



# People and Transformation

## Dyslexia Strategy

V2 March 2017

## 1.0 Introduction

It is estimated that 10% of the UK's population is dyslexic and that between 4% and 5% have severe dyslexic difficulties. Research indicates that almost half of adults do not reveal their dyslexia to employers and colleagues and many more do not believe that employers would be able to adapt to their specific needs. In addition, many managers are unaware of what support is available to staff with dyslexia.

This strategy aims to:

- Raise awareness of the issue of dyslexia in the workplace
- Identify pathways for assisting employees receiving appropriate assessments

Give advice and support to managers and staff in identifying reasonable adjustments in the workplace

## 2.0 Definition

Dyslexia literally means “difficulty with words” and can be described as a continuum of difficulties in learning to read, write and/or spell, which persist despite the provision of appropriate learning opportunities. These difficulties often do not reflect an individual's cognitive abilities and may not be typical of performance in other areas.

The impact of dyslexia as a barrier varies in degree according to the working environment, as there are often associated difficulties such as:

- auditory and /or visual processing of language-based information
- phonological awareness
- oral language skills and reading fluency
- short-term and working memory
- sequencing and directionality
- number skills
- organisational ability





Motor skills and co-ordination may also be affected

Dyslexia exists in all cultures and across the range of abilities and socio-economic backgrounds. It is a hereditary, life-long, neurodevelopmental condition.

Unidentified, dyslexia is likely to result in low self-esteem, high stress, atypical behaviour, and low achievement.

Research has shown that dyslexia may be an inherited condition and that it may overlap with other specific learning difficulties such as dyspraxia and attention deficit disorder


### **3.0 Diagnosis**

Dyslexia is not considered to be a medical issue and forms no part of medical training.

If dyslexia is identified as a potential concern, screening can be arranged by contacting the [Adult Learning Team](#) in Highlife Highland. This service is offered at no cost.

Further screening can be obtained by completing the [Dyslexia Adult Screening Test \(DAST\)](#) or the [Lucid Adult Dyslexia Screening \(LADS\)](#). The assessment will identify what, if any, additional support is required including further assessments and/or suggest reasonable adjustments. The cost of this screening and implementing the recommendations – including further assessment – must be met by the Service.

Further help and advice on assessments can be obtained from [Dyslexia Scotland](#).





#### **4.0 Dyslexia in the workplace: legal position**

Dyslexia is a recognised difficulty under the Equality Act 2010. This means that the Council should ensure that employees diagnosed with dyslexia are not treated unfavourably and are offered reasonable adjustments or support.

Managers must take cognisance of the recommendations from any assessment or the existing recommendations where the employee already has a diagnosis.


##### **Reasonable adjustments**

The following have proved successful for many people. However, consultation with the employee should be carried out before implementing any adjustments.

It is important to determine:

1. The nature of the individual's dyslexia; this should be obtained from their diagnostic assessment.
2. The requirements of the job and its related task and competence requirements.
3. The working environment and working practices and any impact on performance.
4. The requirements of any associated training and assessment.

This process enables those involved to identify job and training requirements that are likely to be the most successful in mitigating any areas of difficulty. Implementing reasonable adjustments will not be an overnight remedy. Depending on the nature of the dyslexia and the job specification, it may take a few months before a review of performance may be undertaken.






## 5.0 Hints and tips for working with dyslexia

### 5.1 Written Communication

#### General difficulty with reading

- Give verbal as well as written instructions
- Highlight salient points in documents
- Use voice mail as opposed to written memos
- Use screen reading software
- 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

#### 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 videotape, drawings, diagrams and flowcharts
  - Use mind-mapping software, such as Inspiration, Mind Genius
  - Use digital recorders
  - Use speech to text software
  - Get someone else to take the minutes of meetings
- 



## Spelling and grammar errors


- Offer assistive text software
- Proof read work
- Use spell checker
- Offer assistive text software on all applications, where possible

Text to Speech (TTS) software is useful for dyslexic people, who:

- read slowly or with difficulty
- have visual stress when reading
- want feedback when writing
- want help with spotting errors when proof-reading
- benefit from the multisensory experience of seeing and hearing

Training must be provided for any software or additional technology introduced to assist the dyslexic employee. This is normally offered by the supplier.

## **5.2 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
- 




### **5.3 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 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

### **5.4 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
- 




## 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.

### **5.5 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.
- Supply a PDA personal digital organiser
- Supply an alarm watch
- Encourage the employee to use the daily calendar and alarm features on his/her computer

### **5.6 Organisation of property**

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



## 5.7 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

## 5.8 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 practise 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 program menus and help features are useful
- Use a calculator

### 6.0 Support and advice

Dyslexia awareness sessions will be offered on a regular but infrequent basis to Council staff.

The following organisations also provide further support and advice on dyslexia in adults:

- [Adult Dyslexia Organisation](#)
- [British Dyslexia Association](#)
- [Dyslexia Action](#)
- [Dyslexia Scotland](#)

### 7.0 Review

This strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis.



