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Supporting staff in Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and Dyscalculia

Toolkit for Managers

Written in collaboration between Employee Health and Wellbeing Service and Operational HR.



**EMPLOYEE HEALTH &
WELLBEING SERVICE**
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Supporting Dyscalculia in the Workplace

Overview

Dyscalculia is a specific and persistent difficulty in understanding numbers which can lead to a diverse range of difficulties with mathematics. It will be unexpected in relation to age, level of education and experience and occurs across all ages and abilities. (British Association of Dyslexia)

Dyscalculia is a recognised learning disability and is often linked to other distinguished conditions including Dyslexia and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). It is estimated that dyscalculia is likely to occur in 3% – 6% of the population.

Dyscalculia is unique to the individual, but can include one of, or a combination of many symptoms, including:

- Difficulty counting backwards
- A high level of mathematics anxiety
- Weak mental arithmetic skills
- Trouble handling money or finances
- Difficulty understanding graphs or charts
- Poor time management
- Struggles to use Excel

Below are some websites that may help you to support your staff:

[Dyscalculia and maths difficulties - British Dyslexia Association \(bdadyslexia.org.uk\)](https://bdadyslexia.org.uk)

[Math and Dyscalculia Services - You can count on us](#)

[What is Dyscalculia? - The Dyslexia Association - The Dyslexia Association](#)

Diagnostic Assessment

Dyscalculia can be difficult to identify and is usually diagnosed via your doctor or psychologist however many individuals, especially those with milder symptoms, do not have a formal diagnosis. Online tests are available to help with diagnosis, however understanding the difficulties will be better achieved by an individual in a clinical interview.

Reasonable Adjustments in the Workplace

Disclosing the condition of dyscalculia may be a difficult conversation for an individual to have and line managers must approach with sensitivity and understanding. Dyscalculia was only recognised fairly recently and therefore there may be employees who may struggle with numbers and be undiagnosed with dyscalculia. Employees who suspect that they have dyscalculia and feel that it impacts on their role are advised to contact their GP, further information and references of support is also available through the British Dyslexia Association. www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/dyslexic/dyscalculia

Following disclosure of dyscalculia by a member of staff, it is important to arrange a meeting to openly discuss how the condition affects the employee. The effects of dyscalculia are unique to each individual and as such you must be aware of the needs and support required in order to implement any necessary adjustments for your member of staff. These adjustments offer those with dyscalculia equal opportunity and ensure they are not limited by their working environment.

Employers have a legal responsibility to make Reasonable Adjustments to the workplace to enable their employees who have dyscalculia to carry out their roles

A Reasonable Adjustment is a change to the working environment or way of working. What is 'reasonable' will depend on the employee's difficulties, the employer's resources and how practicable the changes are. It is important to communicate with your employee and really understand their individual needs.

Many Reasonable Adjustments are simple inexpensive changes that are easy to implement. Below are a list of adjustments that can be put in place to help the individual manage dyscalculia whilst in the workplace:

- Provide a Calculator – If the employee is required to multiply, add or subtract as part of their role and struggles to do this in their head then you can provide them with a calculator to support the employee with this.
- When presenting Numerical Data, keep the message clear and remove unnecessary figures from the document
- Use Visual Charts and diagrams to interpret the data such as pie charts, bar graphs etc
- Explain what the numbers that you have communicated mean for the department/organisation
- Avoid asking for the employee to record important figures in meetings there and then – ask the employee to provide the feedback from the meeting in written format so that any errors can be rectified.
- Encourage individuals to take 'rough paper' into meetings to note down any numbers or math problems
- Display a clear table with conversions of measures/formulas which are relevant to the role, which is easily accessible for the employee
- Provide Time Management Tools

Workplace Needs Assessments

It is advised that specialist advice is taken, and a Workplace Needs Assessment (WNA) is carried out to determine the most appropriate adjustments for an employee. This has an approximated cost of £450. It is a semi-formal remote interview with an experienced workplace needs assessor to look at the specific job role of an individual, and the difficulties that they have as a result of their dyscalculia. To find out more about a WNA visit the BDA Assessments webpage.

