



# Code of Practice for Employers

Good practice guidelines for supporting employees with Dyslexia in the workplace

8th edition



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Number: 1830587.

## **The British Dyslexia Association is the leading authority on Dyslexia and related issues.**

### **Our Vision.**

A Dyslexia friendly society enabling all dyslexic people to reach their potential.

### **What the BDA does.**

At the BDA we break down the barriers faced by people with Dyslexia and enable them to achieve their potential. We campaign for change by influencing the public policy agenda at national and local level. We set the standards expected of individuals and organisations working with people with Dyslexia through our Accreditation Board, Policy work and our Quality Mark. Our Training programmes provide individuals with the knowledge and skills to achieve these standards. We support all who need our help through our National Helpline, our national network of Local Associations and support groups.

For more information visit our website: **[www.bdadyslexia.org.uk](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk)**

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BDA publications are available in accessible P.D.F. formats and can be purchased via our online store: **[www.bdastore.org.uk](http://www.bdastore.org.uk)**.

## Editorial Note.

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.

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## **Introduction.**

The BDA Helpline receives many enquiries from employers and dyslexic employees, often with very specific requests: What adjustments should we offer in recruitment? What can we do to improve the accuracy of work? What font size and colour of paper should we provide? Could my employee be dyslexic, they seem very motivated but are failing to deliver on paper? Should I tick the disabled box on my application form? I am getting stuck for my spelling and proof reading: what can I do to improve things? I want to go for promotion, but I am worried about having to write reports. And so on.

We are also receiving an increasing number of enquiries relating to discrimination issues. There are a number of excellent publications dealing with Dyslexia and the workplace available in the BDA Shop. This Code does not set out to discuss in detail the nature of Dyslexia in adults, but is essentially a concise and practical guide bringing together relevant information from a variety of sources.

The BDA believes that this Code offers employer's accessible, actionable advice to achieve a Dyslexia friendly workplace in which difficulties can be supported and talents fully developed. Please note that the advice given here includes that for the most severely affected. Some adjustments may therefore sound very significant whereas many individuals will only need minor adjustments.

Dyslexia is one of a family of genetically inherited conditions affecting the connections between the brain and the senses. Around 15% of the population are affected by these conditions. Consequently, there are individuals with these everywhere and we will all be directly associated with these common difficulties either through our family, our colleagues, our customers or ourselves. Lots of dyslexic people have gifts in the areas of creativity, big picture thinking and problem solving, talents that are of particular value in the workplace.

An employer should take necessary steps to encourage all staff to be aware of hidden disabilities and how colleagues can be supported to ensure optimum performance and career prospects. This can be achieved in partnership with the BDA.

Dyslexia is a recognised difficulty under the Equality Act 2010. These guidelines will assist an employer to adopt policies and procedures in compliance with the Act. The document has been written to comply with Dyslexia friendly principles, so sentences are short and to the point.

### **Core Principles.**

The BDA wishes to promote a Dyslexia friendly workplace. All organisations are encouraged to work towards adopting the following standards. This Code offers guidelines to enable employers to work towards achieving these aims.

### **Culture.**

An organisation should strive to achieve a positive and open workplace environment by creating an informed culture which celebrates talent and achievements and resolves problems constructively.

The dyslexic employee should be encouraged to feel confident to talk about their difficulties and to seek support.

### **Awareness of Dyslexia.**

The employer should take all necessary steps to ensure that its staff have an understanding of Dyslexia and how dyslexic colleagues can be assisted to give of their best. This should include making training courses in awareness available to all staff.

### **Discrimination.**

All organisations are urged to take steps to avoid direct or indirect discrimination through a review of Human Resources policies and procedures. This would involve a review of recruitment, training, appraisal, promotion, disciplinary, redundancy and related procedures to ensure that dyslexic

employees are not being discriminated against through ignorance or prejudice. The guidance in this Code should help inform such a review process.

### **Communication.**

An organisation should ensure that all written communication, both internal and external, is designed in a Dyslexia friendly format. This includes web design.

Details for achieving this can be found in **Appendix 1: Dyslexia Style Guide**.

## **What is Dyslexia?**

Many successful people in a wide range of business, professional and financial roles are dyslexic. Dyslexic people are frequently prominent in I.T., art, design, engineering and innovation. Some dyslexic people are outstanding in their fields.

Most dyslexic employees have the ability to make significant contributions to their organisation and become highly valued employees. Any issues arising from Dyslexia can be easy to mitigate with simple coping strategies. To understand this a bit, imagine a world where you needed spectacles but they were socially unacceptable or for some other reason, individuals couldn't use them. This would inevitably affect their performance at getting and carrying out work! In addition to the actual issues relating to Dyslexia, lack of awareness and support in education often leaves the individual with less automatic skills in areas such as spelling, and unaware that their difficulties are due to Dyslexia. These issues coupled with a lack of awareness amongst colleagues, may sadly and unnecessarily, prevent dyslexic employees from achieving their full potential. In addition, the absence of reasonable adjustments designed to mitigate a dyslexic employee's difficulties can lead some employers to perceive dyslexic employees' performance as problematic.

This Code sets out ways that employers, dyslexic employees and their colleagues can work together for the benefit of all involved, to release the great potential many dyslexic employees have.

Dyslexia is a genetic neurological learning difference that affects around 10% of the population. 4% will have severe difficulties. It occurs regardless of gender, race, culture, class or level of intelligence.

Dyslexia frequently co occurs with related conditions such as dyscalculia. It is important to recognise that no two dyslexic people are the same. In total, therefore, around 15% of the population are affected. Any support and accommodations offered in the workplace will need to be individually tailored.

For further information on related difficulties, see **Appendix 4: Specific Learning Difficulties**.

**Dyslexia:** Of the many descriptions of Dyslexia, the following is a useful summary:

“Dyslexia is a combination of abilities and difficulties that affect the learning process in one or more of reading, spelling and writing. It is a persistent condition. Accompanying weaknesses may be identified in areas of speed of processing, short-term memory, organisation, sequencing, spoken language and motor skills. There may be difficulties with auditory and /or visual perception. It is particularly related to mastering and using written language, which may include alphabetic, numeric and musical notation.

Dyslexia can occur despite normal intellectual ability and teaching. It is constitutional in origin, part of one's make-up and independent of socioeconomic or language background.

Some learners have very well developed creative skills and/or interpersonal skills, others have strong oral skills. Some have no outstanding talents. All have strengths."

(Dr Lindsay Peer, BDA 2006)

Hidden disabilities such as Dyslexia, unlike physical impairments, are not readily apparent. As a result, ignorance and prejudice may be widespread. Many dyslexic adults have developed good coping strategies to compensate for weaknesses. However, with the demands of a changing workplace, these strategies can fail. Dyslexic people can be particularly prone to stress due to managing workloads without effective coping strategies.

Practical support for dyslexic employees will usually involve minor adjustments to the working environment and practices, and can include effective Assistive Technology and software. Support for this area of disability will not be expensive. However, a critical factor in the success of any adjustments will be the support and consideration shown by work colleagues and management.

In return, the dyslexic employee may have a lot to contribute to the workplace, in terms of their unusual strengths and loyalty to those who have chosen appropriately to support them.

## **Why Would You Employ a Dyslexic Person?**

The main reason has to be that they are the best person for the job. Dyslexia conveys some specific strengths including creativity, problem solving from a unique perspective, and entrepreneurial skills of big picture and lateral thinking. These strengths can result in an exceptional candidate for sales, I.T. or strategic roles who might just need to use a few coping strategies with written material. Some architect practices look for dyslexic candidates as many can visualize in 3D, very useful when you work with flat drawings! NASA employ dyslexic people because of their ability to think outside the box.

