty with certain tasks at specific points in your life.

Your report will also contain a list of recommendations (reasonable adjustments) designed to assist you in accessing support for the things you struggle with. That is, after all, the main reason to have an assessment; while understanding your profile will be enormously helpful in your daily life, it is the access to support that motivates most people to have an assessment if they are over 16.

The BDA can offer assessments with experienced specialist teachers or Psychologists.

https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/services/assessments

Due to Covid 19 and changes to Government guidelines; please see BDA website for latest information on BDA Assessment Service.

Study Skills in Higher Education:
"I can't get my thoughts out!" Help for neurodiverse students in Higher Education

Sally Daunt

Sally Daunt is Chair of the British Dyslexia Association Music Committee and a support tutor at the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts.

"I can't get my thoughts out!"; "I never seem to know what I should be doing..."; "My spelling's **!*" "I spend ages reading something, then have to read it again and again... and still don't understand"; "I feel so stupid"; "What on earth is referencing?"; "Can you help me?" I hear comments like this daily. Why? Because I work as a 1:1 study skills support tutor in Higher Education (HE).

In 2019, there were 2.38 million students in HE in the UK[1]. Of these, 6.6%, or over 157,000 were in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)[2] although the actual number of 'disabled' students will be higher. Many such students are dyslexic, with others having other neurodiverse differences, such as dyspraxia or ADHD, a mental health condition, autistic spectrum condition or other disability. The students I've worked with over the last 18 years mirror this, plus some with less usual conditions such as narcolepsy, PTSD and neurological problems. Students are not given an advantage: support goes some way to levelling the 'playing field'. Some students in HE doing pre-graduate courses or those not from the UK cannot be funded by DSA, but they should get similar support funded by their Higher Education Institution (HEI)[3]. 'Students' can include mature individuals returning to education who may need particular help with building confidence. Sadly, some students don't receive support until near the end of their course and with them, it's impossible in a few months to build up long-term strategies: the most one can hope for is a 'sticking plaster' approach to getting the next assignment in.

I work mainly at the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, but also at other HEIs including the Open University. So, what do I actually **do** in my sessions with students? Do I do their work for them? Do I offer subject expertise? Do I correct their work? The answer to all of those is **NO!** I'll explain.

Following an educational psychologist's (or similar) diagnosis and an expert assessment of needs for support, students are generally allocated a support tutor for the equivalent of an hour a week for each academic year of their course, with meetings being arranged flexibly. We normally meet face-to-face for sessions which must be in a private space as our work is confidential. During the pandemic, we have been working online, although many students work in cramped, inadequate conditions that have made this difficult.

When I meet new students, I often hear tearful stories of endless battles to get their dyslexia recognised. Students tell me they've been described as 'slow' and 'stupid' and constantly put down. One dyslexic student, having eventually achieved a dyslexia test after years of battling by her mother was told by a learning support tutor that she "mustn't use dyslexia as an excuse not to do [her] work". This leaves such people in a vulnerable state: I need to constantly remember that and acknowledge success where possible. Sometimes the 'dyslexia tutor' is the only person that a student can go to, to talk unreservedly, in the whole HEI.

So, building self-esteem is a crucial part of our role, as is **motivation**. More and more I see co-occurrence of mental ill-health, and this has been exacerbated by the pandemic. The extra amount of time that neurodiverse students may need to do most tasks takes its toll[4]. Every neurodiverse individual is different, of course: some will have huge problems with organisation – the day-to-day management of deadlines and the juggling of an often-changing time-table. A patient breaking down of tasks into small 'chunks' is crucial: whether assignments, the understanding of material from a lecture or a book or fitting everything into the week. Organisation within

written work – what goes where and in what order (sequencing) can be a trial for dyslexics.

With most of us rarely using 'formal' styles of writing these days, most students, dyslexic or not, need help to understand academic conventions, including referencing: showing where information comes from and whether it's from a reliable source. I try to show the relevance of this (and other features of academic life), encouraging students to ask, "How do I know that?" and "Why am I writing this?" Repeating fundamental approaches in different ways ('**overlearning**') and working on them **little and often** both help to embed the learning experiences for neurodiverse individuals. Without in any way doing the work for a student, we may use **modelling** to explain possible approaches. But always, the support tutor must tease out what works best for each person and encourage **metacognition**, that is the student's own understanding of the ways in which they best learn. The five terms highlighted above are part of the 'Seven Principles' which underpin support for neurodiverse learners created by the Association of Dyslexia Specialists in Higher Education (ADSHE) of which I am a member[5]. Of the others, '**motivation**' has been mentioned and '**multisensory**' is about to be!

Ideally, the student and I work on each assignment throughout the understanding, planning, research and final stages. My heart sinks when a student says (enthusiastically), "I thought I'd do the whole essay before showing it to you" because it's so much easier and kinder to point people in the right direction at an early stage and so much more difficult to unravel a rambling 2500 words essay which never really answers the question.

Study skills tutors do **not** give subject specific tuition, though we certainly can use course materials with the student to help with understanding; we may work within 20 or more subject disciplines at any one time! It is the **approach** to work which is our focus: the organisation of an essay may be much the same whether the subject is a comparison of two performances of Giselle or an 'Evaluation of the different ways through which activity in the brain is measured'.

Difficulties with writing, spelling and grammar are the 'classic' problem areas for dyslexics: I once had a student who managed to spell the word 'organisation' seven different ways in the same essay: 'orgnasation; organasation; organisasion; oransition; oranzation; orgainxation and 'organization'! There are many strategies that can be adopted to help in such areas but they are, sadly, outside the scope of this article.

The most common (and despairing) comment I hear is, "I can't get my thoughts out". Often the best way forward is to encourage students to talk through ideas while I make notes or type as dyslexic individuals are frequently very articulate; we then organise these notes together. Or I may ask lots of questions to tease out inner thoughts. Sometimes I need huge imagination and ingenuity to decipher first drafts. What about this (from a fine art student)?

> Even though my work is no of the surreal but more of the composite fantastic, I think it interact well with surrealist art and reguarding the above Dali – who used to 'hide' faces into. This he claimed was an insight in the deep seeded fearfs of the human mind, that something somewhere maybe watching you.

One needs to remember that there is no correlation between cognitive ability and dyslexia[6], for example – the piece above was from an MA student. Structuring work in some way that works for each student, is crucial: some like mind maps (using software or just large bits of paper), colour, lists, pictures or headings. These are the **multisensory** approaches that work so well, not only for the neurodiverse but for most of us.

We never correct work or proof read it, instead we discuss with our students. "Do you think this **sounds** right?" is a good approach, perhaps using software that reads out text (available these days as standard on most computers), because **hearing** the words allows one to become aware of repetitions or places where sentences need to stop or link to another, for example.

Many dyslexic students will have great difficulties both with the amount of reading required for a degree course and the

complexity of it. Together we find short-cuts to the retrieval of information – using the web sensibly and building up the skills of scanning and picking out key words. Students often feel that they **must** try to read the whole book, whereas the blurb on the back cover, the index, or one bit in one chapter (ideally with an illustration and headings to help) may be more than enough. Working from paper rather than the computer is often a preferred option helped by a DSA allowance towards printing costs[7].

Understanding the wording of assignments can also be a challenge – and that's so crucial as students can easily go off in the wrong direction if they have misunderstood it. Recently a student asked for help as she'd been asked to write about 'Queer theory'. It turned out that she was, in fact, being asked to write about 'Queer theatre': she'd misread it.

An assignment such as the following, though worded clearly enough, can present enormous difficulties:

> Analyse and critically evaluate a personally and professionally relevant aspect of your music practice and potential career within a relevant theoretical framework. Construct a coherent and well evidenced argument communicated using academic writing skills and conventions (6000 words)[8].

The student and I will work together to break this down, re-wording perhaps or printing out in a format to show the component parts, perhaps using colour. What is the meaning of 'personally and professionally relevant'? Does the student understand the terms, 'relevant', 'potential', 'coherent' or 'conventions'? Other assignments are far less clear to the point of impenetrability, but I dare not quote those!

What qualifications do I need to do this work? Apart from academic qualifications in Specific Learning Difficulties, perhaps the greatest requirements are patience, a sense of humour and compassion. This is from a text I received from a student in her final year:

> Everything was ok but its not! I'm a bit of a wreak right now? What we went thourhg last week sounded strighforward. But for some reason every thing has gone out of my head... all becoming too much. PS I don't feel to good write no. I have the sieves [shivers]. Please help me.

It's helping to sort out situations such as this that are the day to day work of the study skills support tutor.

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Positive Psychology:

How to help students with dyslexia to flourish in general and have higher well-being in education

Chantal Karatas

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Positive Psychology is a relatively new area of psychology which focuses on an individual's strengths, not their weakness, and seeks to support each and every person to live and thrive to their optimal best, i.e. to flourish[1,2]. The aim is to ascertain each individual's character strengths and use these in everyday life, across every context. As a Specialist Teacher Assessor working in Higher Education, I wanted to better understand how positive psychology could be used as an evidence based tool with my learners. I designed a cross sectional survey with the aim to identify the roles of; active coping, hope, self-esteem and perceived competence in education, in predicting 1) flourishing in general and 2) well-being in education. Over 100 university students with dyslexia took part. The results will be discussed in this article, in addition to practical recommendations which can be used in all phases of education, as well as one to one study skills, mental health mentoring and at home with parents/guardians.

The word flourish comes from the Latin root 'flor' meaning 'flower' and is linked to growth and development, both biologically and psychologically. There are said to be two types of happiness which humans can strive for[3]. The first is Hedonic which focuses on pleasure and satisfaction, also known as subjective well-being. The second is Eudaimonic (You-die-mon-ik) defined as happiness through achieving a person's full potential via meaning, enlightenment, purpose and growth[3]. Ultimately, to flourish we need to experience both types of happiness. People need to have rewarding and positive relationships, feel competent and confident and believe life is

meaningful and purposeful[4]. Of course, 'meaning' can come from many different parts of our lives. However, in the research undertaken, the focus was on Higher Education students (i.e. those at university) with dyslexia and what factors could support them to flourish in general, as well as in the classroom, to have higher levels of well- being. The findings highlighted how important both self-esteem and hope were to students with dyslexia in order for them to flourish in general. The second key finding was that active coping skills and perceived competence for learning were predictors of well-being in an educational context. To understand these concepts better, it is important to discuss what each predictor is and how it can be applied through the educational community and be further supported by the home environment.