When looking to make Reasonable Adjustments an employer may feel they need more information about an employee's specific difficulties in order to support them effectively. To identify job and training requirements that are likely to be the most successful in supporting areas of difficulty, the employer may need to identify:

- The nature of the individual's dyscalculia;
- The requirements of the job;
- The working environment and working practices and any impact on performance.

Workplace consultancy

National Dyslexia Network (NDN) offers a workplace consultancy service to help you and your staff with all the implications of dyscalculia in the workplace.

The focus during workplace consultancy is on identifying and developing strengths and the supportive management of weaknesses for each employee. They provide support to both employer and employee, including workplace coaching, which may involve help with organisation, report writing and presentations, alongside strategies for reasonable adjustments in line with the Equality Act 2010.

[www.dyslexia.uk.net/employers/equality-act/
ndnetwork.org/help-in-the-workplace.html](http://www.dyslexia.uk.net/employers/equality-act/ndnetwork.org/help-in-the-workplace.html)

Access to Work

If the Reasonable Adjustments put in place do not provide sufficient support, the employee may be able to get help from Access to Work. To apply for Access to Work an individual will need to have a paid job or be about to start or return to one.

An Access to Work grant can pay for:

- Special equipment, adaptations or support worker services to help an employee do things like answer the phone or go to meetings;
- Help getting to and from work;
- The requirements of any associated training and assessment.

www.gov.uk/access-to-work

If Access to Work criteria for Grant does not apply, equipment will have to be purchased from service's budget.

Supporting Dyslexia in the Workplace

Overview

It is estimated up to 1 in every 10 people in the UK has some degree of dyslexia.

Dyslexia is a neurological difference, each person's experience with dyslexia is unique. Dyslexia occurs across the range of intellectual abilities. It can range from mild to severe, and it can co-occur with other learning differences (British association of dyslexia.) Dyslexia can cause problems with processing and receiving information, reading, writing and spelling, however it does not only affect these skills.

Dyslexia is a lifelong problem that can present challenges on a daily basis, but support is available.

Below are some websites that may help you to support your staff:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/dyslexia/

www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/

ndnetwork.org/index.html

Diagnostic Assessment

An employee may approach management if they suspect they may have dyslexia. This may be a difficult conversation for the individual and should be approached with sensitivity and respect. To provide the individual an assessment you may use the British Dyslexia Association diagnostic assessment service. Information available on:

www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/services/assessments/diagnostic-assessments

A Diagnostic Assessment is the only way that dyslexia can be formally identified. This assessment will also provide a clearer picture of someone's cognitive profile and their strengths and weaknesses. This will help to ensure that any support put in place is as effective as possible.

Reasonable Adjustments in the Workplace

Disclosing the condition of dyslexia may be a difficult conversation for an individual to have and line managers must approach with sensitivity and understanding. Following disclosure of Dyslexia by a member of staff, it is important to arrange a meeting to openly discuss how the condition effects the employee. The effects of Dyslexia are unique to each individual and as such you must be aware of the needs and support required in order to implement any necessary adjustments for your member of staff. These adjustments offer those with dyslexia equal opportunity and ensure they are not limited by their working environment.

Employers have a legal responsibility to make Reasonable Adjustments to the workplace to enable their employees who have dyslexia to carry out their roles

A Reasonable Adjustment is a change to the working environment or way of working. What is 'reasonable' will depend on the employee's difficulties, the employer's resources and how practicable the changes are. It is important to communicate with your employee and really understand their needs. Dyslexia can affect people in different levels and aspects of life, therefore is important to understand their individual needs.

Many Reasonable Adjustments are simple inexpensive changes that are easy to implement.