More prosaically, with 15% of the population with Dyslexia and /or a related condition, someone you recruit will be affected so it's important that we next examine how to get the best from everyone.

## **Recruitment.**

It makes business sense to ensure that dyslexic candidates are included in the pool of applicants or organisations could be ignoring a vast amount of talent. It also makes sense to run selection activities in a "Dyslexia friendly" way so that the process does not inadvertently miss relevant information on a candidate.

**Please note that whilst the majority of dyslexic individuals may only be mildly affected, the advice given here is relevant for that minority of individuals with very significant needs.**

A major issue here is the effect of stress; interviews and assessment tests are stressful for everyone. However, stress depletes the individual's coping strategies, so in recruitment, the dyslexic person usually performs worse than they would in normal working conditions because their coping strategies have broken down.

The strengths such as problem solving, creativity, empathy and pattern recognition may be recognised as very valuable in the workplace. However, the recruitment process rarely focusses on these and so the challenges that dyslexia can confer, can be brought into sharp definition. Dyslexia can affect organisational, reading and writing skills and also the ability to manage and process information. Dyslexic candidates will have individual requirements which the recruitment process should accommodate, from written tests through to the final interview.

Evidence of dyslexic difficulties should be no bar to selection for interview where the candidate meets the selection criteria for the post in question.

**Job Adverts.**

Adverts should be written in clear text, in an active (not passive) voice, with plenty of space and a direct message. This information should be presented in a clear, sans serif large font, avoiding italics and placed in a box.

Adverts should be reviewed to ensure that they do not ask for qualifications which are unnecessary for the specific role.

See **Appendix 1: Dyslexia Style Guide.**

Job adverts on websites should also be presented in a Dyslexia friendly format. In addition, the website should offer a choice of background colour and font size, and preferably a text to voice option.

**Relevant Tests.**

Recruitment tests are frequently more challenging and stressful for dyslexic candidates. Most test providers also acknowledge that the effects of Dyslexia and related conditions can mean that scores in psychometric tests are not reliable. Tests should be limited to those which are strictly relevant to the position. For example, it is not necessary to test for numeracy or spelling accuracy if the job does not require it.

Psychometric tests generally do not provide valid data on dyslexic candidates. Work sampling will provide information that is valid and useful. Avoid timed tests which do not replicate time pressures in the job.

**Application Forms.**

- Filling in forms: handwriting and spelling difficulties may cause excellent candidates to present less than their true potential, and fall at the first hurdle. Application forms should be made available in alternative formats, such as online or by email attachment. Typed C.V.s. should be accepted as an alternative to handwritten forms.
- On line applications must have a drafting and saving facility and not time out.

- Employers should not insist on handwritten covering letters: a typed letter with handwritten signature should suffice.
- Many dyslexic individuals have not been able to get a formal diagnosis (it is one of the only disabilities that you have to pay for your diagnosis as it is seen as an educational issue rather than a medical one).  
Consequently, they may not feel they can tick the disabled box or may not see themselves as disabled in the conventional sense. Therefore, forms which inviting disclosure on disability, would do better to have a second box: *Do you have a Specific Learning Difference, e.g. Dyslexia?*
- Forms should be designed in a Dyslexia friendly format. See **Appendix 1: Dyslexia Style Guide**.

### **Proof of Disability.**

In order to be offered accommodations in the recruitment process, the dyslexic candidate is often asked to produce some evidence of diagnostic assessment. However, it may not always be possible for the candidate to meet the organisation's criteria, which sometimes can be unduly stringent. Some flexibility should be allowed where it is evident Dyslexia has been previously recognised. Few people will claim to be dyslexic when they are not! If it is essential to provide written proof then the following may help.

- Dyslexia is a life-long condition, so any proof at any age is of value.
- Ideally a candidate should be able to supply a copy of an assessment report post 16 years: either from a Psychologist registered with Health Care Professionals Council (HCPC) and specialising in Adult Dyslexia or a Dyslexia Teacher Assessor with Professional Membership of the BDA, Patoss or the Dyslexia Guild and, if possible, a Practising Certificate (APC) to carry out assessments where the report is to be used in an application for Disabled Student Allowance.
- If a candidate was assessed pre 16 years and has evidence to support the diagnosis, their dyslexic difficulties should still be accommodated in the recruitment process. Dyslexia assessments are not available on the N.H.S. and are difficult to arrange in a short time frame. For a job

application, it is unreasonable to expect a candidate to pay for an assessment (around £450-700) for a life-long condition which has already been diagnosed.

- Every dyslexic person is different. Individual candidates should be contacted to ask how the recruitment process can accommodate their difficulties in respect of written tests and interviews: what can we do to help?
- Some dyslexic candidates may have navigational and organisational difficulties. It is important that a map, with pictures and clear directions to the venue should be provided to avoid undue stress.

### **Written Tests.**

- For a dyslexic candidate, 25% extra time in written tests and exams is usual. This provides for the reduction in coping strategies resulting from stress and core issues such as slower immediate comprehension of written material. It provides the opportunity for the dyslexic candidate to give a good account of their knowledge and abilities.
- In assessment centres, candidates eligible for extra time will need to be accommodated in a separate room so that they will not be disturbed by others leaving. Dyslexic people may be particularly susceptible to disturbance and may find it hard to get back on track after being disturbed.
- The use of a computer should be available instead of handwriting. For some with considerable difficulties, lack of fluency in handwriting will result in too much concentration being applied to the physical act of writing and prevent the free flow of ideas and thought. In addition, untidy handwriting can create a poor impression with the examiner.
- A reader or computer screen reading facility may be required where indicated in an assessment report.
- Test papers should be in a Dyslexia friendly format. See **Appendix 1 Dyslexia Style Guide**. Some candidates will have specific visual requirements in relation to background colour and font size. A set of coloured overlays may be helpful to mitigate visual disturbance

difficulties experienced by some dyslexic people. These are very cheap and available via the BDA shop.

- We all read less efficiently on-screen, and this visual difficulty can be a significant issue for dyslexic people. Tests on-screen may therefore be very discriminatory for many dyslexic candidates. A hard copy version should be offered, in a Dyslexia friendly format.
- Dyslexic candidates should not be required to transfer answers from a test to a separate answer sheet, as this may give rise to visual and tracking errors.
- Psychometric tests may present problems and may have to be waived. A work sample may give more reliable information about a candidate's competence. The BDA Helpline receives a steady number of complaints from highly educated and intelligent dyslexic candidates who are unable to manage psychometric tests. Test providers acknowledge that scores for dyslexic people may not be reliable.
- Questions should be strictly relevant to the position applied for.
- Case study tests, where a significant amount of information must be absorbed and processed in a short space of time may be discriminatory for candidates with weaknesses in reading/comprehension/working memory. Case study material should therefore be offered in advance to allow time for processing. A modified case study is also possible, which simply excludes all superfluous detail.

### **Interviews for Recruitment and Promotion.**

While some dyslexic people have superb communication skills, others are not so lucky. One of the areas of difficulty associated with Dyslexia which often gets overlooked is verbal communication. Some dyslexic people need more time to take on board what is being said and to organise a reply. They may have difficulty with verbal fluency and recalling the right word, particularly in the heat of the moment and when stressed. They may have memory difficulties and get in a muddle with recalling events and dates.

This may all tend to create a poor impression which may be quite erroneous.

Some candidates will be aware that they require consideration at interview. Others will be less aware that their difficulties are likely to cause underperformance or not even know that they have dyslexic difficulties.