Self esteem

Low self-esteem is characterised as feelings of unhappiness, negativity and a lack of satisfaction and contentment, in addition to possible anxiety and feelings of inferiority[5]. By contrast people with high self-esteem can take responsibility and be true to themselves. They strive to set goals for self-improvement and commit to them. Furthermore, they are forgiving and positive and have internal values, often due to a strong identity[5]. The role of self-esteem and self-confidence is important to consider because both are known to be adversely affected for many people with dyslexia[6]. This can be due to the fact a student with dyslexia may feel frustrated because they cannot meet other people's expectations. This, in turn, can create sadness and depression[7], as well as anxiety and loneliness and thus affect a person's behaviour[8]. A number of studies have argued that there is a significant relationship between self-esteem and academic performance; students with dyslexia have significantly lower self-esteem, feel more anxious and less competent in their written work and academic achievements, compared to their peers who do not have dyslexia[9]. However, self-esteem is deemed a precursor to happiness and thus can be used to support students with dyslexia[10]. This was evident in my study, too.

Hope

The second key area said to be crucial for flourishing is hope and hopeful thinking. Snyder[15] is one of the key theorists in relation to this area and he split 'hope' into three main components. The first is "goal orientated thinking"; this is an individual's perceived capacity to create or imagine life goals. These can be big or small, short or long term. The goal needs to be obtainable but of sufficient value to justify time and thought. The second key component is "pathway thinking". This is an individual's capacity to find different ways to achieve the goal and the flexibility to work around difficulties[11]. People with high hope typically use affirmations as part of their internal dialogue, for example, "I can do this" or "I will find a way"[12]. Furthermore, they are efficient and effective at finding alternative routes[13]. The third part requires "hope agency" which is the belief system a person has regarding their capability to instigate change in their lives and achieve the goals they set for themselves. It is also known as the motivational component and is intrinsically (internally) motivated[11]. In summary, high hope thinkers are proficient at establishing clear goals for their lives, imagining a multitude of workable pathways to achieve their desired goal and the capacity to persevere when faced with challenges or obstacles. Research conducted previously with student populations found a positive correlation between high hope and academic achievement[14], as well as lower levels of depression[15]. In contrast, individuals with low hope were associated with a reduction in well-being[16]. This is an area which supports students with dyslexia to flourish in general across all contexts.

Active Coping

The role of active coping is of great interest to Positive Psychological theory. The aim is to ascertain what people do to cope with stress; some choices will be functional whereas others will be dysfunctional[17]. In order to flourish; functional, effective and efficient ways of coping need to be employed so as not to 'languish' or feel depressed[18]. It is therefore deemed an

important life skill which must be developed, shaped and honed to support an individual to navigate the world and cope in a crisis[19]. Coping style is said to be a predictor of Higher Education adjustment and achievement in first year university students. Active coping (i.e. being proactive to solve a problem) is most predictive of academic achievement and personal-emotional adjustment[20]. Coping patterns are established at a young age, i.e. during the mainstream school years[21] which is why it is so important that all phases of education are providing the right tools, to support holistically, all learners with dyslexia.

Being able to cope adaptively to situations, utilising perseverance, asking and accessing help, as well as finding alternative ways to overcome barriers, are all deemed crucial[22]. Unfortunately, previous studies have suggested students with dyslexia used more negative coping styles, such as avoidance, especially in relation to academic life[23,24]. Therefore, there is an argument to suggest that these skills need to be explicitly taught and embedded into our teaching practice across all educational phases.

Perceived Competence

In many studies, children and older students with dyslexia experienced lower perceived competence in education which negatively impacted on their achievement and their attitude towards teachers[25]. Perceived competence links to Social Determination Theory which stipulates a person must feel autonomous and competent in respect to specific tasks or areas of their life which are important for them. Perceived Competence relies upon a person engaging in activities whereby they have experienced being effective and successful. If a student perceives him/herself to lack competence, this will be a potential barrier to flourishing in regard to their education[26]. Many students with dyslexia can fail both academically and socially due to external barriers which leads to frustration, disappointment and low self- esteem and thus lower perceived competence for learning[25,27].

Implications for Practice

As specialist teachers, we need tools to support all our learners. Positive Psychology is a growing area of evidence-based practice which has the capacity to support students with dyslexia in a holistic way. It can easily be incorporated as part of one-to-one study skills sessions and mental health mentoring. In the wider educational context, these skills can be used in any phase of education as well as at home. Here are some strategies that can be used:

- Build self-esteem through identifying an individual's character strengths (character strengths exercise)[28]
- Encourage engagement in different, varied activities outside of an educational context[28,29]
- Celebrate achievements and accomplishments both in and outside the classroom.
- Praise and reward effort
- Undertake small random acts of kindness[28,29]
- Express your gratitude to key people in your life (verbally or in a written format)[27]
- Build a routine to establish study time[28]
- Break down academic work into small goals/tasks[29]
- Consider feedback which focuses predominantly on content, plus one area to develop.
- Support goal-setting activities and prioritise into short, medium and long term goals[28].
- Take one goal at a time and create a step-by-step plan with each learner, by setting small achievable goals[29].
- Promote being proactive by discussing problem solving strategies[28]
- Create affirmations with your students to create an internal dialogue of encouragement and positivity[28]

- Create solutions together to overcome barriers, if obstacles do arise.
- Help the student find their intrinsic motivation, i.e. an internal reason which will drive them towards their goal
- Give permission for the student to be able to ask for help and signpost[28], where needed.

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Workplace Strategy Coaching

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Introduction

Workplace Strategy Coaching is often recommended as part of a support package of reasonable adjustments for dyslexic employees. Coaching sessions are designed to help individuals develop their own effective coping strategies to overcome specific workplace challenges and improve performance. Most individuals will benefit from booking around four coaching sessions, spread out over a two to three month period. A specialist workplace coach will work with an individual to look at what is working well; to develop their self-awareness of what is not working, and to help them to explore and develop successful new strategies.

In this article, Patrick Mulcahy, a workplace assessor and coach, discusses how he incorporates software strategies into his workplace coaching sessions for employees with dyslexia.

Incorporating software strategies into workplace coaching sessions for employees with dyslexia

Having worked in the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) sector for over 20 years, I was keen to investigate if some of the good practice gleaned from this experience could be adapted to my current roles as a workplace assessor, diagnostician, and coach. I was involved in developing the strategy enhancement approach to DSA assessing which took as a basis: Need, Strategy, Solution; I incorporate the same approach when undertaking workplace assessments and coaching.

The basic premise is that the assessor uses the employee's diagnostic report in conjunction with the assessor's observations on how the employee has learned to adapt previously in the work environment. All previous strategies used by the employee

can be used to select the most appropriate hardware and software solutions. In my reports I include a programme of software strategies to ensure that employees receive training pertinent to their need rather than generic features-based training.

The support provided by a workplace coach aims to build on the employee's existing strategies, using a framework and a list of strategies firmly grounded in the reality of the work-based tasks. I take a scaffolding approach to empower the employee so that their work is better able to meet their potential. This has highly beneficial effects on their self-esteem as well as their ability to fulfil their designated role.

Sessions on-line

Due to COVID-19 most workplace assessments, training and coaching sessions are being undertaken on-line. The use of virtual platforms allows the workplace coach to adopt the same teaching techniques used by universities and colleges. Using the employee's workplace assessment report and their diagnostic report to build an understanding of the particular difficulties they face; the workplace coach can build a strong one-to-one relationship which helps to support their confidence and to pinpoint the "reasonable adjustments" they need in the workplace.

Coaching should introduce forms of support to help employees to bridge the gap between their current abilities and their intended goals. A key issue is concentration. Maintaining attention to the task at hand is a cognitive function that often seems indistinguishable from working memory. To engage with this, a variety of teaching strategies can be used such as modelling, feedback, questioning, and cognitive structuring. Adapting established teaching practices to support the employee in specific tasks which they are required to do in their role has the immediate benefit of improving the person's confidence and embedding their newfound skills in their daily working practice.

There is a great deal of research on teaching practices and I have synthesised the most useful elements in relation to dyslexia in my teaching of software strategies as follows:

(i) Focus the attention of the employee.

(ii) Provide the employee with a general overview of the strategy and the context within which it would be used.

(iii) Demonstrate the strategy by using the 'share screen' feature of remote platforms e.g. Zoom, MS Teams, WebEx etc.

(iv) Guide the practice – employee repeats the strategy but is able to ask for assistance.

(v) Independent practice – employee undertakes strategy without recourse to asking for assistance.

Workplace coaches ought to be familiar with established teaching practice to ensure they can provide really effective support, focused on the individual employee's need. This enables us to provide good value for the company or organisation. Coaches should familiarise themselves with the accessibility features of software being used by their clients. At the very least, we should be aware of the accessibility features of software that is in common use in the workplace.

Employers in turn should consider creating discussion lists for all employees with neurodiverse conditions in receipt of workplace assessments. This will enable the cascading of good practice across the organisation as well as providing a mutual support network for employees.

All software strategies can, in effect, be recommendations for the workplace coach as well as the trainer. This means that all training providers for employees with dyslexia should have some knowledge and experience of teaching practice. That way, all parties benefit: workplace coaches build their professionalism and expertise, employers not only meet their legal obligations but can improve employee retention and job satisfaction, often

for a very modest investment and employees can receive effective, well-focused support.

Workplace coaching is one of many services funded through the Government's Access to Work scheme. For further information please visit the website.

https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work

Setting up a Workplace Support Network

Inspector Pete Phillips
Hampshire Police

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world, indeed it is the only thing that ever has".

Wise words spoken by American anthropologist Margaret Mead. Setting up a workplace support network can seem impossible. When speaking to other police forces looking to set up a similar dyslexia support system to that created in Hampshire Constabulary, I can sometimes see the feeling of despair in people's eyes as they initially take a look at what we have done and how far we have come.

It is important, firstly, to realise that all things will be difficult before they are easy. There will inevitably be battles, hearts and minds to be won over, uncertainty and doubt transformed into confidence and enthusiasm. Success comes from many small efforts repeated over and over, it comes from patience and perseverance, and some of it comes from luck, which we can occasionally create ourselves.

Staff wellbeing

Hampshire Constabulary has invested significant time, effort and finance, into looking after its staff. Staff wellbeing cannot be underestimated and many academic studies highlight that the most successful organisations value, look after and listen to their staff.

We are not a business organisation, but we have customers; the public. The demands on us are significant, and never more so than recent events with Covid19. Police officers are expected to step forward while others are heading in the opposite direction. The complex nature of investigations and the crucial work undertaken by police staff, also cannot be taken for granted.

The prize for getting wellbeing support right is improved morale and motivation, improved attendance and retention of staff and

improved performance. The impact can be an organisation that understands its staff, provides for them, values them and in return provides an excellent service and a Police Service that punches way above its weight, especially in terms of its funding.

We are an organisation that celebrates difference. We want neurodivergent staff. You only have to look at the strengths that neurodiverse conditions, including dyslexia, bring to the organisation. Innovation, creativity, intuition, persistence, problem solving, holistic visualisation, decision making, dealing with change and an ability to think outside the box, to name just a few. In the Policing world these skills are invaluable.