Examples of reasonable adjustments

We've put together some suggestions to help with difficulties with:

Reading

- Give verbal as well as written instructions
- Highlight important points in documents
- Use voicemail rather than written memos
- Supply screen-reading software or a Reading Pen
- Print resources on coloured paper, and change background colour of computer screens and presentations

Reading and writing

- Allow plenty of time to read and complete a task
- Discuss the material with the employee, giving summaries and/or key points
- Present information in other formats e.g. audio or video, drawings, diagrams and flowcharts
- Offer/use mind-mapping software
- Offer/use digital recorders
- Offer/use speech to text software
- Ask someone else to take the Minutes of meetings

Spelling and grammar

- Spell checker on all computers.
- Offer assistive text software on all applications, where possible:
www.texthelp.com/en-gb/products/

Computer work

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

Verbal communication

- Give instructions one at a time, slowly and clearly without distractions
- Write down important information or encourage the employee to take notes
- Write a memo outlining a plan of action
- Provide a digital recorder to record presentations/training with the appropriate consent of the other participants and without identifying the individual in terms of their confidentiality
- Check understanding

Concentration

- Make sure there is a quiet space available away from distractions such as doors, busy phones, loud machinery
- Allocate a private workspace if possible
- Allow an employee to work from home occasionally, if possible
- Use a “Please do not disturb” sign when tasks require intense concentration
- If interrupting, allow the person to pause and write down what they are doing to refer to when resuming work

Appointments and deadlines

- Remind the person of important deadlines and review priorities regularly
- Encourage the employee to use the daily calendar and alarm features on his/her computer or work phone.

Tips for 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, if appropriate
- Ensure work areas are well lit

Organising workflow

- Prioritise important tasks
- Create a daily, dated “To Do” list
- Use and share diaries
- Write a layout for regular tasks with appropriate prompts for example for meetings or taking notes
- Build planning time into each day

Supporting 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

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When looking to make Reasonable Adjustments an employer may feel they need more information about an employee's specific difficulties in order to support them effectively.

To identify job and training requirements that are likely to be the most successful in supporting areas of difficulty, the employer may need to identify:

- The nature of the individual's dyslexia;
- The requirements of the job;
- The working environment and working practices and any impact on performance.

Workplace consultancy

National Dyslexia Network (NDN) offers a workplace consultancy service to help you and your staff with all the implications of dyslexia in the workplace.

The focus during workplace consultancy is on identifying and developing strengths and the supportive management of weaknesses for each employee. They provide support to both employer and employee, including workplace coaching, which may involve help with organisation, report writing and presentations, alongside strategies for reasonable adjustments in line with the Equality Act 2010.

[www.dyslexia.uk.net/employers/equality-act/
ndnetwork.org/help-in-the-workplace.html](http://www.dyslexia.uk.net/employers/equality-act/ndnetwork.org/help-in-the-workplace.html)

Access to Work

If the Reasonable Adjustments put in place do not provide sufficient support, the employee may be able to get help from Access to Work. To apply for Access to Work an individual will need to have a paid job or be about to start or return to one.

An Access to Work grant can pay for:

- Special equipment, adaptations or support worker services to help an employee do things like answer the phone or go to meetings;
- Help getting to and from work;
- Dyslexia awareness training for colleagues and strategy training, both of which can be put in place immediately;
- The requirements of any associated training and assessment.

www.gov.uk/access-to-work

If Access to Work criteria for Grant does not apply, equipment will have to be purchased from service's budget.

Supporting Dyspraxia in the Workplace

Overview

Dyspraxia, also known as developmental co-ordination disorder (DCD), is a common disorder that affects movement and co-ordination.

Dyspraxia does not affect intelligence, however it can affect co-ordination skills – such as tasks requiring balance, playing sports or learning to drive a car. Dyspraxia can also affect fine motor skills, such as writing or using small objects.