Interviewers should have training to be made aware of dyslexic difficulties and be sensitive to possible weaknesses at interview.

### **Telephone Interviews.**

- Where possible, questions should be provided in advance and then asked in the sequence originally provided.
- Selection criteria should not include fluency, speed of response or ability to process complex information quickly as these will indirectly discriminate against dyslexic candidates.
- The candidate should be advised to ensure that they will not be distracted either visually or aurally during the interview. Dyslexic people often find it difficult to screen out background noise and movement.
- Avoid timing responses, because of possible difficulties with speed of information processing.

### **Guidelines for Interviews.**

#### **General Points.**

Interviewers need to be aware of the areas of difficulty which may affect a candidate's performance.

- Interviews are not memory tests.
- Some people process information at different speeds.
- People affected by Dyslexia and other Specific Learning Difficulties have a strong tendency to respond less well in pressured situations such as interviews and exams. The stress induced causes their coping mechanisms to fail, giving a false impression of their abilities.
- Where the interview is long, candidates should be invited to take a break. They should be allowed to leave the room for a short time
- A candidate should be allowed the opportunity to see the workplace. This would enable the candidate to have a clearer understanding of the

working environment than can be gained from a job description, including specific difficulties for them. This lets the candidate analyse whether they can perform the role and whether this job is suitable for them or not.

### **Accommodations in Interviews.**

There is case law pertaining to this area and these recommendations will ensure that you comply with the legal decisions taken.

- Candidates with known Dyslexic difficulties should be contacted to ask about accommodations in interview.
- Some candidates may need to be given the questions in advance of the interview to allow for processing and understanding. They may need time to prepare notes. Providing the question only a short time before the interview is inappropriate. The candidate should be asked how long in advance they require the list. Subsequently, it is important that questions are asked in the same sequence as provided originally.
- Case studies or scenarios to be read out to the candidate will need to be given in writing in advance.
- Avoid asking about specific dates/times. These may be hard to recall. Put in context instead.
- Long and complex questions should be broken down into short questions.
- Prompting may also be needed where the C.V. indicates the candidate has certain knowledge and experience, but is having difficulty sequencing thoughts and verbalising accurately. Prompting may also be necessary to elicit a fuller answer. Avoid non-specific phrases such as 'Can you tell me more?' or 'Can you expand on that?' Questions need to be very direct.
- Candidates can become verbally muddled when asked to give details or describe a situation or method. This needs to be appreciated.
- Give full titles and names, avoiding initials and acronyms.
- Candidates may misinterpret the correct meaning of a question. It may be necessary to repeat the question in a different way.

- Questions may need to be repeated for the candidate to be able to process more accurately.
- Candidates, with some very specific difficulties, may have an issue with nuances and metaphors. Avoid phrases which are open to confusion or misinterpretation.

### **Written or Verbal References.**

When providing a reference for a former employee with dyslexic difficulties, criticism or disparaging comments relating specifically to these difficulties could be seen as discriminatory. Disability and medical issues should be treated as confidential. It is the prerogative of the candidate to choose to disclose disability information.

### **Training and Learning a New Role.**

Sadly, many dyslexic people have had very bad experiences at school. Thus, training may be stressful for the dyslexic employee, who may have bad memories and be aware of the challenges presented by the learning process.

An assessment of an individual's needs in relation to induction and training should be carried out prior to the commencement of training. This should be undertaken by a Dyslexia specialist, either from Access to Work or via the BDA. For further information, see **Assessments**.

Staff involved with the delivery of training should be made fully aware of the individual's training needs and have in place the necessary support. It is essential that all staff involved in induction and training receive Dyslexia awareness training.

Apart from trainees whose dyslexic difficulties have been made known, there are very likely to be others who are reluctant or fearful to admit to weaknesses. There may also be trainees who are unaware that their difficulties may be related to Dyslexia. Dyslexia friendly, multisensory training delivery meets best industry standards and will benefit all trainees.

It is important that training staff are able to identify those at risk and offer appropriate support, including referral for assessment.

### **General Points.**

- Individual requirements for training will usually be identified in the diagnostic and work-based needs assessments. See **Assessments**.
- Dyslexic people often take longer to master new tasks, but have good long term memories so once mastered they are well and truly learnt.
- Dyslexic people respond better to multi sensory training. They learn more efficiently from being shown how to do a task, not from verbal instructions alone, and from being able to practice it.
- Dyslexic people have had to contend with their challenges all their life and are usually determined and hardworking. Underperformance in training will rarely be a result of poor attitude or laziness.
- Where an individual trainee is motivated but performs poorly, undiagnosed or undisclosed dyslexic difficulties should be considered.
- Individual dyslexic learners will have different needs. These need to be met at the **outset** of training if effective learning is to be achieved.
- Ensure that access to a computer is fully available to dyslexic learners who may require it.
- Adopting best practice in training for dyslexic people will also be of benefit to all employees.
- For accommodations in written tests see **Recruitment**.

### **Guidelines for Trainers.**

- Dyslexia and related conditions are a complex area of hidden disability. No two people will have the same set of problems or levels of severity. It is vital that trainers should have an understanding of an individual's

particular requirements with the appropriate accommodations put in place at the outset.

- Dyslexic people tend to learn better when they are given an overview of the subject first before going into the minutiae.
- Dyslexic people often report that they learn best by visual and hands on learning. Just listening to a lecture may be problematic due to poor short term memory and information processing difficulties.
- Training needs to be **multisensory**, i.e visual, auditory and hands on, and broken down into bite size chunks. This helps with sustaining concentration and focus.
- Handouts should be provided. Taking notes can be very challenging for some dyslexic people because of poor short term and working memory, and occasionally poor automaticity in writing skills. Listening, organising what to write and writing while continuing to listen can cause system overload. Dyslexic trainees should be allowed to use a digital recorder if requested.

Work involving extensive reading material should be available in audio and/or suitable for scanning and computer screen-reading. For information on assistive technology and other resources, see

[www.bdatech.org/](http://www.bdatech.org/)

- Handouts should be on cream or pastel coloured paper. Font size should be at least 12 pt in a sans serif font such as Arial. Full details on making slides and handouts Dyslexia friendly can be found in **Appendix 1:**

#### **Dyslexia Style Guide.**

- If something is to be read out aloud, ask for volunteers – never pick someone at random; they may be dyslexic and feel very exposed reading aloud. Similar allowances should be made for writing things on flipcharts or recording information for teamwork activities, where the person fears making a spelling mistake.
- Explanations may need to be expressed in more than one way if someone appears to have trouble grasping the point.
- Watch out for slower processing speeds, difficulties with verbal fluency and word recall. Be patient. Give the trainee time to respond.

- Never belittle a trainee for poor spelling, poor memory or slow processing speed.
- Avoid using acronyms, overly complex language or phrases open to misinterpretation.

### **I.T. and New Systems Training.**

For I.T. software training, and particularly for training on new systems, dyslexic employees may need additional training time. The standard training offered may not suit a dyslexic individual's learning style and be ineffective and stressful. The dyslexic trainee would benefit from individualised hands-on training over a longer period of time, rather than classroom type training. Online training where the individual can set their own pace and revisit sections may be ideal.

- I.T. training should be offered in short sessions (no longer than half a day), rather than intensive one day training.  
The total time available for training may need to be longer than standard.
- One-to-one training is likely to be more successful, with opportunity for hands-on learning and repeated practice.
- Dyslexic trainees should be offered the opportunity of follow-up sessions if necessary.
- Where possible, software should be presented in Dyslexia friendly style, or should offer the facility for changing font, font size and background colour to accommodate visual stress difficulties. See **Appendix 1: Dyslexia Style Guide.**
- Training for assistive software offered to a dyslexic employee as a reasonable adjustment should also be carried out as above.

