Dyslexia Guidance

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# Introduction

This guidance aims to provide information to managers so they can support an employee who has dyslexia to achieve their full potential.

Dyslexia is a recognised difficulty under Equality Act 2010. This means that employers should ensure that disabled people are not treated unfavourably and are offered reasonable adjustments or support.

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# What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a common learning difficulty that can cause problems with reading, writing and spelling as well as verbal processing speed and verbal memory.

* It's a specific learning difficulty, which means it causes problems with certain skills used for learning, such as reading and writing.
* With dyslexia, intelligence isn't affected.
* It's estimated up to 1 in every 10 people in the UK has some degree of dyslexia.
* Dyslexia is a lifelong condition that can present challenges on a daily basis, but support is available to improve reading and writing skills and help those with the condition to be successful at work, as well as in there day to day activities.

This guidance specifically focuses on dyslexia, however there are other conditions within the Autistic spectrum, listed below. Although this guidance is not aimed at these conditions, some of the information may still be appropriate.

* Dyspraxia (affecting spatial awareness, motor skills and coordination)
* Attention Deficit Disorder (attention, concentration, planning and regulating)
* Autistic Spectrum Disorders (interpretation in context, social significance and Dyscalculia (maths reasoning and calculation, see appendix one for more information on Dyscalculia)

The vast majority of people who have dyslexia have developed coping strategies over time. These can often enable individuals to face and cope with difficulties more easily. Dyslexia can still however cause problems from time to time for employees, often as a result of barriers encountered in the workplace.

The aim of this guidance is to offer information and suggestions to managers with regard to what they can do to assist employees with dyslexia, and enable them to achieve their full potential.

## Find out more about dyslexia

It is intended that the information in this guidance will provide a good overview of dyslexia and its effects. However, it may also be useful for managers to enhance this through further research. The following sources provide useful and easy to digest information:

The British Dyslexia Association: <https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/>

NHS Dyslexia overview: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dyslexia/>

# What are the signs of dyslexia?

Signs of dyslexia usually become apparent when a child starts school and begins to focus more on learning how to read and write. However, in the workplace it will not always be immediately obvious that an employee has dyslexia. In many cases people develop coping strategies to counteract symptoms of dyslexia and many adults with dyslexia remain undiagnosed. If an employee already has a range of coping strategies, dyslexia may not impair work performance on a day to day basis unless unexpected circumstances arise, such as a period of stress.

A person with dyslexia may:

* read and write very slowly
* confuse the order of letters in words
* put letters the wrong way round (such as writing "b" instead of "d")
* have poor or inconsistent spelling
* understand information when told verbally, but have difficulty with information that's written down
* find it hard to carry out a sequence of directions
* struggle with planning and organisation
* struggling to remember things such as a PIN or telephone number
* struggling to meet deadlines

Where people with dyslexia may experience difficulties with literacy and organisation for example, they have strengths in other areas, the most common being as follows:

* Innovative thinking
* Excellent trouble shooting
* Intuitive problem solving
* Creativity
* Lateral thinking

# Disclosing Dyslexia

Many people in the workplace have not been diagnosed with dyslexia. Some may even be unaware that they have dyslexic difficulties. Others will have been assessed at some point, possibly at school, but prefer to keep things under wraps for fear of discrimination. There is no legal requirement to disclose a disability.

However once the employer has been informed of an employee’s dyslexia or been given a copy of an assessment report, they are on notice that they have a duty under the Equality Act.

# What can a manager do to support an employee who has dyslexia?

A manager should meet with the employee to have a supportive meeting to discuss and explore whether or not there are any reasonable adjustments that can be made immediately.

Where an employee has not been previously assessed for dyslexia difficulties the manager can refer the employee to the British Dyslexia Association (BDA) who can provide a full diagnostic assessment. Where an employee has previously been assessed the manager would need to refer the employee for a workplace assessment.

Prior to an employee having a workplace assessment or whilst waiting for a workplace assessment to be completed managers may find it beneficial to read the additional manager guidance found in appendix 2.

# Full Diagnostic Assessment

A full understanding of the individual’s profile is necessary in order to offer the most effective support.

Where an employee has not been previously assessed for dyslexic difficulties (post 16 years), the first step could be for the employer to arrange for the employee to have a full diagnostic assessment. Dyslexia is a complex area of difficulty and no two people have the same profile of strengths and weaknesses or levels of severity. However in the case of a job not involving significant paperwork, a screening test such as the one linked to our website may be sufficient. This test is 90% accurate in predicting dyslexia. A full diagnostic assessment should be carried out by Chartered Psychologists specialising in adult dyslexia.

The cost could be around £500 or more and would be paid for out of the service budget, managers should consider how much the employee would benefit from a full diagnostic assessment, as it may be possible to fully support an employee without a full assessment being carried out. The test takes around 3 hours and is followed by a full written report. It would not normally be possible to arrange this inside a month. For recommendations of appropriate psychologists for a diagnostic assessment, please contact the British Dyslexia Association Helpline on 0333 405 4567.