Dyslexia in the Police Service

Professor Stephen MacDonald and Faye Cosgrove of Sunderland University undertook an academic study (pub. 19/08/19 ISSN 2040-7149) on the impact of dyslexia in the Police Service. The study identified barriers that prevented staff achieving their full potential, it identified why staff were unwilling to share their dyslexia with us and, amongst other findings, it identified the importance of workplace support, especially in relation to the provision of reasonable adjustments. The research mirrors the findings in studies by Andrew Paul Hill (2013) and Chief Inspector Alex McMillan (Cheshire Police, 2019).

Those studies tell us that in order to achieve the wellbeing, attendance, retention, performance and service delivery benefits we want, we also need to remove the barriers and provide the right, specific, bespoke work environment that allows a staff member the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

That means ensuring a robust people strategy, a commitment to equality and inclusion, policies and procedures that our supervisors are aware of and understand and a reasonable adjustment process that enables specific, targeted and early interventions.

The dyslexia assessor group in Hampshire Constabulary has, for the last 7-8 years, taken on important work with staff,

providing advice and guidance to both staff members and/or their supervisors, as well as carrying out workplace needs assessments. The assessments are undertaken in addition to their day job and they are enthusiastic, motivated people who want to make a difference to the working life of their colleagues, and, in some circumstances, this impacts on their home life.

Findings of the study

The assessor group is made up of staff from a variety of roles and supervisory levels within the organisation. The right assessor is placed with the right client to ensure they have the best opportunity of understanding their role requirements. One of the findings of the study by Andrew Paul Hill was that:

> "Assessments should be carried out by a person who is familiar with the role requirements of the client…the intended effect being that the recommendations are bespoke to the individual and not based on a shopping list approach".

Too often we see assessments carried out by accredited workplace needs assessors which provide a cut and paste list of recommendations, be it speech to text or text to speech assistive technology, Dictaphones, noise cancelling headphones, the list goes on and on. The recommendations are often not compatible with organisational operating systems or the person's actual role. They may have tried it before and it didn't work.

Organisations, however, can then feel duty bound to purchase the items recommended because, if they don't, they may be liable to litigation. The poor client is then left with 15 pieces of equipment that they either can't use, doesn't work or haven't been given the training to use and an organisation that thinks they are helping.

Only when you sit down and talk to the individual do you then realise that most of the purchased equipment will never be used. This is not only costly, but can become a further barrier to the individual and further reduces the likelihood of success.

When we get it right, however, it feels good. I am happy to say

that we have had many feel good days. One colleague wrote thanking the team saying:

> "I cannot thank you and your team enough. A huge weight has been lifted off my shoulders. I no longer need to feel I need to hold myself back. I can now look at my developing career and do something about it. This has been a 20 year question waiting to be answered".

When we get it right, sometimes it can be the most minor, inexpensive adjustments that make a difference such a changing computer profile settings, extra time for report writing or examinations, to-do books or using personal or electronic diaries. As it is so often said, it can be the simple things that make the most difference.

The right support

Providing the right support can significantly improve the perception of your organisation, both internally and externally. Embedding national guidance such as the Disability Confident Scheme will allow you to encourage staff with disabilities to progress. It will increase the likelihood that a person with a neurodiverse condition, such as dyslexia, may apply to join a particular organisation, bringing significant skills with them. By looking differently at how we as an organisation are made up, we can become an employer of choice.

The opposite, of course, can also be true and a failure to look after someone can be costly, both financially, through an Employment Tribunal, and reputationally. However, if we are truly looking to do the right thing, these situations will be minimised and when, not if, we get it wrong we can learn from our mistakes.

Increasing the willingness of colleagues to "share" their dyslexia, or other conditions is important. If individuals feel empowered to talk with their teams and the organisation about their condition, organisational learning will again, improve service delivery.

I choose my words carefully and say "share" because too often people are asked if "they have a disability", and "would they like

to disclose" or "declare" anything. Many with neurodiverse conditions, including dyslexia, will not believe they have a disability. To be asked to disclose or declare something sounds negative, we disclose previous convictions, we declare goods on which we haven't paid tax to customs and excise.

We can use different terminology easily to get the information we need. We can ask people to share their needs with us, or advise us of any needs. On applications we can ask if someone requires reasonable adjustments and if so why, thereby negating the need to use the term disabled.

Committed people

All of this can, and usually does, start with a small group of thoughtful, committed people. It can also go much further. The Hampshire Constabulary model of support for dyslexia has now be adopted by 50% of the UK's Police Services. It has been commended by the House of Commons APPG for learning difficulties, the Disabled Police Association and the NPCC working group for dyslexia.

It is thought that this year, over 2000 police staff across the country will access level 4 trained workplace needs assessors and be given the bespoke support they need to do their job. A job that they are perfectly capable of doing, a job which they can excel at, a job in which the barriers to their success will have been removed.

This, along with other support networks and inclusive work taking place across the other strands of diversity, will allow us to become a step nearer to our goal of being representative of our public and an organisation where a good proportion of our senior leaders are diverse.

If you are still in doubt about whether to start up a support network I will leave you with some words from Marianne Williamson, which I hope will inspire you to give it a go:

> "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate, our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure, it is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.

> “We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be?...
>
> “There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won’t feel insecure around you, we are all meant to shine…
>
> “It is not just in some of us, it’s in everyone. And, as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people the permission to do the same.
>
> “As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others”.

Have faith, give it a go, good luck.

Technology and Adults

Arran Smith
Founder SEND Group

For many years technology has become a large part of most people's lives, from children, parents, carer's, grandparents, to CEO's and entrepreneurs. Technology is everywhere. When we look at technology to support those with dyslexia and additional needs, we know that technology is definitely everywhere.

As a dyslexic adult I use technology every day to support my ongoing differences and difficulties, including using technology to dictate this chapter.

Assistive Technology

Assistive technology is a piece of software or hardware that can help you in your daily life. This technology can remove barriers to help to support with differences and difficulties along with creating independence.

When we look at technology for dyslexic people, we think about the difficulties that people face from the frustration of spelling and writing to the difficulty with reading and decoding. There are many types of assistive technology out there.

Text to Speech TTS

Text to speech can help to support with reading, decoding, consuming and understanding content. Text to Speech works in the way that its name suggests; text is displayed on a screen or on a piece of paper and the technology reads what is written. Text to speech often uses a synthesised computerised voice to read aloud the text. Many pieces of software and hardware also deliver synchronised highlighting, allowing you to follow along whilst listening to the text being read. This feature can be beneficial as it supports tracking. One of the other main benefits of text to speech is proof reading; listening back to what you have written allows you to amend any mistakes that you've

made. Text to speech can also enable adults to consume a high amount of content in a timely fashion as it removes frustration and barriers sometimes experienced with reading and decoding. Text to Speech can therefore create independence, remove stress and anxiety, and place the adult on a level playing field.

Dictation

The technology for using your voice to do an action or command has come a long way. We see this technology in our smart home devices, in our cars and on our mobile phones. The concept of dictation is being able to speak into a computer or a device that turns our spoken voice into text which is commonly known as speech to text. This can be very beneficial to dyslexics that have difficulties with spelling, handwriting and those that find getting information down on paper very difficult. Dictation is an empowering piece of technology that can remove frustrations and create independence for the individual user. We see its benefits in many of our lives, growing in many sectors and supporting all people to improve productivity.

Spelling

Spell check has been around for many years, the red squiggly line on the word processor has been an annoyance for many people.

As with many other pieces of technology, we have seen advances in spelling, predictive text and autocorrect. Spelling technology has become innovated in understanding what we are saying and how we are saying it. Emphasis being on artificial intelligence to ensure language is communicated correctly. These advancements include advanced mistake detection, clarity, consistency, punctuation and formatting.

Many of us in the past have been annoyed with predictive text. The benefits and the advancements in recognising what spelling is needed has gone forward in strides allowing those with dyslexia and other difficulties to pick from a minimum of 3-word

choices to select from. This technology is not just available from mobile phones; it is becoming more mainstream in desktop computers. Auto correction is that automatic change that happens when you are typing e.g. we get a capital letter at the beginning of a sentence automatically. This has also grown to be very powerful for those with additional needs, with software out there that helps understand and analyse spelling habits to support each individual on an ongoing basis.

Note taking

Note taking is an interesting topic, as there are many pieces of technology out there. One form of note taking is mind mapping. Mind mapping can be used in many ways, from taking the notes in a meeting, to jotting down ideas for planning, to creating presentations. The concept of mind mapping has been proven to support some people with dyslexia in many ways as it is a speedier way of getting information on to paper. Using the software available makes this even easier by removing many more frustrations such as poor handwriting and spelling. The additional tools including exporting, timelines, picture inserts and business tools like gant charts give the user more flexibility.

We have also seen technology that helps with journaling, such as taking your own notes on note pads, writing on sticky notes and scribbling down ideas. There are products that enable you to do this and give you the power of using inking capabilities on a device and converting handwriting into text; along with using other forms of input including audio, picture and emoji's. These are interesting products and services that are available to support with collecting and sharing information.

This powerful software gives users back control when it comes to recording conversations, lectures and meetings. It enables users to manipulate, and generate notations giving support with revision and visual cues to help identify important extracts of information. This can be beneficial giving user's control of audio recordings.

Planning

Planning can be hard. For many years, to do lists are the way many dyslexics have planned their day to day lives. The benefits of cloud based technology are that it allows users to have calendars, tasks and to do lists which can be shared on multiple devices, along with multiple people. This can help users to plan by removing some of the frustrations and giving users the indications and structure of the tasks that need to be done. Along with Note taking products such as journals and Mind Maps, planning tools can be very beneficial to help with organisation, creating clear thinking and increasing productivity.

Author's comments

Throughout this article I have given you some common terminology related to assistive technology, along with insights into products and services and some of the features and tools. With an insight into my personal use of technology, on a daily basis I use a combination of all tools listed in this article, more commonly text to speech, followed by dictation and planning tools. I use a wide range of devices and software to help me every day. These are tools that I have found to be beneficial to support me with my dyslexia needs. My recommendation to any adult that is using technology is that they should also get training to better understand the features and ensure competent use of technology.

Author's background

I am a severely dyslexic adult with ongoing difficulties with reading and spelling. At the age of 9 I was diagnosed with severe dyslexia and have tendencies of dyspraxia and other neuro-diverse conditions. To this day I have difficulties in the automaticity of reading along with difficulties with spelling. Technology has enabled me to continue at the same level as my peers, allowing me to be independent and ultimately continuing my growth to reach my potential.

BDA Groups

Dyslexia@Work an Erasmus Project

Erasmus+ KA2 project (no. 2019-1-IT01-KA202-007433)

Sue Flohr, MBE

The BDA is proud to be working with the Università Dell'Insubria (ITALY), the Associazione Italiana Dislessia (ITALY), the Dyslexia Association of Ireland (IRELAND), the Fédération Française Des DYS (FRANCE), the Malta Dyslexia Association (MALTA) and the European Dyslexia Association on this project to increase work prospects for dyslexic people.