### **Promotion.**

Dyslexic difficulties should be no bar to promotion. At the BDA, we constantly hear of employees who choose not to put themselves forward for more

responsibility. This is a loss to them in reduced income etc. but also a tremendous loss to the organisation of someone who knows the culture, is a good employee and could contribute at a higher level.

- Many talented and capable dyslexic employees are often put off applying for promotion as they are concerned about the new challenges this may present.
- Employers may not be aware that many of the additional responsibilities may be made manageable by using assistive software, for example to address problems with report writing, or that training could be offered to help improve organisational and management skills.
- Employers should not be reluctant to put dyslexic employees forward for promotion. Apart from being seen as discriminatory, the employer may be depriving the organisation of excellent candidates.

Written tests for promotion involving multi-choice questions, including psychometric tests, are likely to be discriminatory for dyslexic candidates. An alternative assessment of suitability should be sought.

Promotion interviews should follow **Guidelines for Interviews**.

## **Appraisals, Managing Performance and Disciplinary Procedures.**

With 15% of the population affected by Dyslexia or a related Specific Learning Difficulty, there will be individuals with these hidden conditions in your organisation. Many dyslexic adults in the workplace have never been formally identified or assessed. Others may prefer not to disclose their Dyslexia for fear of discrimination. In many cases, individuals may have poor self-awareness and understanding of how their dyslexic difficulties can impact on the many different circumstances which may present in the workplace.

Currently, most employers rely on the fact that if the employee has not disclosed their disability, then they don't have to do anything. However, an employer may well have a duty under the Equality Act even if the employee

does not disclose that he/she is dyslexic. There is case law relating to employers' responsibilities relating to non-disclosed mental health issues where symptoms were very obvious. This is particularly so where the individual has severe challenges and with larger organisations.

HR departments and management should be trained to pick up the signs of Dyslexia in an employee.

Everything may be going well, but all too often change can cause particular problems for the dyslexic employee. These changes are frequently:

- A change of job description requiring a greater emphasis on written documentation or report writing. (Promotion may have this effect too.)
- An introduction of new methods of working or I.T. systems.
- A new line manager with a more rigid, bureaucratic and less sympathetic management style.

General principles for interviews and communications discussed earlier also apply here.

It is well recognised that people with Specific Learning Difficulties like Dyslexia can be under more pressure which leads to stress. Under stress, dyslexic difficulties can become more pronounced, leading to further performance issues, more stress and a further decline in efficiency. In these circumstances, it is not uncommon for the employee to end up off work with stress or depression. There is a very strong link between deficiencies in well-being and undiagnosed Dyslexia.

Where Dyslexia is well supported at work and with colleagues and management sensitive to individual working styles, dyslexic difficulties are likely to be less pronounced and good performance maintained.

It is also important to appreciate that being dyslexic can bring particular strengths which can be uniquely beneficial to the workplace. In a study of the factors dyslexic adults attributed their success to, 72% listed their strengths in

areas such as atypical problem solving, determination, empathy, pattern recognition, creativity and entrepreneurial thinking styles (Malpas 2017).

Where an employee is having difficulties at work and may be dyslexic, the employer should arrange for an assessment by a suitably trained and experienced expert, with the report provided to both the employer and to the employee.

In addition, the employer will have an obligation to arrange a workplace needs assessment to see what adjustments may be required. The obligation to institute adjustments may well arise even if the employer does not know that the employee is dyslexic, if the employee is clearly having difficulty and the difficulty may be due to a disability. There is case law on this.

### **Managing Performance.**

Changes in people's performance at work are very common. Weaker performance may arise because the volume of work has increased, the job role or methodology has changed, there is a new manager, or standards required have changed. External impacts too can reduce the individual's motivation or ability to perform as well. This often results in conversations with the individual about how their performance can improve. Performance management has been written about substantially and so here we will just make mention of key aspects where the individual concerned may be dyslexic.

- It is important to create a culture which is genuinely inclusive. All employees have quirks, and specific strengths and weaknesses. Staff need to feel they can open up and be frank without being penalised. They will need support subsequent to discussing their challenges which they may have been hiding for years, this might, in fact, be the first time they have discussed them with anyone.
- If Dyslexia is suspected then it's important for the individual to be offered a diagnostic assessment and subsequently a workplace needs assessment. These assessments will result in recommendations being

made which can transform dyslexic people's lives. However, substantial changes in how you work and organise yourself can take time to be embedded, so no-one should expect significant improvements overnight.

- Where formal meetings are instigated, the dyslexic person should have the right to be accompanied and by someone with some awareness of Dyslexia and co-occurring conditions.

Poor appraisals and performance issues that can lead to disciplinary procedures can be a real possibility for a dyslexic employee whose difficulties are not supported or appreciated. Stress can play a significant role in underperformance and can be exacerbated by hostile and unsupportive management styles.

The **Guidelines for Interviews** should also be applied in these proceedings.

#### **Key Points:**

- Where an employee faces a disciplinary hearing for poor performance, undiagnosed (and undisclosed) dyslexic difficulties should always be considered as a possible contributory factor.
- Many people in the workplace have never had their dyslexic difficulties identified and formally assessed, or even realise they are dyslexic.
- Many dyslexic people do not fully appreciate how their Dyslexia impacts on their performance.
- Many people in the workplace keep their dyslexic difficulties under wraps for fear of discrimination and bullying.
- A change of circumstances or the introduction of new systems may present new difficulties.
- Dyslexic employees may be more prone to stress than colleagues because they are working harder to keep up and coping with some challenges.
- Underperformance may result from unsupported dyslexic difficulties.
- Rigid management styles and bullying can lead to a downward cycle of stress and underperformance.

- Where an employee may have dyslexic difficulties, a screening test should be offered by the employer. See **Appendix 2: Dyslexia Screening**.
- If the results of the screening test point to possible dyslexic tendencies, an assessment should be arranged with a suitably qualified expert specialising in Adult Dyslexia. See **Assessments**.
- Employees facing a disciplinary hearing or appraisal for performance issues should be allowed to be represented by a disability employment adviser or advocate who has some knowledge of Dyslexia. Standard rules limiting the permitted accompanier to a work colleague or trade union representative should be relaxed so that a knowledgeable advocate can attend.

## **Diagnostic and Workplace Assessments.**

Dyslexia is a complex area of disability and affects individuals in different ways. In order to offer a dyslexic employee, the appropriate support which will enable them to perform to a high level, professional advice should be sought. All employees whose Dyslexia has not been assessed post 16 years may need to be assessed by an adult Dyslexia specialist. Unless an assessment is obtained, an employer may fail to identify the reasonable adjustments he has a duty to provide under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010.

Where an employee is from an occupation which does not require significant literacy or administrative skills, a good quality screening test may be sufficient, which can be found on the BDA's website.

Best practice in all cases would be to arrange for a full diagnostic assessment to be carried out. Such assessments usually take three hours. During that time, the Assessor will take historical details and then arrange a number of tests for the individual to perform. These include tests of underlying ability, tests of cognitive skills such as working memory; and finally, attainment tests on literacy and sometimes numeracy. The diagnosis is made on the basis of particular patterns of strengths and weaknesses which are prevalent in Dyslexia or other specific learning difficulties. The majority of these tests provide scores which

can be compared to results across large populations of people so that comparisons can be made. The Assessor will produce a detailed report subsequently and it will contain practical recommendations for coping strategies in life. Diagnostic assessments may be carried out by either a suitably qualified Psychologist registered with an HCPC, or a specialist Dyslexia teacher/ Assessor trained in adults and qualified to diagnose.

