

## Career Development Unit

### Notes on Dyslexia in relation to Postgraduate Medical and Dental Education and Training

1. Dyslexia is one of a group of conditions called Specific Learning Difficulties in Adults, which also includes Dyspraxia or Development Co-ordination Disorder, Dyscalculia, and Attention Deficit Disorder. Further information about these is available on the British Dyslexia Association website – see <http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/about-dyslexia/adults-and-business/dyslexia-and-specific-learning-difficulties-in-adu.html>. Hereafter in these notes the term “dyslexia” will be used to refer to all the Specific Learning Difficulties in Adults.
2. Specific information about dealing with dyslexia in postgraduate medical and dental education and training is hard to find. There is useful information on the BMA website produced by the BMA Medical Students Committee – see <http://bma.org.uk/developing-your-career/studying-medicine/common-challenges-while-studying/studying-with-dyslexia> but this does not refer to what happens after qualification.
3. The GMC website includes references to dyslexia under its Gateways guidance – see [http://www.gmc-uk.org/education/undergraduate/gateways\\_guidance.asp](http://www.gmc-uk.org/education/undergraduate/gateways_guidance.asp) for general information about this guidance. In summary:

#### **GMC Gateways guidance**

- This advisory guidance is aimed primarily at medical schools. It will also interest organisations involved in postgraduate medical training and many individuals, including disabled doctors, students and potential students.
- It provides practical suggestions to help schools ensure that disabled students do not face unnecessary barriers to successful medical careers.
- The advisory guidance originally resulted from a partnership led by the GMC and financially supported by 11 medical schools. Matched funding was provided through Gateways to the Professions, set up by the Department for Education and Skills (England), as it then was. The guidance has been revised to take account of developments including the 2009 edition of Tomorrow’s Doctors and the Equality Act 2010.
- The guidance does not lay down new requirements, quality assurance standards or ‘policies’ from the GMC or any of the other organisations involved.

Section 4.2 of the GMC’s guidance covers the legal definition of ‘a disabled person’ (copied from GMC guidance – the emphasis is added):

#### **The Equality Act 2010 defines a disabled person as:**

‘A person (P) has a disability if P has a physical or mental impairment which has a

- a. long-term and
- b. substantial adverse effect on P's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.'

As this is a legal definition, it is ultimately for a court or tribunal to determine to whom it applies. Where there is doubt about whether an individual will be covered, it is best practice to assume that they will be and focus on identifying reasonable adjustments that will assist them.

The effect of an impairment is long-term if:

- c. It has lasted for at least 12 months
- d. It is likely to last for at least 12 months or
- e. It is likely to last for the rest of the life of the person affected.

A 'substantial' adverse effect is defined in the Act as one that is 'more than minor or trivial'.

**Medical schools, postgraduate deaneries and employers should use this definition when considering how to assess and support disabled applicants, students and employees.**

They should also encourage a greater understanding of who is protected by the Act, and seek to protect the rights of disabled people in their use of all the services at university and medical school.

People with a range of impairments and long-term health conditions are included in this definition, such as people who are hard of hearing or have mental health issues, multiple sclerosis, cancer or HIV. Importantly, **others who would not usually describe themselves as disabled people, such as those with dyslexia, may be protected by the Act if the effects of the impairment are 'long term' 'adverse' and 'substantial' on normal day-to-day activities.** People with hidden disabilities such as epilepsy are also covered.

- 4. It is not clear from the above to what extent The Equality Act 2010 places any obligation on Postgraduate Deaneries in relation to doctors and dentists in training that have diagnosed or suspected dyslexia. There are certainly obligations under the Act for the employers of doctors and dentists in training.
- 5. There is most useful and comprehensive guidance for employers on the British Dyslexia Association website (see <http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/about-dyslexia/adults-and-business.html>). For example, there is:
  - a. An Adult Dyslexia Checklist which can be used as a screening tool for adult dyslexia – see <http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/about-dyslexia/adults-and-business/i-think-i-might-be-dyslexic.html> , and <http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/files/Adult-Checklist.pdf> . A copy of this checklist is included as Appendix A to this paper. This test is said to be 90% accurate in predicting dyslexia.
  - b. A Summary for Employers – see <http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/about-dyslexia/adults-and-business/dyslexia-in-the-workplace-summary-for-employers.html> , the text from which is also copied as Appendix B to this paper.
- 6. Some relevant text **copied from the BDA guidance** follows:
  - a. 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.