There are two main goals of this project. Firstly, we hope to identify good dyslexia awareness practice amongst recruiters and employers to enable other organisations to emulate this good practice. The results from the project should form a good dyslexia friendly employment model; created to make the interviewing process easier to navigate through for the dyslexic employee, enhancing prospects and career progression.

Each project partner has researched and gathered information from their countries to compile a comparative analysis. In particular, we have examined legislation which protects dyslexia and work. We have also looked at the fairness of the interview process and whether or not reasonable adjustments are offered in the workplace, and whether there is a 'levelling of playing field' for achieving professional qualifications.

Interviews with recruitment agencies and employers will help to establish their commitment to dyslexia awareness. Our findings will inform the second part of the project. This will be to create a manual with guidelines aimed at creating a better workplace for dyslexic individuals. It will also demonstrate to employers the diverse sought after skills that dyslexic people are able to offer.

Further details of the project can be seen here:
https://www.dyslexiaprojects.eu

BDA Academic Committee

Professor Angela Fawcett
Chair

The academic committee of the BDA continues to form an integral part of the BDA mission, to create a dyslexia friendly society. Its brief is to provide research information towards the advice that BDA give to individuals or to Government itself. Set up in December 2011, the academic committee consists of a small group of academics, who are noted for their knowledge and expertise in the broad area of dyslexia. The BDA liaises with the academic committee, to ensure that their advice is solidly evidence- based. Over the past few years, the academic committee has learned to respond at a moment's notice to the needs of the BDA, often following a tight timeline in providing useful information.

Activity this year includes:

An update was required this year on the MESH website on dyslexia, **www.meshguides.org/**, originally created by Angela Fawcett, with Dr Kate Saunders and Liz Horobin. Inevitably, a number of the links had become redundant, and needed to be updated this year. Further work is in progress on areas for further research and online communities. If you have any information to contribute to this guide, please contact Angela on **prof.angelafawcett@gmail.com**

Angela continues to attend the APPG, but of course, this year this has taken place virtually, with a Teams meeting in May, on the societal cost of dyslexia, featuring interesting reports on exclusions and SEND, youth offending and prison.

BDA Accreditation Board

Mike Johnson
Executive Vice-chair

The BDA Accreditation Board meets formally twice a year to discuss and review courses accredited for BDA awards and developments within the SpLD world. In the past year, the Board has formed several specialist groups to develop policy and criteria in specific areas; currently they are considering dyscalculia and online specialist teaching. There is also an independent online forum for leaders of BDA accredited courses co-ordinated by a member of the Board.

The Board keeps the criteria that must be met by accredited courses under regular review. Accreditation is granted to a course provider, which can be a university, a commercial organisation or a Local Authority, for four years at the end of which the course must be reaccredited. Each course has a Liaison Team of two members of the Accreditation Board who remain in contact with the course leader for the period of accreditation and to whom an annual report on the progress of the course is submitted.

There was a major restructuring of the Board three years ago, and a review of its constitution and regulations to make clear the particular responsibilities of each member. It now mirrors a cross-section of the sector:

- Four members each represent the concerns of:
  - Northern Ireland
  - Scotland
  - Wales
  - International courses.
- Three members each represent professional services to the sector:
  - PATOSS
  - Helen Arkell Dyslexia Charity
  - Dyslexia Guild/Real Group

- Four members represent accredited course providers.
- One member represents Local Authorities, Children's Services and national concerns.
- One member has responsibility for a wider knowledge of dyslexia and its effects.
- One member advises on concerns relating to dyscalculia.

The Board is chaired by a person with a distinguished academic reputation in the field of dyslexia, who must be independent of any provider of dyslexia training. The Chair is supported by the Executive Vice-chair, who is also independent of any provider of dyslexia training and is responsible for the day-to-day working of the Board.

All members of the Board are 'volunteers' in that they are unpaid, are independent of the BDA and recognised as experts in the field of dyslexia.

Naturally, the BDA has representation on the Accreditation Board (Chair of Trustees, Chief Executive Officer and Education Manager who is also the Vice-chair) acting in an advisory capacity.

The prime focus of the Accreditation Board's work is and must remain - indicated by its title – accreditation. It sets the nationally (and internationally) recognised standards and criteria for courses for specialist teachers of learners with dyslexia and now also dyscalculia. It awards to those successfully completing these courses a certificate, valid for three years, indicating the level of study undertaken. Crucially, having a BDA award signals to all stakeholders that its holder has the professional knowledge, skills and understanding to recognise and intervene with the individual needs of a learner experiencing dyslexic-type difficulties.

These accredited courses offer a full career progression for specialist teachers. Each course has two-elements:

- "Core" – the theoretical bases of the understanding of dyslexia and the methods currently recognised as effective in specialist intervention. The teaching and assessment of these elements must be independently validated as being of a minimum FEHQ (Framework for Higher Education Qualifications) standard set for each level of course.
- "Specialist" – the skills involved in 1:1 and small group interventions based on multi-sensory methods. Again, each level of course demands an ascending standard of justification for the activities included in the programme and the evaluative reflection on the results.

The course levels are:

- Accredited Learning Support Assistant (ALSA) – These courses are taught at a minimum of FEHQ Level 4 in England (equivalent level in Scotland). They are often offered by Local Authorities in conjunction with an FE college or integrated into foundation degrees or as a module within a degree in education.
- Accredited Teacher/Practitioner Status (ATS/APS) – These courses are taught at a minimum of FEHQ Level 5 (or equivalent). They are offered by a number of commercial organisations and universities. (University-based courses are taught at Level 7.) Holders of an ATS/APS award have studied and been assessed on the theoretical foundations of dyslexia to degree level. They are competent to assess, by use of information for parents and classroom teachers, observation and curriculum-based assessments, the needs of learners showing dyslexic-type difficulties and develop programmes for both 1:1 and small group interventions and strategies for enhancing access to the curriculum in class and subject teaching.
- Associate Membership of the BDA (AMBDA) – This is the Gold-standard award. These courses are taught at

FEHQ (or equivalent) Level 7 – Master's Degree. Holders of AMBDA have studied both the theories and contemporary research that underpins the understanding of the difficulties experienced by learners with dyslexia. They can use these understandings to reflect on and evaluate their interventions.

They are competent to perform diagnostic assessments including the use of psychometric and educational tests. They are entitled to an Assessment Practicing Certificate without further study if applied for within 5 years of completing their course.

- There are parallel awards for ATS/APS and AMBDA in dyscalculia. Many of the courses are delivered using a combination of eLearning and face-to-face teaching.

Apart from the continual process of review and revision of the criteria for accredited courses, the Board is also proactive in responding to on-going events and developments affecting the sector. A recent example is the BDA's response to the effects of Covid-19 on schools. As soon as it became clear that school closures were likely, Liaison Teams contacted the courses for which they were responsible, to agree how it was proposed to mitigate those effects on learners for whom specialist provision was being made. Further, a group was set up meeting weekly, using Microsoft Teams™, to develop recommendations for online teaching and assessment and, particularly, the safety and safeguarding provisions that must apply to such teaching.

As indicated above, the Board has recognised that there was now sufficient agreement regarding the understanding of mathematical difficulties and what was referred to as dyscalculia to enable the development of criteria for courses at both ATS/APS and AMBDA levels. The Board now has a sub-committee devoted to this area working in conjunction with the BDA Dyscalculia Committee.

Finally, it is important to recognise that the Board aims to work in liaison with all those active in enhancing the lives and prospects of those with dyslexia. For example, its Liaison Teams work collaboratively with course proposers and not as inspectors. It makes decisions normally by consensus. These decisions and the discussions leading to them are governed by evidence, as are the criteria governing the content and curriculum processes of its accredited courses.

BDA Cultural Committee

Joseline Porter
Secretary

This article does not aim to represent every Black dyslexic's experience but will give a very small insight into some shared and lived experiences from different voices. We have had the opportunity to interview a small sample of black dyslexics and neurodivergents and they have shared their stories and journeys.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the black community and the issues brought to the fore by the Black Lives Matter movement of summer 2020 have made headlines and highlighted how systemic issues compound inequalities, the under representation of, and discrimination faced by BAME (Black and Minority Ethnics) communities every day including within the social-justice system.

The national Lockdown imposed in March 2020 resulted in an overnight change impacting on the ways of working mostly shifting to home-based working, the delivery of teaching and training to those in education and training moving online and the introduction of home schooling. Economic disparities exposed gaps in the access of resources available to some communities particularly BAME. The impact to the dyslexic community and others with specific needs, cannot be underestimated.

We will highlight the intersection of stories told by others, through Toni's Journey, (name changed for confidentiality) based on true events.

Toni is 32 and she is dyslexic and dyspraxic. Her academic accolades include a BA & MA in Business, Economics and Organisation Management. In common with many neurodivergents, Toni has found job application and interview processes to be the greatest barriers to acquiring a professional career specifically in the corporate world. She has raised concerns about the application process becoming more discriminatory now more than ever, disadvantaging those whose

strengths may not shine on a memory test as well as other aspects of the interview process making her feel more disabled.

Toni has said that during her employment journey, her previous employers have had very little awareness of dyslexia or dyspraxia, which had a profound effect on her experience in the workplace and may have contributed to her colleagues' and managers' lack of understanding her. She felt she always had to justify and prove herself.

No understanding

Toni's experience of disclosure to the Human Resources Department has not always been a positive one. She says she was never listened to and the tendency was an automatic referral to Occupational Health. There was no attempt by her previous employers to gain some understanding of what it meant to be dyslexic or dyspraxic which would have enabled them to gain informed advice on what the best course of action would have been in terms of support. She was made to feel like she was the problem which had an impact on her wellbeing and self-esteem at work.

Our discussions with peers who are dyslexic has highlighted a common notion of being fearful and the perception that disclosure during the job application process has hindered their chances of being hired and that disclosure during the course of employment has often resulted in performance management leading to them making the choice to suffer in silence or leave their employment as they would not want to be judged as incompetent. Other dyslexics have often made choices not to ask for support and have compensated by having to work beyond their normal working hours, taking work home as well as working during weekends. In most of the stories told, there is a common theme of employers failing in their duty to make reasonable adjustments in accordance with the Equality Act.

In 2018, the Westminster AchieveAbility Commission (WAC) highlighted 42% of neurodivergent applicants reported that they always or usually feel disabled by the application process, and

this rises to 60% of neurodivergent applicants from minority ethnicity backgrounds (Ref 4). The committee would like to shine a light on the marginalisation of this community group and call out for targeted support and resources.