Following the diagnostic report, or the presentation of a report by a new employee or recruit, it will usually be necessary to arrange a work-based needs assessment from a Dyslexia workplace specialist to determine the most effective 'reasonable adjustments'. All these assessments are available through the BDA and are quality assured, for further information see [www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/assessments](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/assessments).

**Work-based needs assessments** should be undertaken in depth by a Workplace Dyslexia Needs Assessor. The assessment would involve a Dyslexia specialist coming to spend some time with the employee in the workplace.

**Access to Work** (part of the Jobcentre organisation) are able to offer a limited service of workplace assessment and support.

The **BDA** trains workplace needs Assessors through an accredited training programme at level four, and is also able to provide Assessors for organisations. These assessments are very comprehensive. Potential adjustments are explored through semi-structured interviews and job analysis with the dyslexic individual, their manager and usually an H.R. coordinator. This would determine the exact nature of the job specification, working environment and working practices and how these relate to the individual's particular dyslexic profile of strengths and weakness, as assessed by the qualified Psychologist or specialist Dyslexia teacher/Assessor. The most appropriate adjustments would then be proposed.

For full details of this process see **Appendix 3: Reasonable Adjustments**.

## Reasonable Adjustments.

Support for a dyslexic employee will be neither expensive nor disruptive to the organisation and can be very effective.

Some dyslexic employees will have a good idea of the sort of accommodations and I.T. support which will help, particularly if they have had experience of these at college or university. However, the individual dyslexic employee will not have the detailed knowledge of all the possible adjustments available. The employer is advised to seek specialist advice in the form of a work-based needs assessment. Details of the work-based needs assessment procedure can be found in **Appendix 3: Reasonable Adjustments**.

### General Points.

- The Equality Act 2010 requires an employer to implement reasonable adjustments to support a disabled employee.
- Every dyslexic person is different and will have different requirements for support. There is no one-size-fits-all reasonable adjustment for Dyslexia.
- Reasonable adjustments are not an instant remedy guaranteeing immediate success. Although progress in overcoming Dyslexia related difficulties is likely to be seen quite quickly, it may take three to six months to achieve maximum benefit, depending on the nature of the dyslexic difficulties in relation to the job specification.
- For reasonable adjustments to be effective, the following need to be in place:
  - Appropriate adjustments with any related training.
  - A willingness on the part of the employee to embrace the adjustments and training.
  - Support and understanding of colleagues and management.
- Dyslexia awareness training is essential for H.R. and Management, including immediate line managers to support these adjustments.
  - For details of adjustments which have found to be helpful in supporting dyslexic employees. See **Appendix 3: Reasonable Adjustments**.

## Discrimination.

All organisations have a legal requirement to support dyslexic employees under the **Equality Act 2010**, replacing the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

- Failure on the part of the employer to implement adjustments and support an employee with Dyslexia and related hidden disabilities may lead to avoidable performance problems, inappropriate disciplinary measures up to and including dismissal, poor employee relations, health issues and loss of employment through resignation or constructive dismissal.
- This not only deprives the employer of a possibly talented and useful employee, but leaves an organisation open to legal action by the employee in an Employment Tribunal for discrimination or failure to make reasonable adjustments.
- Employers should ensure that dyslexic employees are not subject to verbal discrimination or harassment, e.g. calling a dyslexic employee 'thick' or 'stupid' or using a discriminatory nickname. Employers should have policies and procedures in place together with awareness training to address these issues, in order to avoid ignorance based discrimination.
- **The Equality Act 2010** prohibits discrimination against disabled people in employment. Employers must make reasonable adjustments to their premises or employment arrangements if these substantially disadvantage a disabled employee or prospective employee, compared to non-disabled persons.
- Where it becomes evident that an individual is experiencing difficulty with their work through Dyslexia related disability, a diagnostic assessment from a qualified psychologist or specialist Dyslexia teacher/Assessor, followed by a work-based needs assessment will need to be made to determine appropriate action.
  - The **Equality Act** also states that employers must not discriminate against a disabled person in:
    - Recruitment
    - Promotion
    - Appraisals
    - Training and development
    - The dismissal process.

**Contract Workers.** Where a person works under a contract for services and is not an employee, there are likely to be the same obligations not to discriminate and to make reasonable adjustment as for an employee.

Lack of Disability Awareness Training for staff with responsibility for disabled persons can result in staff making inappropriate assumptions of a disabled employee's ability and thus have a devastating effect on their self-esteem and confidence, resulting in deterioration of performance and stress.

Employers have responsibilities towards their disabled employees.

## **The Undisclosed or Unidentified Dyslexic.**

Some dyslexic employees are unaware that they are dyslexic, but display clear symptoms of the condition that should be capable of identification. For instance, Home Office guidelines on the marking of application forms for entry into the police service make it clear that police forces are expected to identify a dyslexic candidate even if the candidate does not give notice of being dyslexic. In these circumstances, appropriate accommodations should be offered.

The same applies to any employer organisation of any description. If an employer has a Human Resources Department or Occupational Health Department, it can be taken that the organisation is sufficiently sophisticated to be able to identify a dyslexic employee, even if the employee has not declared his/her Dyslexia or is unaware that he/she is dyslexic.

Once on notice of the likelihood that an employee is dyslexic, the obligation falls on the employer to ensure that the employee undergoes a Dyslexia assessment and work-based needs assessment to determine the most appropriate reasonable adjustments. Failure to implement reasonable adjustments for a disability may well be a breach of the Equality Act 2010.

## Appendix 1: Dyslexia Style Guide.



### Dyslexia Style Guide 2018: Creating Dyslexia Friendly Content

This Style Guide provides principles that can help ensure that written material considers the difficulties experienced by some dyslexic people and allows for the use of text to speech to facilitate ease of reading. Adopting best practice for dyslexic readers has the advantage of making all written communication easier on the eye for everyone.

When making changes consider all the ways that you use written communications, such as emails, presentations, web pages and printed materials. Consider these principles in combination with other accessibility guidance such as the Web Accessibility Content Guidelines (WCAG).

#### Readable Fonts

Use sans serif fonts, such as Arial and Comic Sans, as letters can appear less crowded. Alternatives include Verdana, Tahoma, Century Gothic, Trebuchet, Calibri, Open Sans.

Font size should be 12-14 point or equivalent (e.g. 1-1.2em / 16-19 px). Some dyslexic readers may request a larger font.

Larger inter-letter / character spacing (sometimes called tracking) improves readability, ideally around 35% of the average letter width. If letter spacing is excessive it can reduce readability.

Inter-word spacing should be at least 3.5 times the inter-letter spacing.

Larger line spacing improves readability and should be proportional to inter-word spacing; 1.5 / 150% is preferable.

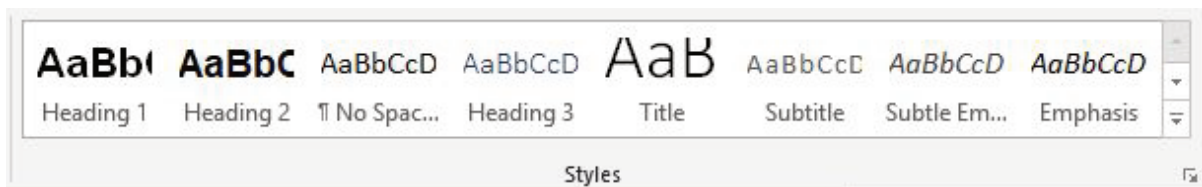
Avoid Underlining and italics as this can make the text appear to run together and cause crowding. Use bold for emphasis.