Dyspraxia can vary between individuals and may change over time, but it can affect one or more areas listed below:

- your co-ordination, balance and movement
- how you learn new skills, think, and remember information at work and home
- your daily living skills, such as dressing or preparing meals
- your ability to write, type, draw and grasp small objects
- how you function in social situations
- how you deal with your emotions
- time management, planning and personal organisation skills

Below are some websites that may help you to support your staff:

www.dyspraxiauk.com/

dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/about-dyspraxia/

Diagnostic Assessment

Dyspraxia affects people differently and many GPs are unfamiliar with dyspraxia, although they are the correct first point of contact for a diagnosis. Therefore, it is important to take in information to the appointment, this could be a completed checklist with examples of how the indicators of dyspraxia apply to you. The doctor will probably discuss with you an appropriate referral, it will be appropriate for some to go to a physiotherapist, for others a speech and language therapist, an optometrist or an occupational therapist. However, the GP will also discuss why an assessment is appropriate.

Reasonable Adjustments in the Workplace

Disclosing the condition of dyspraxia may be a difficult conversation for an individual to have and line managers must approach with sensitivity and understanding.

Each person's circumstances are unique: only the individual will have an idea of how their dyspraxia is likely to affect their ability to do the job. If their dyspraxia is only mild, for example, it may not affect their ability to do that particular job.

Each individual will require different reasonable adjustments, however below are a list of adjustments that can be put in place to help the individual manage dyspraxia whilst in the workplace:

Breaks

Encourage the individual to take regular breaks to maximise productivity and concentration.

Time management

Before each shift it's helpful to plan what they have to do that day and prioritise their tasks. Visual aids such as mind maps, flow charts, and spider diagrams, can help. Give them plenty of advance warning of deadlines. Be careful not to be seen to 'hover over' every single task, giving the employee space to do find their way but confident to flag when they need help.

Organisation

You can help the individual organise their workload into urgent and non-urgent piles, by explicitly stating the level of prioritisation of the task you're giving them. Break down tasks and projects into manageable chunks, thinking of large projects as a series of small tasks with a beginning and an end. Encourage the individual to reward themselves when they have finished a task.

Instructions

Encourage the individual to write down instructions clearly and keep them for safe reference. Take time to clarify instructions if necessary. At meetings, a tape recorder can help the individual to remember what they have to do.

Operating office machines

If required, an ergonomic keyboard and mouse, may help. Slowing down the mouse can help, as can using keyboard shortcuts, if they find the mouse particularly difficult to manipulate. Keep clear instructions on how to operate photocopiers, fax machines, printers etc. Pin the instructions up next to these machines – then they can serve as a memory jogger for other people too.

Written work

Make sure that the individual's word processor has grammar- and spell-checks and encourage them to consider asking someone to proof-read their work. If appropriate, they can have a speech recognition software and proof-reading programs such as textHELP! , installed.

Coping with distraction

Flexi-time – coming in early or leaving late, could help avoiding distractions from colleagues. A partition round the desk or wearing headphones can also help to reduce distractions.

Attitude

Assertiveness training may help communicate more effectively at work. You might want to think about encouraging them to use basic mind and body relaxation exercises to help to reduce their stress levels and thus improve their overall performance.

Workplace Needs Assessments

It is advised that specialist advice is taken, and a Workplace Needs Assessment (WNA) is carried out to determine the most appropriate adjustments for an employee.

Dyspraxia UK can help you ensure you have made all the appropriate (for your context) reasonable adjustments for your staff member. It can provide an up-to-date assessment of the person's needs and facilitate discussion around possible support and role options in your employment setting. The essential aim is to support you in getting the right equipment and/or strategies in place for your employee to do their job to the best of their ability. Please contact the organisation on 01223 967897 or by email at enquiries@dyspraxiauk.com for a Work-place and individual assessment quote.

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If the Reasonable Adjustments put in place do not provide sufficient support, the employee may be able to get help from Access to Work. To apply for Access to Work an individual will need to have a paid job or be about to start or return to one.

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