Society can disable a person who is dyslexic or is neurodiverse by not accepting differences unconditionally and the compounded effect of discrimination on the basis of gender, sexuality, parenthood and mental health can make a person feel like they are walking in quicksand while others don't have the same constraints.

It needs to be recognised that as a consequent of the COVID-19 pandemic, the shift by employers to online recruitment, remote interviewing and onboarding is having a disproportionate effect on all dyslexics and more so on the BAME community, given disparities in accessing resources and the general lack of awareness of dyslexia and the needs of neurodivergents in the workplace. There is an emerging trend of a one size fits all approach by some employers.

Recruiters and employers are missing out on a unique talent pool with so many excellent qualities that include creativity and thinking out of the box.

Tony's story is not unique. There is a strong sense of responsibility to advocate for her and others with similar experiences. The BAME dyslexic community's involvement in initiatives that are meant to support them is crucial. Visible and tangible change is therefore vital more so than ever. We recognise that there is limited research about dyslexia within the BAME as well as from a cultural perspective. It is the aim of the committee to influence changing the landscape.

References:

The Westminster AchieveAbility commission (WAC Report 2018) Page 48

https://www.achieveability.org.uk/files/1518955206/wac-report_2017_interactive-2.pdf (27.10.2020)

BDA Dyscalculia Committee

Pete Jarrett
Chair

It has been a busy year for people that work with struggling maths learners. The British Dyslexia Association Dyscalculia Committee and SASC have been working on a new definition for dyscalculia for educators. This definition has now been published on the BDA website and in the SASC guidance on assessing for dyscalculia and maths learning difficulties. I discuss the definition in another chapter in the Handbook, particularly in relation to the similarities in symptoms that can be seen between people with dyscalculia and some people with maths anxiety.

A new AMBDAM qualification has been created, allowing for the development of a professional work force of specialist teacher/assessors to be created. The BDA, Chester University and Edge Hill University are delivering the courses. The BDA Accreditation Board are looking forward to receiving the first applications for this award.

For the first time, dyscalculia has made it to the title of the BDA International Conference. This is very exciting, and I am looking forward to some fantastic speakers that have agreed to contribute. Once again, we are pleased that Professor Daniel Ansari will be joining us from Canada. Professor Stanislas Dehaene, author of the seminal text 'Numbersense' will also be speaking, and it is very lucky that the conference is virtual, so that he doesn't then have to indulge me in a conversation about Spatial Numerical Area Response Coding (the SNARC Effect). We also have some amazing speakers from the UK; Tom Hunt, Sue Johnston-Wilder, Clare Lee and Judy Hornigold amongst others.

We are looking forward to the next year and anticipating some very exciting news, so keep looking at the BDA website.

https://sasc.org.uk/SASCDocuments/FINAL%20SASC%20Guidance%20on%20assessment%20of%20%20Dyscalculia%20%20November%202019.pdf

BDA Local Associations and the Local Association Board

Lesley Hill
Chair, Local Association Board

The BDA is the national charity providing information and support around all aspects of dyslexia. In addition, there are about 50 Local Dyslexia Associations (LDA) around England, Wales and Northern Ireland who are all members of the BDA, but are also charities in their own right. Each of these provides a variety of services. Dependent on their expertise and the needs in their locality, and most are run entirely by volunteers.

The Local Association Board (LAB) is a network of volunteers who have been elected by all the LDAs to represent the 11 regions of England, Wales and Northern Ireland (See map on page 200) and provide vital communication between the BDA and the LDAs.

The Local Association Board

The BDA provides the national voice for dyslexic people, and has an important role in discussions with statutory services including the Government. However, it is dyslexic adults and families of dyslexic children who are experiencing the highs and lows of being dyslexic in today's world, and it is often their LDA who hears about their experiences and issues. The purpose of the Local Association Board (LAB) is to bring together and share issues and views that can then be communicated to the Management Board of the BDA. The LAB also provides a means of disseminating information from the BDA to the LDAs, and meetings are attended by the BDA Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and sometimes by other BDA staff too. The regional Representatives, and their Deputies, serve for three years. If you are an active member of your LDA, please make sure that your LDA keeps in touch with your representative, and make sure that your voice is heard. In recent years, two National Representatives have also been established on the LAB; a

Dyslexia Adult Representative and a Dyslexia Young Person Representative, both of whom, together with their respective Deputies, have a vital voice in making sure that the voice of dyslexic people of all ages really is heard.

In recent years the LAB has helped the BDA to achieve some real benefits to the LDAs, for example:

The LDA Manual

Some years ago an electronic copy of the new LDA manual, updated to reflect the changes in law and adhering to current guidelines, was distributed to every LDA.

If you are an active member of your LDA, make sure that you have access to the manual so that you will be able to see the guidelines relating to your role. The manual also includes sample documents that LDAs can use to ensure that they are meeting current requirements of data protection, safeguarding and that the LDA Trustees are meeting their obligations. These elements of running an LDA sound onerous and difficult when the main aim of LDAs is to provide support to dyslexics; the guidance contained in the manual is designed to make these requirements as simple as possible.

It is intended that the LDA manual is updated regularly, so look out for updates as they become available.

Free Helpline Training

On-line FREE Certificated Helpline Training course for LDA members. Access to this is via the BDA website on the Membership Page at: **https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/membership/local-dyslexia-association-membership**

Anyone successfully completing the course will be able to progress to taking the BDA Accredited Level 2 course. There is a charge for this additional course, which is accredited by OCNCredit4Learning, but it is still a cost-effective way for LDAs to ensure that volunteers working on their Helpline are well qualified to take on the role.

LDA Funding Opportunity

Prior to GDPR, LDAs were able to claim £7, from the BDA in respect of Individual BDA Members living in their area. Since then, the LAB has led negotiations with the BDA to introduce the opportunity for LDAs to apply for money to fund a project. This was a new service introduced in 2019 and it is hoped that applications will be considered twice annually after Easter and before Christmas.

LDA Free Webinars

The BDA is providing LDAs with a free webinar on "Using Social Media". After the event a recording will also be available. This is a new venture as a result of feedback to the LAB from LDAs.

This is an example of the benefits of BDA membership that can be arranged for LDAs by liaising with your LAB representative.

LAB Roles

The LAB has roles in approving new LDAs, supporting all LDAs and approving LDA nominations for individuals serving on the BDA Management Board.

The LAB usually meet 3 or 4 times each year, and now use "GoToMeeting" as a web-based virtual meeting which is proving a real saving in terms of cost and time for both the LAB Members and the BDA. This innovation has also meant that both LAB Regional Representatives and their Deputies are now able to attend every meeting.

Finally, the network of LAB Representatives and their contacts provide a wealth of knowledge and experience which is available to LDAs through their Regional Representative. Do make contact and keep in touch.

Local Dyslexia Associations

There are as many different models for LDAs as there are LDAS, but they all provide information and support for dyslexic people; adults, children and their families. Some are specifically run by dyslexic adults for dyslexic adults, while others primarily provide help for children and their families.

Nearly all the LDAs will have their own Helpline which provides basic information about dyslexia and signposts enquirers to more in-depth support. This might include access to resources; information about support in school or in the workplace, or referral to someone with specialist knowledge about the Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice, which should be the guidance used by schools and local authorities. Referrals can also be made to someone with knowledge about the support that is available for dyslexic adults.

Some LDAs run workshops where young dyslexic people can get affordable private specialist tuition in small groups or individually.

In some areas, it is very difficult to get assessment for dyslexia, and in response, some LDAs now offer a dyslexia screening service. There is usually a charge for this, but it can provide a useful first step for adults needing more support, or for parents wanting to provide evidence of need to their child's school.

Most LDAs provide regular or occasional meetings, perhaps with an invited speaker which gives opportunities to share knowledge and information together with mutual support. A few LDAS also run annual conferences where experts can share their knowledge and specialist suppliers can showcase their products.

Finding your LDA should be easy:

- There is a list of LDAs on the BDA website, or the BDA Helpline will be able to give you the contact number.
- Many LDAs will be listed in on-line directories organised by local and county/city councils and libraries.
- Most areas have a council for voluntary service who will also keep directories
- The 2014 SEND Code of Practice requires local authorities to publish a Local Offer, and many voluntary organisations, including LDAs, will also be listed there.

However, when contacting your LDA remember, whether by telephone, e-mail or letter, that most LDAs are run by a small group of dedicated volunteers. The Helpline will not be available 24/7, but do be patient because the information and support that your LDA can provide could be invaluable.

If you have received help from an LDA in the past, do consider if you can support it in the future. Why not become a member? You will receive Contact magazine published by the BDA three times a year, which gives details of events around the regions, national events and campaigns, as well as updates on technology from the BDA Technology Advisory Committee (BDA TAC) As a member of your local association you can choose to become a "Shared" Member of the BDA, at no extra cost, giving you a vote at the AGM. Not only will you learn more by becoming a member of your Local Association, but perhaps you might also be able to offer a particular skill? You may only be able to spare a few hours, but nearly all LDAs are in need of more volunteers to enable them to continue the vital service that they provide.

Adults and Local Dyslexia Associations

Around the country there are a few LDAs dedicated to the interests of adults and many more that include Adult Groups among their activities. If you are looking for support as an adult dyslexic, contact your nearest LDA in the first instance. If they don't have their own adult group, they may know of one nearby. Peer support can be invaluable and sharing solutions to common problems a real asset.

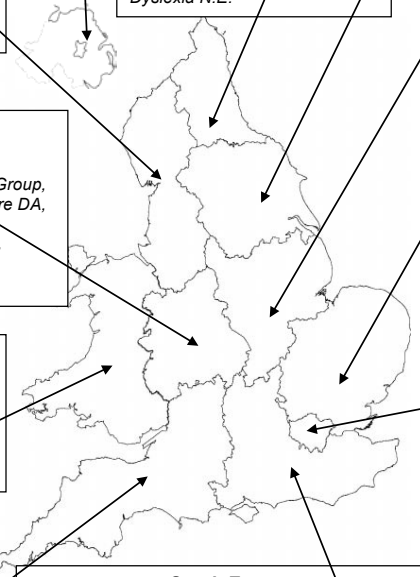
Finally, if there is no Adult Group in an LDA near you, perhaps you might consider starting one. Contact your LAB Representative for support and guidance.

Local Association Board - Area Map

2021

Chair : Lesley Hill
Vice Chair : Pamela Tomalin

British Dyslexia Association



Yorkshire & Humber
Kath Lawson, *Representative*
Pat Payne, *Deputy*

Dyslexia Network Plus
Yorkshire Rose Dyslexia
York & District DA

Northwest
Jeff Hughes *Representative*

Cheshire & North Wales DA,
South Cumbria DA,
West Cumbria DA,
Salford DA with East Manchester,
St Helens & District DA,
DA Wirral

Northern Ireland

North East
Lyn Brown *Representative*

Dyslexia N.E.