# Workplace Assessment

Following the diagnostic assessment, (or where an employee is able to show an existing adult assessment report), a workplace assessment should be arranged with a dyslexia specialist. This will detail the most appropriate accommodations and support, (reasonable adjustments) that would be successful in mitigating any weak areas and reduce stress. This is not something that either the individual or the employer would be able to work out for themselves. An assessment of reasonable adjustments should be carried out via a workplace assessment from a dyslexia workplace consultant.

## How to organise a Workplace Assessment

### **Access to Work**

Workplace assessments can normally be obtained from Access to Work, part of the Jobcentre organisation; (Access to Work do not usually require a full diagnostic assessment report in order to support an employee with dyslexia, but to enable the workplace assessor to have a full understanding of the individual’s dyslexic profile, a full assessment report is often desirable).

It is important to request an assessment from a qualified workplace dyslexia specialist,

The application to Access to Work should be made by the employee. There is no charge for the workplace assessment, but the cost of implementing recommended reasonable adjustment is borne by the employer up to a specific limit, depending on the size of the organisation. For costs over this limit, the employer is only required to pay 20%.

Workplace strategy training for a dyslexic employee is provided at no cost to the employer. This is a frequent recommendation from a workplace assessment.

### **Independent Workplace Assessment**

Independent dyslexia workplace consultants can also be appointed to do an assessment. Their report can still be submitted to Access to Work for the grant to the individual for items and training recommended.

The British Dyslexia Association offers independent workplace assessments in many areas of the country: for further information email: [assessments@bdadyslexia.org.uk](mailto:assessments@bdadyslexia.org.uk)

# Reasonable Adjustments

Reasonable adjustments should be put in place as soon as possible. It would be considered a breach of the Equality Act if reasonable adjustments are not implemented.

Managers need to be aware that reasonable adjustments are not a quick overnight remedy. Depending on the individual circumstances, it may take 2 or 3 months for measures to become embedded and for any associated training and learning to become effective.

For optimum performance an individual will need to have the support of colleagues and manager, dyslexia awareness training is essential. Dyslexic employees can be particularly prone to stress and this will exacerbate dyslexic difficulties. Where well supported, these difficulties will be less prominent.

## ICT Support

Once assessments have been completed by the British Dyslexia Association, any requests for specialist equipment or software can be sent to the ICT Service Desk.

## Occupational Health Support

Although dyslexia does not specifically fall within the remit of Occupational Health as the support needed is based around workplace adjustments that have been advised by specialists in this condition, they are more than happy to have a discussion around any immediate support as well as signposting to the relevant authorities to provide further support for the employee.

# Appendix 1 - Introduction to Dyscalculia

Dyscalculia is defined as a condition that affects the ability to acquire arithmetical skills. People with Dyscalculia may have difficulty understanding simple number concepts, lack an intuitive grasp of numbers, and have problems learning number facts and processes. Even if they produce a correct answer or use a correct method, they may do so mechanically and without confidence.

There is very little known about its prevalence, causes or treatment. Research suggests that it is an atypical functioning of a specific area of the brain. People with dyscalculia may experience difficulty with basic aspects of number and arithmetic such as:

* Counting - May be able to count in sequence, but find it difficult when counting times tables
* Calculations – May have difficulty learning and recalling number facts. Also do not use rules or procedures to build on known fact, they may know that 2+5=7 but do not know that 5+2=7
* Operations – May have difficulty when handling money or telling the time
* Orientation – Can have difficulties with spatial awareness including left and right

# Appendix 2 – Additional guidance for managers

### Identify workplace issues

Once managers have an understanding of the effects of dyslexia, they should think about how this might apply to roles within their team.

* What kinds of tasks and situations might pose difficulties for dyslexic employees?
* How could work be organised to minimise any such difficulties?

### Use effective communication methods

One of the key difficulties experienced by dyslexic employees is organising information and processing complex instructions. The following techniques might be particularly effective for dyslexic employees, but would also be considered good practice for clear communication in general:

* **Give clear instructions:** 
  + Break down complex instructions into simple steps
  + Keep wording as clear, simple and direct as possible
  + Give instructions both orally and in writing.
* **Check understanding:** Ask concept-check questions to ensure that messages have been interpreted as you intended.
* **Explain the bigger picture:** Communicate how individual tasks contribute to overall project goals/outcomes.

### Encourage and support employees

Where relevant, managers should:

* Ensure that dyslexic employees have had a full workplace assessment, applying recommended adjustments as appropriate.
* Seek feedback from the employee to better understand any help or support that can be offered.
* Maintain an open dialogue with dyslexic employees to understand the effects of any changes in work or home environments.

### Develop a culture of acceptance.

**Model and reward the values you want to promote** – When team members demonstrate supportive and accepting behaviour, rewarding it sends a message to others about your values and expectations for them

**Listen to each other –** encourage employees to share their experiences, attitudes and perceptions both with you as a manager and with the rest of the team. Increasing understanding between team members will help build respect and acceptance.

**Show you care –** when you get feedback from employees, try to reflect this in your actions to show you have taken their views into account

**Encourage everyone to believe in themselves –** Recognise and reward the contributions that all members of the team make to show that everyone is valued.