Avoid text in uppercase / capital letters and small caps, which can be less familiar to the reader and harder to read.

## Headings and Structure

Use headings and styles to create consistent structure to help people navigate through your content.

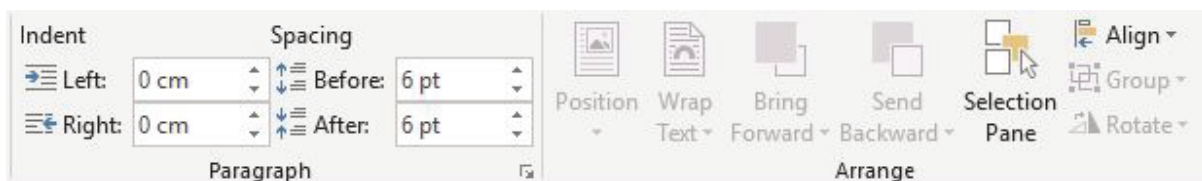
In Word, you'll find these tools in the 'Home' tab:



For headings, use a font size that is at least 20% larger than the normal text. If further emphasis is required, then use bold.

Use formatting tools for text alignment, justification, indents, lists, line and paragraph spacing to support assistive technology users.

In Word, you'll find these tools in the 'Layout' tab:



Add extra space around headings and between paragraphs.

Ensure hyperlinks look different from headings and normal text.

## Colour

Use single colour backgrounds. Avoid background patterns or pictures and distracting surrounds.

Use sufficient contrast levels between background and text.

Use dark coloured text on a light (not white) background.

Avoid green and red/pink, as these colours are difficult for those who have colour vision deficiencies (colour blindness).

Consider alternatives to white backgrounds for paper, computer and visual aids such as whiteboards. White can appear too dazzling. Use cream or a soft pastel colour. Some dyslexic people will have their own colour preference.

When printing, use matt paper rather than gloss. Paper should be thick enough to prevent the other side showing through.

## **Layout**

Left align text, without justification.

Avoid multiple columns (as used in newspapers).

Lines should not be too long: 60 to 70 characters.

Use white space to remove clutter near text and group related content.

Break up the text with regular section headings in long documents and include a table of contents.

## **Writing Style**

Use active rather than passive voice.

Be concise; avoid using long, dense paragraphs.

Use short, simple sentences in a direct style.

Use images to support text. Flow charts are ideal for explaining procedures.

Pictograms and graphics can help to locate and support information in the text.

Consider using bullet points and numbering rather than continuous prose.

Give instructions clearly.

Avoid double negatives.

Avoid abbreviations where possible; always provide the expanded form when first used.

Provide a glossary of abbreviations and jargon.

Further information on Web Design and adaptation:

- <http://www.distilled.co.uk/blog/distilled/usability-versus-dyslexia>
- RNIB Web Access Centre:  
[http://www.mlb.org.uk/professionals/webaccessibility/Pages/web\\_accessibility.aspx](http://www.mlb.org.uk/professionals/webaccessibility/Pages/web_accessibility.aspx)
- BBC: **My web, my way**. Making the web easier to use.  
[http://www.bbc.co.uk/accessibility/guides/allguides\\_index.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/accessibility/guides/allguides_index.shtml)

## **Appendix 2: Dyslexia Screening.**

Dyslexia screening tests and checklist tests are not diagnostic assessments, nor can they analyse the nature of an individual's dyslexic profile of strengths and weaknesses, but they are effective in flagging up the probability of dyslexic difficulties.

Further indicators could be provided from workplace checklists available from [www.workingwithdyslexia.com](http://www.workingwithdyslexia.com).

### **Online Screening Tests.**

An online screening test can be effective in identifying adults at risk of Dyslexia. However, there may always be a few false negatives and positives. For instance, a few well compensated dyslexic people may not show up clearly on this type of test.

The BDA website has a link to an online test: the Do-It Profiler. This is very comprehensive and screens for Dyslexia and other co-occurring conditions. It is accompanied by extensive help sheets and video guides.

This test has been accepted as evidence of dyslexic difficulties for driving theory tests by the DSA.

### **Adult Checklist Test.**

An adult checklist test would be a good place to start where the possibility of Dyslexia is being considered.

A checklist for dyslexic adults will not provide enough information for a diagnostic assessment, but it can be very useful in promoting a better self understanding and a pointer towards future assessment needs.

Below are the questions that were found to be more predictive of Dyslexia (as measured by prior diagnosis). In order to provide the most informative checklist, scores for each answer indicate the relative importance of that question.

Alongside each line you can keep a tally of your score and at the end find a total.

### Adult Checklist

For each question, circle the number in the box which is closest to your response.

		Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Most of the time
1	Do you confuse visually similar words such as cat and cot?	3	6	9	12
2	Do you lose your place or miss out lines when reading?	2	4	6	8
3	Do you confuse the names of objects, for example table for chair?	1	2	3	4
4	Do you have trouble telling left from right?	1	2	3	4
5	Is map reading or finding your way to a strange place confusing?	1	2	3	4
6	Do you re-read paragraphs to understand them?	1	2	3	4
7	Do you get confused when given several instructions at once?	1	2	3	4
8	Do you make mistakes when taking down telephone messages?	1	2	3	4
9	Do you find it difficult to find the right word to say?	1	2	3	4
10	How often do you think of creative solutions to problems?	1	2	3	4
		Easy	Challenging	Difficult	Very Difficult

11	How easy do you find it to sound out words such as e-le-phant?	3	6	9	12
12	When writing, do you find it difficult to organise thoughts on paper?	2	4	6	8
13	Did you learn your multiplication tables easily?	2	4	6	8
14	How easy do you find it to recite the alphabet?	1	2	3	4
15	How hard do you find it to read aloud?	1	2	3	4

### **Results from the Adults Test - what it all means.**

The research and development of the checklist has provided a valuable insight into the diversity of difficulties and is a clear reminder that every individual is different and should be treated and assessed as such. However, it is also interesting to note that a number of questions, the answers to which are said to be characteristics of dyslexic adults, are commonly found in the answers of non-dyslexics.

It is important to remember that this test does not constitute an assessment of one's difficulties. It is just an indication of some of the areas in which you or the person you are assessing may have difficulties. However this questionnaire may provide a better awareness of the nature of an individual's difficulties and may indicate that further professional assessment would be helpful.

Whilst we do stress that this is not a diagnostic tool, research suggests the following:

#### **Score less than 45** - probably non-dyslexic.

Research results: no individual who was diagnosed as dyslexic through a full assessment was found to have scored less than 45 and therefore it is unlikely that if you score under 45 you will be dyslexic.

#### **Score 45 to 60** - showing signs consistent with mild Dyslexia.

Research results: most of those who were in this category showed signs of being at least moderately dyslexic. However, a number of persons not

previously diagnosed as dyslexic (though they could just be unrecognised and undiagnosed) fell into this category.

**Score Greater than 60** - signs consistent with moderate or severe Dyslexia.

Research results: all those who recorded scores of more than 60 were diagnosed as moderately or severely dyslexic. Therefore we would suggest that a score greater than 60 suggests moderate or severe Dyslexia. Please note that this should not be regarded as an assessment of one's difficulties. But if you feel that a Dyslexia-type problem may exist, further advice should be sought.