East Midlands
Pamela Tomalin *Representative*

Leicestershire DA
Northamptonshire & Buckinghamshire DA
The Dyslexia Association

West Midlands
Lesley Hill *Representative*

BADG Birmingham Adult Dyslexia Group,
Hereford& Worcester DA, Shropshire DA,
DA of Staffordshire,
North Warwickshire & Coventry DA,
South Warwickshire DA.
IDEAS Walsall DA

East of England
Fay Dutton *Representative*
Denys Lyne *Deputy*

Dyslexia Assist (Essex)
Hertfordshire DA
Peterborough & Cambridgeshire DA
Suffolk DA
South Bedfordshire DA

Wales
(Vacant)
Caretaker: Lesley Hill

West Wales DA,
Powys Dyslexia Support Group

London
Anthony Yates *Representative*

DA of Bexley, Bromley, Greenwich, Lewisham
Croydon DA
Ealing DA,
DA of London,
Richmond DA,
Sutton DA,
Waltham Forest DA

South West
Helen Ross *Representative*

Cornwall DA,
Dorset DA,
Gloucestershire DA,
Somerset DA,
Wiltshire DA

South East
Sam Rapp, *Representative*

Adult Dyslexia Centre,
DA of Windsor, Maidenhead, Slough & Bracknell.
Dyslexia House Ass.
Hampshire DA,
Kent West DA,
Oxfordshire DA,
North Surrey DA,
South East Surrey DA,
Wokingham & Reading DA

Adult Representative:	Tessa Polniaszek
Adult Deputy:	Georgia Niolaki
Young Person Representative:	(Vacant)
Young Person Alternate:	(Vacant)

BDA Music Committee:
the life and times of the Music Committee 2019-20

Sally Daunt
Chair

What would the one word be that might sum up this committee and its aims? **Dissemination**!

And we've been involved in disseminating information about music and dyslexia in various ways this last year:

- Via the web (of course, like everyone): both meetings and presentations, including webinars for 'The Dyslexia Show (Virtual)' and the Berkshire Maestros, a group of 60+ instrumental teachers working for the Berkshire Music Hub. These presentations were centred on the positive aspects that dyslexia and neurodiversity in general can bring and were organised as a number of 'snapshots' – each preceded by quasi-fanfare on a little melodica, with every strategy accompanied by a little 'ting' on some nice antique cymbals! To continue the multi-sensory experience (music, words, images, colour...) we have a 'Dyslexia Song'. Sung to the tune of 'Good King Wenceslas' the first verse is

  Ten per cent of folk are dys-
  -Lexic, -calc or -praxic.

  These diff'rences often mix:
  Co-occurring's classic.

  Neurodiverse people show
  Many strengths and talents.

  Everyone's unique and so
  Find a plan for ba-lance.

  This webinar is available, with commentary (and singing!) by emailing us at the address shown at the end of this article.

- Dissemination via opera: a webinar by the international opera singer, Anna Devin in October, 2020, hosted by the Incorporated Society of Musicians (ISM) describing her 'Personal journey' as a dyslexic musician. Anna is a BDA Ambassador and quite happy to share the fact that she is dyslexic, which isn't always the case. Some of her points about creativity really emphasise the positive aspects of the dyslexic/neurodiverse mind:

  > "I think the number one good thing about dyslexia is the ability to think outside the box and find ways around the challenges that I face. I'm not very good at accepting 'no' as an answer – if we can't do it one way, then surely there is another way to do it. This way of thinking breeds great creativity and can be brilliant for brain storming and coming up with solutions: being different is a good thing!"

  Anna's webinar is freely available from the ISM website: search for 'webinar' once you're on it.

- We also disseminate via discussion. For example, the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) introduced a new online music theory exam at Grade 5 level, in August 2020 and we have been concerned about the ramifications of this exam for neurodiverse candidates. We have had extensive dialogue with the Board and some of our members actually sat the exam to experience it at first hand. (I'm glad to tell you that we all passed!) This also resulted in building excellent relationship with the European Piano Teachers Association (EPTA UK).

- Dissemination through the written word. We have revised our (free) 53-page booklet, Music and Dyslexia which is now fully referenced, assuring readers that the information given is indeed from authentic sources and thus, trustworthy. The use of (104) end-notes means that the information doesn't clutter up the text but is easily

accessible. This booklet has also recently been translated into Italian by Miriam Bergese, a PhD student at the University of Turin who used our information in her work.

We also have 13 other music/neurodiversity documents available covering areas including reasonable adjustments in music exams, scales, sight-reading and DCD/Dyspraxia. Our 'Top Ten Tips' have recently been included in a new book, Dyslexia. Wrestling with an Octopus by Beth Beamish.

At the ABRSM (real, live!) conference in November, 2019, a booklet, published by the Board and largely written by committee members, Making Music Accessible: teaching students with dyslexia was available to all delegates and another live event just squeezed in before lockdown was to the Limerick School of Music, with presentations both to instrumental teachers and parents.

- And lastly, dissemination takes place via queries sent to BDA Music, either directly using our email address **bdamusicdyslexia@gmail.com** or via the BDA Helpline. These come from all over the world, with a range of requests for information, both general and specific. Certainly, a novel area this year has been support for a neurodiverse Jewish boy having difficulties memorising the complex music required for Bar Mitzvah.

  Otherwise, frequent pleas for help include requests for a 'dyslexia-aware' teacher. But with the whole of the UK (and beyond), at least 20 or so possible instruments (or voice) and a very, very limited number of teachers who fit that bill, this is usually a difficult one. One person wanted a teacher for the Japanese shakuhachi flute!

So – we keep ourselves busy! Do email us for more information and for copies of any of our information booklets, including an extremely pertinent one on teaching online.

BDA Technology Advisory Committee (BDA TAC)

Arran Smith
Acting Chair

For many years, the Technology Advisory Committee has assisted the BDA in its continuing awareness of supporting those people with dyslexia. The committee's remit is to look at technology. When the committee was first formed it was known as the Computer Committee and wow how things have changed since then. The name was changed to the BDA's New Technologies Committee when we were looking at all the new innovative technology in the areas of dyslexia and assistive technology. More recently the committee's name was changed to the BDA Technology Advisory Committee and continues in its remit of spreading awareness of the technology available to support those with dyslexia and neurodiverse conditions. TAC members are volunteers that have for many years worked in the field of technology and supporting dyslexic people.

TAC supports the BDA's National Helpline with advice and awareness of technology and also plays a role in developing policy around exam access arrangements in relation to the use of assistive technology. The committee would like to thank the previous chair Abi James for her ongoing support in these areas.

Going forward the Technology Advisory Committee will continue to innovate in areas of policy, advice and support, along with providing continued professional development for those working within the field of dyslexia.

Other Dyslexia/Literacy Related Organisations

The Association of Dyslexia Specialists in Higher Education (ADSHE)

Mark Worrall
Chair

ADSHE is the only professional body that specifically and exclusively addresses the Higher Education context. Membership is open to Specialist 1:1 Tutors, Assessors, Assistive Technology Trainers, Needs Assessors, Managers, Co-ordinators of Disability Services, and other interested parties, including students.

ADSHE offers:

- Low membership fees
- Representation of the teaching and learning of neurodivergent students in HE at the highest level including DSSG, SASC, and the Department for Education
- Access to Regional Group meetings, many of which offer regular opportunities to gain ADSHE Accredited CPD as part of the membership fee
- The Journal of Neurodivergent Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, which covers issues for specialist academic support and formal assessment
- Reduced member rates at the ADSHE's Conferences: North, Scotland, National and South, with opportunities for Professional Peer Supervision®, Assistive Technology surgeries and SASC-Authorised CPD for Specialist Assessors
- Free discussion forums which are specifically HE-focused
- Free member-only resources on our website, and information relating to dyslexia including ADSHE's 7-Principles®, Good Practice Guidelines and Code of Ethics.

- QA Portfolio registered and marked for our Professional QA Tutor members, with free listing on the ADSHE website for DSA-funded work
- Level 5 course: Teaching Students with Specific Learning Differences in FE & HE
- Preferential member-only rates for public liability and professional indemnity insurance through Towergate Insurance
- Being part of a recognised professional body, which meets the DfE mandatory auditing requirements

Please note: Professional Peer Supervision® and 7-Principles® are registered trademarks of ADSHE Ltd.

Communicate-ed

Caroline Read
Founder

At Communicate-ed we are passionate about seeing people developed to their true potential. That passion drives our training portfolio, providing the knowledge and tools for education professionals to work with understanding and effectiveness, to the benefit of students who might otherwise be disadvantaged.

Communicate-ed was launched in 2003, when we realised the enormous need amongst education professionals in the UK for accessible training in Examination Access Arrangements. Over the years, the company has grown and adapted to changing circumstances, including of course those created by COVID-19. New courses have been added to our catalogue in response to requests, issues brought up by delegates at our existing training, and our continued ability to keep a finger on the pulse of new legislation and requirements.

We are now the largest UK provider of training courses dealing with Examination Access Arrangements, training thousands of professionals every year. We also offer a range of other modules providing training in various aspects of special educational need and the examinations process.

Communicate-ed works very closely with the JCQ and provides feedback to that body to help improve and refine the regulations based upon feedback from colleagues at our various training events and courses.

Communicate-ed offers:

- An extensive online training catalogue, covering both examination access arrangements and a wide range of related issues, available throughout the year, making training accessible wherever and whenever busy education professionals need it – on any device.
- Live, interactive webinars

- Face to face courses around the country and overseas (subject to COVID-19 restrictions)

Full details of all our training offerings please see **www.communicate-ed.org.uk**

Through our sister company Include-ed we also offer courses which lead to externally accredited qualifications.

- **The Postgraduate Award of Proficiency in Assessment for Access Arrangements (PAPAA)**. This has been designed to offer a rigorous, comprehensive, cost-effective and flexible route to fulfil the Joint Council for Qualifications regulations for achieving Access Arrangements Assessor status. The course also provides a thorough grounding in the understanding and practice of psychometric testing for individuals in an educational setting. (Includes at least 100 hours relating to individual specialist assessment. Typically completed over 9 month period)
- **The Award of Proficiency in Access Arrangement Coordination (APAAC)**. A qualification for SENCos and Access Arrangements Administrators who are responsible for co-ordinating Access Arrangements for General Qualifications in secondary schools and further education colleges. (Approx. 30 hours)
- **The Postgraduate Award of Proficiency in Standardised Educational Testing (PAPSET)**. This is a new qualification, equipping professionals to oversee and carry out standardised testing in an educational establishment. Include-ed has partnered with the **Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors** to offer this postgraduate qualification, tailored to the needs of professionals using psychometric assessments in the educational arena.

All these Include-ed courses are available in an online format. The PAPAA and PAPSET courses will normally be available in with a mix of face to face and online training. During COVID-19 restrictions the face to face elements are replaced with live interactive webinars.