- b. Disciplinary proceedings around performance issues are frequently dyslexia related. Many are off sick with stress as a result. In many circumstances they could seek redress under the Equality Act in an Employment Tribunal.
- c. **Assessment.** Where an employee has not been previously assessed for dyslexic difficulties (post 16 years), the first step would be for the employer to arrange for the employee to have a full diagnostic assessment:
  - i. This should be carried out by a Chartered Psychologist specialising in adult dyslexia. The cost could be around £500 or more.
  - ii. 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.
  - iii. Most large employers and those in the public sector would be expected to fund a dyslexia assessment for an employee as part of their duty under the Equality Act. A small employer may help with the cost. For recommendations of appropriate psychologists for a diagnostic assessment, contact your nearest Local Dyslexia Association.
- d. **Workplace Need Assessment.** Following the diagnostic assessment, (or where an employee is able to show an existing adult assessment report), a workplace needs 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.
  - i. Workplace needs assessments can normally be obtained from Access to Work, part of the Jobcentre organisation.
  - ii. The application to Access to Work should be made by the employee. For information on this process see Dyslexia Support in the Workplace.
  - iii. 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.
- e. **Implementing Reasonable Adjustments.** Reasonable Adjustments should be put in place as soon as possible. Failure to implement Reasonable Adjustments would be a breach of the Equality Act. 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.

Internet hyperlinks in this document are correct as at 12th March 2014.

## APPENDIX A

### Adult Checklist

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.

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

		Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Most of the time	Total
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	4	4	
4	Do you have trouble telling left from right?	1	2	4	4	
5	Is map reading or finding your way to a strange place confusing?	1	2	4	4	
6	Do you re-read paragraphs to understand them?	1	2	4	4	
7	Do you get confused when given several instructions at once?	1	2	4	4	
8	Do you make mistakes when taking down telephone messages?	1	2	4	4	
9	Do you find it difficult to find the right word to say?	1	2	4	4	
10	How often do you think of creative solutions to problems?	1	2	4	4	
		Easy	Challenging	Difficult	Very Difficult	Total
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

See also

<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/about-dyslexia/adults-and-business/i-think-i-might-be-dyslexic.html>

<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/files/Adult-Checklist.pdf>

## APPENDIX B

### Dyslexia in the Workplace: A Summary for Employers.

(copied from <http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/about-dyslexia/adults-and-business/dyslexia-in-the-workplace-summary-for-employers.html> on 1 November 2012)

#### Legal.

Dyslexia is a recognised difficulty under Equality Act 2010, replacing the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. This means that employers should ensure that disabled people are not treated unfavourably and are offered reasonable adjustments or support.

#### 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.

#### When things go wrong.

The BDA Helpline receives numerous calls from distressed employees with dyslexic difficulties. Common issues are:

- not receiving the appropriate reasonable adjustments;
- and/or being harassed or unsupported by line managers or colleagues.

Disciplinary proceedings around performance issues are frequently dyslexia related. Many are off sick with stress as a result. In many circumstances they could seek redress under the Equality Act in an Employment Tribunal.

See <http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/about-dyslexia/adults-and-business/performance-reviews-and-disciplinary-hearings.html>

#### Stage 1: Organising an 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 would 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.

**Funding.** Unfortunately dyslexia is not funded by the NHS and does not form part of medical training. A full diagnostic assessment should be carried out by Chartered Psychologists specialising in adult dyslexia. The cost could be around £500 or more. 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.

Most large employers and those in the public sector would be expected to fund a dyslexia assessment for an employee as part of their duty under the Equality Act. A small employer may help with the cost.

For recommendations of appropriate psychologists for a diagnostic assessment, contact your nearest Local Dyslexia Association For recommendations in London or any other area not covered by our local groups, please contact the Helpline on 0845 251 9002 or email: [helpline@bdadyslexia.org.uk](mailto:helpline@bdadyslexia.org.uk)

## **Stage 2: Workplace Need Assessment.**

Following the diagnostic assessment, (or where an employee is able to show an existing adult assessment report), a workplace needs 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 needs assessment from a dyslexia workplace consultant.

For an understanding of dyslexia in adults and information on how an employee could be supported, see our information [Specific Learning Difficulties in Adults and Identifying Reasonable Adjustments](#).

## **How to organise a Workplace Needs Assessment.**

Workplace needs 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, as sometimes Access to Work subcontract to inappropriate assessors.

The application to Access to Work should be made by the employee. For information on this process see [Dyslexia Support in the Workplace](#)

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.

For advice on independent assessors, contact the BDA Helpline or Local Dyslexia Associations.

## **Stage 3: Implementing Reasonable Adjustments.**

Reasonable Adjustments should be put in place as soon as possible. Failure to implement Reasonable Adjustments would be a breach of the Equality Act. 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 line managers: 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.

## **More Information.**

The employer would find it helpful to purchase the BDA Code of Practice for Employers, which offers detailed practical and useful guidelines in supporting dyslexic employees. This can do this via the BDA online shop.

BDA 2012