Copyright Ian Smythe and John Everatt, 2001

Copies of this test can be downloaded from the BDA website:

**<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/screening>**

## **Appendix 3: Reasonable Adjustments.**

### **Identifying Reasonable Adjustments: Process of Assessment.**

It is important to determine:

1. The nature of the individual's Dyslexia. This should be obtained from their diagnostic assessment. It will normally outline the general features of Dyslexia and an individual's particular pattern of strengths and weaknesses as identified by a battery of diagnostic tests and a structured interview. Such assessments are usually undertaken by either a Specialist Dyslexia Teacher/Assessor (for adults) or a Chartered Psychologist with HCPC registration. The BDA has a full assessment service offering, see [www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/services/assessments](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/services/assessments)
2. The requirements of the job and its related task and competence requirements.
3. The requirements of any associated training and assessment.

This process enables identification of appropriate job and training requirements that will mitigate the effects of the employee's Dyslexia. Potential adjustments are then explored through semi-structured interviews and job analysis, with the dyslexic individual, their manager and a Human Resources coordinator to determine:

- The organisation's and individual's priorities, in relation to Dyslexia and job performance.
- The organisation's and individual's impressions, understanding and objectives in relation to these priorities.

The subsequent report contains timed and costed recommendations on adjustments which reflect the input of the stakeholders and provides a phased and integrated delivery plan for the adjustments. This plan clearly needs management agreement and ownership if the recommendations are to succeed. Successful projects are usually co-ordinated by a Human Resources manager, who ensures that the dyslexic employee and individuals supervising

him/her are supported across the agreed timescales with the agreed resources.

### **A typical programme of recommended adjustments.**

#### **Specialist one to one Dyslexia skills training.**

This training is designed to help the dyslexic employee work more effectively and overcome common dyslexic problems such as work planning and time management, effective reading, literacy skills including writing and spelling strategies, and short term memory problems. Such programmes normally last six months and are effective in promoting the skills development necessary to underpin the acquisition of more specific job related skills.

#### **Assistive technology, I.C.T. support and technological aids: their functions and purpose.**

Training in this area will assist the dyslexic employee gain proficiency in specialist hardware and software and subsequently use specific applications to improve performance in areas including: -

- a) Speed and accuracy in reading and writing;
- b) Planning and presenting written documents;
- c) Recording and recalling discussions and decisions;
- d) Organisation, planning and monitoring of work.

The hardware and software recommendations would normally include items appropriate to the trainee's needs from a range comprising;

- Texthelp or Claro Software advanced read back and text proofing software.
- A Digital recorder for recording meetings and training programmes which will allow the dyslexic employee to focus on grasping concepts rather than note taking. This can also be used for 'jotting down' reminders and ideas as they occur, particularly during 'on the job training', thus reducing the burden on short term memory.

- Dragon Naturally Speaking dictation software – which after training will enable the dyslexic employee to dictate directly to Word and other platforms and packages, significantly increasing speed and accuracy.
- Software packages, such as Mindview or Inspirations, which facilitate the creation, planning and production of reports and presentations.
- Many apps are now appearing and other specific software for accessibility purposes is often built into devices such as voice recognition, text to speech and text reading. These can offer excellent and inexpensive solutions particularly for mobile use. This is a rapidly developing sector and it is worth exploring what is readily available, built in free as a first step.

**Other Workplace Adjustments.**

This will include ways for the organisation and colleagues to plan, allocate, monitor and evaluate work and performance, in Dyslexia supportive ways. This generally involves Dyslexia awareness training for those involved in managing and training the individual, to enable colleagues to understand how to supervise, train and evaluate dyslexic employees in ways that address their strengths and weaknesses. It may also identify simple changes to forms, systems and procedures that can help the dyslexic employee work more effectively. External professional advice, which might come from Access to Work or other specialist resources, can assist in the customising of adjustments to individual work circumstances.

**Possible Reasonable Adjustments.**

The following have proved successful for many. Specialist advice is essential to determine the most appropriate adjustments for a particular individual.

**Written Communication.**

General difficulty with reading:

- Give verbal rather than written instructions.
- Highlight salient points in documents.
- Use voice mail as opposed to written memos.
- Use screen reading software.
- Supply screen reading software and scanner.
- A Reading Pen may be useful for unfamiliar words.
- Provide information on coloured paper (find out which colour helps the person to read best).
- Set up a computer screen with a coloured background to documents.

**Difficulty with reading and writing:**

- Allow plenty of time to read and complete the task.  
Examine other ways of giving the same information to avoid reading.  
Discuss the material with the employee, giving summaries and/or key points.
- Utilise information prepared in other formats for example audio or video, drawings, diagrams and flowcharts.
- Use mind-mapping software, such as Inspirations, Mind Genius.
- Use digital recorders.
- Use speech to text software e.g. Dragon.
- Get someone else to take the Minutes of meetings.

**Spelling and grammar errors:**

- Offer assistive text software such as ClaroRead or TextHelp Read & Write.
- Proof read work.
- Instant spell checker on all computers.
- Offer assistive text software on all applications, where possible.

**Working at a computer.**

- Change background colour of screen to suit individual preference.
- Supply anti-glare screen filter.
- Allow frequent breaks, at least every hour.
- Alternate computer work with other tasks where possible.
- Avoid continuous all day computer work.

**Verbal Communication.****Difficulty remembering and following verbal instructions:**

- Give instructions one at a time.
- Communicate instructions slowly and clearly in a quiet location.
- Write down important information.
- Demonstrate and supervise tasks and projects.

- Encourage the person to take notes and then check them.
- Ask for instructions to be repeated back, to confirm that the instruction has been understood correctly.
- Write a memo outlining a plan of action.
- Use a digital recorder to record important instructions.
- Back up multiple instructions in writing or with diagrams.

### **Difficulty with hidden meanings in conversation:**

- Give clear concise and direct instructions; do not hint or make assumptions that you have been understood.

### **Time and Work Planning.**

Concentration difficulties/distractions:

- Make sure the workplace is quiet and away from distractions, for example away from doors, busy phones, loud machinery.
- Allocate a private workspace, if possible.
- Where feasible, allow an employee to work from home occasionally.
- Provide a quiet working environment for a dyslexic employee by allocating libraries, other offices and enclosed areas when others are not using them.

### **Coping with interruptions:**

- Use a "do not disturb" sign when specific tasks require intense concentration.
- Encourage co-workers not to disturb the person unless absolutely necessary.
- When interrupting, allow the person to pause and write down what they are doing to refer to when resuming work.
- Ensure that each task is completed before starting another.
- Encourage outgoing rather than incoming calls. Offer training in how to use the telephone effectively for example jotting down key points before making the call.

**Remembering appointments and deadlines:**

- Remind the person of important deadlines and review priorities regularly.
- Hang a wall planner that visually highlights daily/monthly appointments, deadlines, tasks and projects.
- Use mobile phone for appointment reminders.
- Supply an alarm watch.
- Encourage the employee to use the daily calendar and alarm features on his/her computer.

**Organisation of property:**

- Ensure that work areas are organised, neat and tidy.
- Keep items where they can be clearly seen for example shelves and bulletin boards.
- Ensure the team returns important items to the same place each time.
- Colour code items.
- Ensure work areas are well lit.

**Organising workflow:**

- Supply and use a wall planner.
- Prioritise important tasks.
- Create a daily, dated "To Do" list.
- Use diaries.
- Write a layout for regular tasks with appropriate prompts for example for meetings or taking notes.
- Allow extra time for unforeseen occurrences.
- Build planning time into each day.