Council for the Registration of Schools Teaching Dyslexic Pupils

Brendan Wignall
Chair

The Council for the Registration of Schools Teaching Dyslexic Pupils (CReSTeD) is a charity founded in 1989 to help parents and those who advise them choose an educational establishment to support a student with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD). These include Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia, ADD, ADHD as well as Pragmatic and Semantic Language Difficulties.

CReSTeD maintain a Register of schools and teaching centres, accredited for their provision for students with SpLD. These establishments are visited by a Consultant, selected for their experience in the field of SpLD, to ensure that the criterions set by CReSTeD are met. All schools and centres are revisited every three years or earlier in certain circumstances. If successful, they are placed into one of six categories according to their type of provision:

Category	Description
Dyslexia Specialist Provision (DSP)	Established primarily to teach pupils with Dyslexia.
Learning Support Centre (LSC) (previously Dyslexia Unit – DU)	Offers a designated unit that provides specialist tuition on a small group or individual basis, according to need.
Maintained Schools (MS)	Local authority schools able to demonstrate an effective system for identifying pupils with dyslexia.
Specialist Provision (SPS)	Specifically established to teach pupils with dyslexia and related specific learning difficulties.
Teaching Centre (TC)	Designated centre providing specialist tuition on a small group or individual basis, according to need.
Withdrawal System (WS)	Helps dyslexic pupils by withdrawing them from appropriately selected lessons for specialist tuition.

The MS category now includes schools approved by the British Dyslexia Association (BDA) as Dyslexia Friendly Quality Mark Schools. These schools have demonstrated a high commitment to dyslexic learners and undergone rigorous scrutiny in order to achieve the Quality Mark award, an honour that they hold for 3 years before being re-verified by the BDA. They are identified on the CReSTeD Register with the BDA Dyslexia Friendly Quality Mark logo.

The CReSTeD Register is available to view via the website. It is a valuable resource for parents, educational advisers and schools.

The CReSTeD Council includes representatives from the BDA, Dyslexia Action, Dyslexia-SpLD Trust, the Helen Arkell Dyslexia Charity, educational psychologists, and schools.

For further information contact us: **admin@crested.org.uk**

Or visit our **website: www.crested.org.uk**

Driver Youth Trust

Chris Rossiter
Chief Executive

Driver Youth Trust (DYT) is a national education charity committed to improving outcomes for young people with dyslexia, literacy difficulties and SEND (special educational needs and disability). Our mission is to ensure that all learners receive an education which is responsive to their needs – we do this by:

> **Working in partnership with school staff** at every level to equip them with the knowledge and skills they need to identify and support learners with literacy difficulties;
>
> **Campaigning on behalf of young people**, teachers and schools so that they have the resources and support they need to succeed.

In 2020-2021, DYT are launching new SEND-focused professional development opportunities for teachers, teaching assistants and school leaders. Designed and delivered by subject experts, our range of webinars and workshops aim to build teacher confidence by sharing practical and applicable strategies and frameworks to support every child in the classroom.

We also commission research and campaign for policy change. Our latest report, Hide and Seek: Where are the specialists?, follows up on the recommendations and subsequent promises of the Rose Review (2009), and examines how specialist dyslexia teachers could be better trained and employed by schools across the country.

DYT also provides consultation services for Multi Academy Trusts and Teaching School Alliances, and have supported thousands of teachers and governors across over 70 schools.

For further information, or to get in touch, please visit our website: **www.driveryouthtrust.com**

Dyslexia Action, Real Group

Mark Turner
Managing Director, Real Group

Dyslexia Action Training is a specialist provider of courses for teachers, teaching assistants and support staff with over 40 years of experience and specialism in the field. Our programmes offer high-quality online training for educational and assessment practitioners. Our Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses provide short courses that build up into recognised qualifications that provide the underpinning knowledge to support individuals with literacy and specific learning difficulties. Our specialist teacher training programmes at level 5 and level 7, offer in-depth training for practitioners seeking to become specialist teachers or gain specialist teacher-assessor status.

The Dyslexia Guild, formed in 1994, is one of four professional bodies for specialist education professionals. The Guild is an Assessment Practising Certificate awarding organisation and also provides a wide range of services to support specialist teachers and specialist teacher assessors. These include a specialist online library with an extensive range of journals and e-books, a professional journal and regular e-newsletter as well as online discussion forums and a vibrant annual summer conference.

The Dyslexia Action Shop is an online one-stop-shop for specialist assessment and teaching resources. Guild members are eligible for a discount on resources:
www.dyslexiaactionshop.co.uk

To find out more about the range of services we offer visit:
www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk

Dyslexia Association of Ireland

Rosie Bissett
CEO

The Dyslexia Association of Ireland (DAI) is the national representative and advocacy organisation for people with dyslexia in Ireland. DAI works with and for people affected by dyslexia. We empower individuals by providing information, offering support services, engaging in advocacy and raising awareness of dyslexia.

DAI acts both as a direct provider of services and also advocates on behalf of people affected by dyslexia. As well as a national office in Dublin, we have a nationwide network of workshops offering local community-based services including weekly after-school classes for children, and information and support for parents. Services offered by DAI include an information helpline, assessment for dyslexia and for dyscalculia, tuition for people with dyslexia, training on dyslexia for educators at all levels, for parents and for workplaces.

Our two key areas of advocacy in Ireland, like in many other countries, involve calling for (1) mandatory teacher training on dyslexia identification and support strategies, and (2) equitable access to evidence-based assessment and supports.

We have had good advocacy successes in recent years, making access to many forms of support easier by eliminating the requirements for up-dated assessment reports and modernising access criteria in line with the current research base on dyslexia. We strongly advocate for the right to timely assessment as identification is often hugely beneficial for an individual's self-esteem and understanding. Dyslexia identification is not about labelling an individual, but rather re-labelling an individual. It is about understanding, showing them that they are not stupid or lazy or whatever horrid words they have heard or thought themselves, but rather that their brain works in a different way, and that they have ability and their own unique profile of strengths and challenges.

In relation to adult dyslexia, we continue our work to support the Further and Higher Education sectors to understand and address dyslexia, by delivering seminars on dyslexia identification and support strategies. We are also rolling our Assessment of Needs training workshop for educators in the further education sector, to enable them to identify and support learners with dyslexic profiles.

At DAI we believe strongly in the power of networking and sharing of practice. We engage in collaborations nationally with other disability and education organisations. DAI engages internationally as a member of the European Dyslexia Association and the International Dyslexia Association. DAI is also involved in several Erasmus+ projects including the Magic Sens project (online training for teachers on SEN), the Dyslexia@Work project (identifying best practices and guidelines on dyslexia at work) and the new TuDOrs project (online training and tools for teachers of foreign languages to promote inclusion of learners with SEN).

Dyslexia Association of Ireland:

Address: Office Suite, Block B, 107-110 The Windmill, Windmill Lane, Dublin D02E170, Ireland.

Telephone: 00353 1 877 6001 **Email: info@dyslexia.ie**
Website: www.dyslexia.ie

Dyslexia Scotland:
Key highlights in 2020

Cathy McGee
Chief Executive

Dyslexia Scotland aims to inspire and enable dyslexic people, regardless of age and abilities, to reach their potential in education, employment and life.

Influencing positive change

- In January 2020, Scotland's Deputy First Minister launched the *Final report* of the **'Making Sense: Education for Children and Young People with Dyslexia in Scotland'**. It outlines the positive developments since the 2014 review. To support ongoing improvement in identifying and supporting learners with dyslexia, a range of resources were produced, including The *Dyslexia and Inclusive Practice: Professional Learning Resource*.

Professional learning

- Ten teachers involved in our pilot programme received **Professional Recognition in Dyslexia and inclusive practice** from the General Teaching Council for Scotland.
- **Following a series of 'Mission Superheroes'** interactive primary school workshops, we produced a **free online professional learning resource**. It is available on the Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit for all schools to use.
- Designed and delivered a new face-to-face training course **'Dyslexia for Career and Employability Coaches'**
- Launched our new online course **'Supporting dyslexic clients with job applications'**.

Support and services

- Increased demand for our **Helpline** (0344 800 84 84), **Career Development service, Assessment and Tutor services**.
- **Network of volunteer-led support** for people with dyslexia – 18 branches and 3 Adult Networks across Scotland.

Events

- A series of **Parent and Adult Masterclasses** across Scotland.
- **Youth Day, Education conference** and **DyslexiFest**.
- Since March 2020 we have successfully adapted events and services online in response to the **Coronavirus pandemic**, including 'At home with Dyslexia Scotland' You Tube channel.

For further details, contact Cathy Magee, Chief Executive, Dyslexia Scotland:

www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk

www.unwrapped.dyslexiascotland.org.uk (for children and young people)

www.addressingdyslexia.org (for teachers)

European Dyslexia Association

Rosie Bissett
Chairperson

Who we are

The European Dyslexia Association (EDA) was founded and legally established under Belgian law in 1988 in Brussels, as an international non-profit association, by representatives of ten European national dyslexia associations. It celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2018. The EDA is the voice of people with dyslexia, dyscalculia and other co-occurring specific learning difficulties. It is an umbrella organisation for 42 legal entities in 21 EU-countries as well as in Norway, San Marino, Switzerland, Israel and Turkey.

The EDA represents 28 associations of parents of children with these specific learning difficulties, or associations representing adults affected by the same difficulties, and 14 corporate bodies with educational or scientific motivation, recognised in the domain of specific learning difficulties.

EDA has official relations with UNESCO, is a full member of the European Disability Forum and has Consultative Status at the International Federation of Library Associations. It is in contact with Members of the European Parliament and Commission.

Vision: The EDA vision is a Europe which is accessible to every child and adult with dyslexia, dyscalculia and other co-occurring specific learning difficulties; where there is access, appropriate support and equal opportunity in education, training and employment, leading to active citizenship and a good quality of life in an inclusive society.

Mission: In order to work towards its vision and in partnership with its member organisations, the EDA:

1. Raises awareness based on evidence-based knowledge, practice and research.
2. Enables the exchange of information, experiences, policies and good practice through international networking and mobility.
3. Advocates, lobbies for, and represents children and adults with dyslexia, dyscalculia and other co-occurring specific learning difficulties.

EDA Events: The EDA holds autumn/summer seminars most years, and every 3-5 years we run a major All-European Conference. In 2019, autumn seminars were held in Vaxjo, Sweden. The October 2020 autumn seminars due to be held in Barcelona were cancelled due to Covid. Planning is currently underway for our 2021 autumn seminars. We plan to hold our next major All-European Conference in 2022.

Advocacy: EDA seeks to advocate at European level with the EU Parliament, EU Commission and other relevant EU agencies on the needs of people with dyslexia across Europe. In February 2020, we met with EU President David Sassoli, along with colleagues from the Italian Dyslexia Association, to discuss the needs of citizens with dyslexia and how the EU ensure that Europe becomes more accessible for those with dyslexia and other neurodiverse conditions.

Projects: EDA is currently involved in several EU projects. One is the Reading Disability and Document Access project. It is a pilot project to identify best practice in making EU publications accessible for people with dyslexia; this project is led by the EU Office of Publications and Deloitte. EDA is also a partner in the Dyslexia@Work Erasmus+ project which is identifying best practices and guidelines to support successful inclusion of dyslexia at work. In 2020, EDA also entered into an agreement to take over resources and materials, principally the free online courses in English and French, from Dyslexia and Literacy International (D&LI). Soon these free courses will be available

only from the EDA website, and we thank D&LI for passing this important legacy to the EDA.

Information and Contact:

Website: www.eda-info.eu

Twitter: https://twitter.com/EDAdyslexia

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/EDAdyslexia/

E-mail: eda-info@eda-info.eu

Helen Arkell Dyslexia Charity

Andy Cook
Chief Executive

At Helen Arkell Dyslexia Charity, our vision is of a day when people with dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties have the same opportunities as everyone else to achieve their goals.

Our mission is:

1. to remove barriers to learning and life for people with dyslexia by providing expert, personal and life-changing support
2. to deliver our services free of charge to people who could not otherwise afford them, wherever possible
3. to cover every stage of life
4. to encompass not just those with dyslexia but also teachers, parents and the wider community
5. to undertake research in order to advance our Vision and Strategy.

We offer dyslexia support and advice to anyone who may need it, whether they think they have dyslexia or care for someone who may have dyslexia. We support over a thousand children and adults alike, every year. Together we inspire people to believe in themselves, achieve their goals and succeed on their own terms.

People come to us for help from all over the UK. Our main Centre is near Farnham, in Surrey, and we also have hubs in Oxford, Southwark and Salisbury, and will be opening more regional hubs in the near future. Watch this space!

At Helen Arkell we offer a wide spectrum of dyslexia support services:

- Assessments for children and adults
- Specialist tuition/coaching for children and adults
- In-service training for schools
- Specialist dyslexia services and dyslexia awareness training for workplaces
- Professional qualifications for teachers, teaching assistants and other interested parties in supporting and assessing learners with dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties
- 'Help Parents' courses
- A variety of other dyslexia-related courses
- An online Helen Arkell Shop offering dyslexia-friendly resources.

As a registered charity, (No. 1064646), we would love people to get in touch if they can help us in any way, either through fundraising or raising awareness of our mission.

Email: **enquiries@helenarkell.org.uk**

Web: **www.helenarkell.org.uk**

Professional Association of Teachers of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties (PATOSS)

Lynn Greenwold
CEO

As the name suggests, PATOSS supports Teachers of Students with SpLDs such as Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADHD).

Our aim is to promote and grow good practice amongst professionals and to make available knowledge and resources to support those already in the field, and those considering a move into this specialist sector.

Training

PATOSS provides a wide range of high quality CPD training, designed and delivered by some of the leading specialists in the field.

Training covers a variety of SpLD related topics and age groups, which looks at enhancing general teaching and learning, as well as more specialist areas such as Exam Access Arrangements Assessment and Full Diagnostic Assessment.

If a more tailored approach is needed then members can sign up for our one-to-one mentoring programme, where specialist teachers receive support and guidance around their focus of interest.

Index of Specialist Teachers and Assessors

PATOSS gives free access to one of the largest on-line listings of specialist SpLD tutors and assessors in the UK. The Index is a list of PATOSS members who wish to promote their services to parents, individuals or other professionals seeking tutors, assessment or advice. All those on the list are PATOSS members who have an approved qualification. Details included

in the listing are: qualifications, special professional services, and preferred age ranges with whom they work.

SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate (APC)

As the leading issuer of APCs, PATOSS understands that many schools and parents need access to specialists qualified in providing diagnostic assessments of students. Those who hold an APC are suitably qualified to carry out diagnostic assessments and can establish the nature of the student's difficulty, make recommendations and also deliver specialist teaching.

SpLD Teaching Practising Certificate (TPC)

Many of our members choose to underpin their professional practice in supporting learners with a Teaching Practising Certificate – which demonstrates that they are a current specialist teacher with relevant practical experience committed to maintaining best practice and ongoing development of their professional teaching skills.

We also offer a wide range of training which has expanded beyond our excellent face-to- face training to quality online provision to reach even more professionals and parents.

To find out more about all our services visit

www.patoss-dyslexia.org

SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC)

Lynn Greenwold
Chair

SASC aims to support and advance standards in specific learning difficulties (SpLD) assessment, training and practice and encourage improvements in best practice in the assessment of specific learning difficulties in an educational setting. The SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate underpins these aims. SASC has a responsibility for providing guidance on training and implementation of standards and for overseeing and approving processes of awarding SpLD Assessment Practising Certificates. SASC works to encourage a spirit of cooperation and to help forge links with a range of institutions to support and embed good practice.

This committee is a standard-setting group concerned with the diagnostic assessment of specific learning difficulties in an educational setting. The authority for this committee and its remit stem from the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines. The committee seeks to extend the principles of good practice contained in the Guidelines across all age ranges and throughout the profession.

SASC welcomes professionals as members: individuals and organisations who demonstrate through their professional activities support of the objects of SASC. Further information on membership is available from the SASC website.

SASC provides regular updates on good practice in assessment. Its website should be a reference for all SpLD assessors. **www.sasc.org.uk**

The Children's Literacy Charity

Alexandra Charalambous
Head of Education Development

The Children's Literacy Charity specialises in providing one-to-one literacy support for disadvantaged children from deprived areas of London and Manchester who are at risk of being left behind in the education system. We offer support in all four areas of literacy – reading, writing, speaking and listening – recognising that all of these skills are vital.

We work closely with schools where we deliver our intervention in a space called 'Literacy Lab'. A Literacy Lab is a learning environment away from the main classroom where children work one-to-one with a trained tutor. The bond that develops through working one-to-one paves the way for learning. Our Literacy Lab sessions are 45 minutes in length and take place twice a week. In line with the National Curriculum, our approach is phonic-based and multisensory. Teaching is highly personalised, with formal assessments made and targets created to address an individual child's needs. In all of our work, we seek to boost a child's confidence so that they feel empowered and inspired to achieve.

We are also keen to create strong links with parents, recognising that a child's learning is best supported when parents are involved. To this end, we invite parents to join their child for a Literacy Lab session so they can see how their child's learning is progressing. We are always happy to respond to queries and offer advice on how parents can support their child's learning at home.

The impact of our approach is proven. In 2019/2020, we supported 380 children across the primary age range. Those children who graduated from our Literacy Lab Expert intervention made average gains of 31 months for both reading and comprehension. The average gain for spelling was 18 months.

For our graduates:

- 100% narrowed their reading age gap, whilst 88% closed it.
- 96% narrowed their comprehension age gap, whilst 90% closed it.
- 84% narrowed their spelling age gap, whilst 59% closed it.

In addition to our school Literacy Labs, we run our Community Literacy Labs which take place after school or on a Saturday and follow a similar model but incorporating time with a volunteer. These run either as part of a school offer or in a community setting. We also run a peer-to-peer reading intervention called Reader Leader for secondary schools.

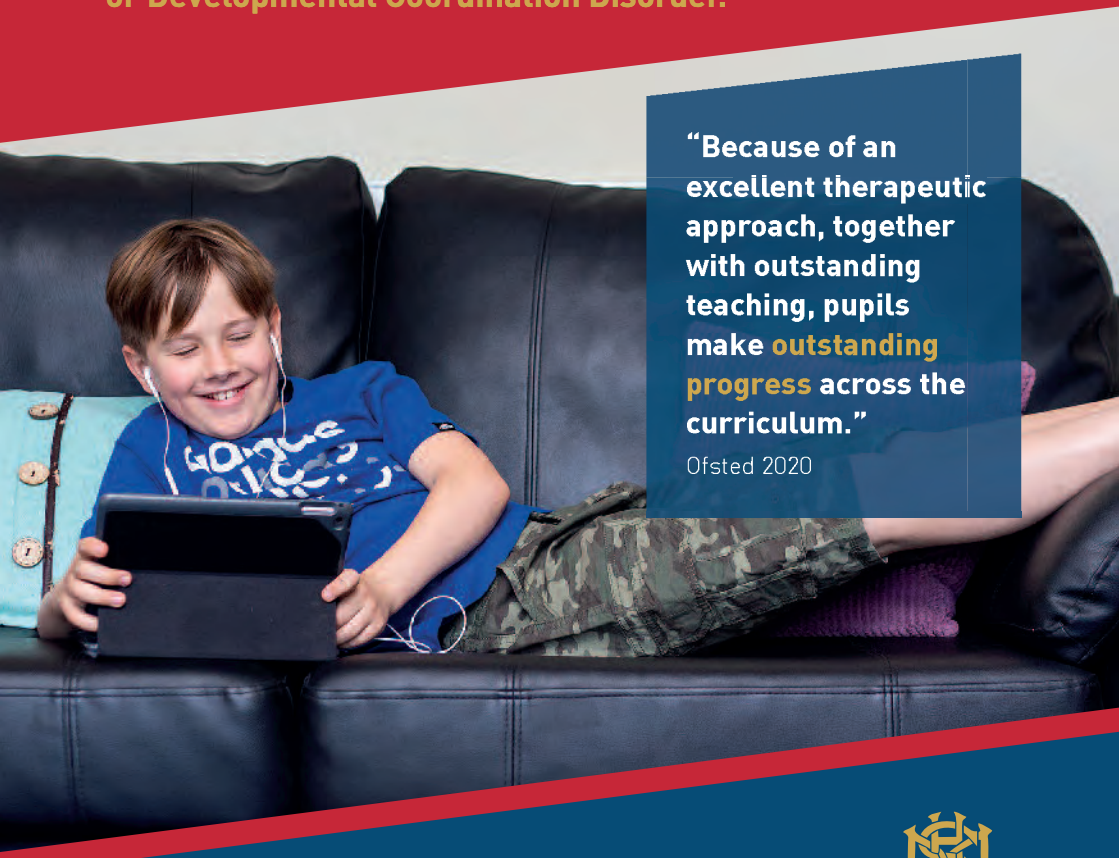
For further details, please visit

www.thechildrensliteracycharity.org.uk

Index of Advertisers

More House School, Frensham

Exceptional independent boarding education for intelligent boys with Dyslexia, Developmental Language weaknesses, or Developmental Coordination Disorder.



"Because of an excellent therapeutic approach, together with outstanding teaching, pupils make outstanding progress across the curriculum."
Ofsted 2020

For more information or to begin the admissions process, please go to: www.morehouseschool.co.uk/professionals

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