**General difficulties.****Reversing numbers:**

- Encourage the person to say the numbers out loud, write them down or press the calculator keys and check the figures have been understood.

- Supply a talking calculator or use the calculator function on TextHelp software.

**Directional difficulties:**

- Always try to use the same route.
- Show the route and visible landmarks.  
Give time to practice going from one place to another.  
Supply detailed maps.
- Supply GPS car navigation system.

**Short term memory problems especially names, numbers and lists:**

- Use mnemonic devices and acronyms.
- Organise details on paper so that they can be referred to easily using diagrams and flowcharts.
- Check back understanding.
- Use multi-sensory learning techniques such as reading material onto a tape machine and then playing it back whilst re-reading.
- Use computer software; sometimes well-developed programme menus and help features are useful.
- Use a calculator.

**BDA Information Sheet: Reasonable Adjustments.**

## Appendix 4: Specific Learning Difficulties.

**Please note** that the difficulties associated with Specific Learning Difficulties vary from person to person and range from the mild to the severe, as does the individual's ability to implement coping strategies. Several symptoms are associated with more than one condition.

### **Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder / AD(H)D.**

AD(H)D has three major aspects:

1. Inattention / distractibility: difficulty focusing on tasks or listening for a sustained period of time and becoming easily distracted by external stimuli or one's own thoughts.
2. Impulsivity: a lack of inhibition which could show itself as the need for instant gratification, blurting out inappropriate comments, interrupting excessively or having difficulty awaiting turn.
3. Hyperactivity: comprising excessive activity, both physical and mental.

Common symptoms also include failing to pay attention to detail, not listening when spoken to; failure to respond to feedback; having difficulty organising tasks and activities; difficulty getting started on or finishing tasks; frequently losing or forgetting things; fidgeting and moving around incessantly; often talking excessively or intruding on others.

If no hyperactivity is present, the term **Attention Deficit Disorder / ADD** should be used. People with this condition have particular problems remaining focused so may appear 'dreamy' and inattentive.

### **Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).**

Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is used as an umbrella term to include people with a range of diagnoses such as autism, atypical autism, high functioning autism, Asperger Syndrome, semantic pragmatic disorder and pervasive developmental disorder. The number of males affected far outnumbers females.

People with autistic spectrum disorders have difficulty in three key areas:

1. Poor communication skills: leading to difficulty understanding instructions or retelling an incident; taking words or phrases literally.
2. Impaired social skills: difficulty understanding socially acceptable behaviour and taking account of the needs of others; failure to foresee consequences; inability to 'read' body language.
3. Inflexible thinking: difficulty following procedures and coping with change, over-reliance on routines.

Some people with ASD have difficulty in sensory perception; this might affect their sense of touch, smell, vision, hearing and vestibular function (balance and body posture). People with **Asperger Syndrome** do not have the accompanying learning difficulties associated with autism; their speech may be fluent but most of them are slow to process information and when pushed may panic. Some have learned to largely conceal their problems but social interaction always remains very challenging.

### **Dyscalculia.**

Dyscalculia is an inability to understand simple number concepts and to gain basic number skills. There are likely to be difficulties dealing with numbers at very elementary levels and therefore with learning number facts and procedures, telling the time, understanding prices and dealing with money and financial matters.

Dyscalculia may exist independently as a specific cognitive deficit, or it may co-exist with other Specific Learning Difficulties. Numerical processing is complex and the deficits of Dyslexia and dyspraxia (short term memory, sequential abilities, retrieval of basic facts, language processing, speed of processing and visual spatial ability) commonly affect the acquisition of numeracy skills.

**Dyslexia.**

Dyslexia often manifests itself as a difficulty with reading, writing and spelling. Even where literacy skills have been mastered, problems remain with skimming or scanning over text and retaining what has been read. Spelling is likely to remain erratic.

The core challenge, however, is the rapid processing of language-based information and weaknesses in the short-term and working memory. Associated problem areas include organisation, time management, visual perception, sequencing ideas, word retrieval and concentration. By adulthood many dyslexic people have equipped themselves with an array of coping strategies which takes energy and sustained effort. These coping skills break down in situations of stress, highlighting areas of weakness.

Dyslexia is also linked to a range of skills including innovative thinking, entrepreneurship, creativity and high-level visual spatial abilities.

**Dyspraxia / Developmental Co-ordination Disorder.**

Dyspraxia is an impairment or immaturity of the organisation of movement. Associated with this may be problems of planning and executing actions, including both language-mediated and practical tasks. People with dyspraxia may appear slow and hesitant, poorly co-ordinated with poor posture and balance. They can appear anxious, easily distracted and often have difficulty judging how to behave in company. Finding their way to an unfamiliar venue can be challenging.

There may also be problems with the following:

- Speech and language: speech may be unclear, due to poor control of mouth muscles; pace and volume of speech may also be affected,
- Communication: including difficulty conveying ideas and incorrect perceptions; laborious, immature and awkward handwriting.
- Social skills: difficulties include judging socially acceptable behaviour, understanding others' needs, a tendency to take things literally.

- Short term memory, sequencing skills: weaknesses in these areas affect organisational ability, decision making, retrieving information from the mind 'on the spot'.
- Time management: poor understanding of time or the urgency of situations.
- Managing change and new routines: people with dyspraxia may lack the flexibility and the ability to re-organise and re-schedule tasks.

Dyspraxia also affects sensory integration: sensitivity to noise, touch, light and an inability to screen out stimuli, leading to sensory 'overload' and a feeling of being overwhelmed.

## Useful References.

### Advice and Information:

BDA Helpline: Tel. 0333 405 4567

E-mail Helpline: [helpline@bdadyslexia.org.uk](mailto:helpline@bdadyslexia.org.uk)

BDA Training: Tel: 0333 405 4565

E-mail Training: [training@bdadyslexia.org.uk](mailto:training@bdadyslexia.org.uk)

[www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/employer](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/employer)

### Assessments.

The British Dyslexia Association are able to offer diagnostic and workplace needs assessments.

<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/services/assessments>

Email: [assessments@bdadyslexia.org.uk](mailto:assessments@bdadyslexia.org.uk)

### Publications:

Dyslexia at Work: by Margaret Malpas, published BDA 2018, Dyslexia in the Workplace (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition): Bartlett & Moody (2011) Wiley.

The Dyslexic Adult: Interventions and Outcomes. An evidence-based Approach. BPS Blackwell.

Dyslexia in the Workplace – a Guide for Unions. Brian Hagan (2013). TUC Publications

Dyslexia: How to Survive and Succeed at Work: Dr Sylvia Moody (2006). Random House.

Making Dyslexia Work for You, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, by Vicki Goodwin, Bonita Thomson, published by Routledge (2011)

Self Fulfilment with Dyslexia: a blueprint for success by Margaret Malpas, MBE, published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2017 , available through BDA shop

### Checklist:

BDA Adult Checklist: <http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/screening>

For supplementary workplace checklists see [www.workingwithdyslexia.com](http://www.workingwithdyslexia.com)

## **Online Screening test:**

Do-It Profiler: <http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/screening>

## **Assistive IT.**

For information and advice on assistive IT see: [\*\*www.bdatech.org\*\*](http://www.bdatech.org).

## **Visual Stress.**

For information on eye assessments, coloured overlays and filters see:

<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/dyslexic/eyes-and-dyslexia>

## **Access to Work:**

[http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/Employmentsupport/WorkSchemesAndProgrammes/DG\\_4000347](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/Employmentsupport/WorkSchemesAndProgrammes/DG_4000347)

For more information visit our website: [www.bdadyslexia.org.uk](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk)

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