

Dyslexia Guidance

Key points for this guidance:

- This guidance should be used when an applicant or member of staff has disclosed they have dyslexia
- As dyslexia is considered a disability under Equality Act 2010 WCC has a duty to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of a person with dyslexia
- There is a FAQ section for managers at the end.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Warwickshire County Council is committed to being a fair and inclusive employer and will not unlawfully discriminate against an applicant, worker, student or employee on the basis of their disability, including those who are identified as having dyslexia.
- 1.2 This guidance provides information and advice to staff and managers about dyslexia.
- 1.3 Dyslexia is a genetic neurological learning difference that affects about 10 per cent of the population. It is a combination of abilities and difficulties that affect learning processes and can often be identified as difficulty in reading, spelling, and writing. Other difficulties may occur in areas of speed of processing, short term working memory, organisation, time management, visual perception, sequencing ideas, spoken language, and concentration. However, many dyslexic people also have above average gifts in creativity, lateral thinking, and problem solving.

2. Legal Responsibilities

- 2.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, employers have a duty to implement reasonable adjustments for employees with disabilities including dyslexia.
- 2.2 The duty to make reasonable adjustments aims to make sure that, as far as is reasonable, a disabled person has the same access to everything that is involved in doing and keeping a job as a non-disabled person.

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- 2.3 When the duty arises, an employer is under a positive and proactive duty to take steps to remove or reduce or prevent the obstacles a disabled employee or job applicant faces.
- 2.4 An employer only has to make reasonable adjustments where they are aware – or should reasonably be aware – that an employee has a disability.
- 2.5 Many of the adjustments that can be made are not onerous or particularly expensive, and an employer is not required to do more than what is reasonable for them to do. What is reasonable depends, among other factors, on the size and nature of the organisation.
- 2.6 Discrimination in the workplace can potentially occur in;
- Recruitment
 - Promotion
 - Appraisals
 - Training and development
 - Disciplinary and dismissal processes
 - Bullying and harassment in the workplace
- 2.7 All staff members are responsible for making sure individuals do not experience any form of unlawful discrimination as a result of their disability and that they are supportive of individual needs. Every person working for Warwickshire County Council will be accountable for their own behaviour and actions, on and off site during working hours, or within any activity linked to their employment.

3. Dyslexia friendly working

- 3.1 This section provides basic guidance on what might be helpful to a person with dyslexia. A good first step includes asking the person themselves what will assist them in carrying out their role at work. Other helpful things to consider are:
- Give full clear instructions, and take time to explain things properly.
 - Give written instructions to back up oral ones, as necessary. Present instructions in a good, clear layout, perhaps in the form of a flow chart. Highlight key points.
 - Encourage employees with dyslexia to break down large tasks or projects into subsections and stages. This will reduce the confusion and overload when facing a large task by turning it into a series of smaller ones, to be completed one by one. Motivation will also be increased as the series of small goals are achieved.
 - Offer help on planning and prioritising the workload and scheduling work tasks, if this appears to be a particular area of difficulty.

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- If attention spans are short, encourage employees with dyslexia to take brief breaks; this will improve concentration and effectively increase the overall output for the day.
- If needed provide access to a quiet, undisturbed workplace. Dyslexic staff may benefit from periods when they are not to be distracted by phone calls and other interruptions. Facilities such as voice mail may also be helpful.
- Give advance notice of tasks whenever possible. Avoid dropping a sudden deadline on dyslexic staff.
- Offer staff discreet guidance and support on challenging tasks, without giving the appearance of doubting their abilities. Encourage them to ask for advice as necessary.
- Try not to put pressure on staff, e.g. by watching or 'hovering', or by showing impatience. If possible do not expect them to take notes or dictations at speed or to write down rushed instructions.
- Many people with dyslexia have particular difficulty absorbing written information which shows the following features: small print, poor spacing, a confusing mixture of fonts and styles and reproduced on bright white paper. It is therefore advisable to consider the following;

3.2 **Paper**

- 3.2.1 Paper should be at least 80g/m thick and matt rather than glossy.
- 3.2.2 Try to avoid white backgrounds for paper; computer and visual aids, as white can appear too dazzling so use cream or a soft pastel colour.
- 3.2.3 Some dyslexic people will have their own colour preference so it is best to ask.

3.3 **Font**

- 3.3.1 Use a plain, evenly spaced sans serif font such as Arial and Comic Sans. Alternative fonts include Verdana, Tahoma, Helvetica, Century Gothic, Sassoon and Trebuchet.
- 3.3.2 Font size should be 12-14 point. However, some dyslexic readers may request a larger font.
- 3.3.3 Avoid green and red/pink fonts as these are difficult for colour-blind individuals.

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3.4 **Headings and emphasis**

- 3.4.1 Avoid underlining, *italics* and text in BLOCK CAPITALS as these tend to make the text appear to run together, use **bold** instead. Also avoid using acronyms.

3.5 **Presentation style**

- 3.5.1 When writing anything, use line spacing between paragraphs to break up text and also use wide margins and headings.
- 3.5.2 Where possible avoid dense blocks of text by using short paragraphs. Keep lines justified with a ragged right edge (large gaps between text causes reading problems).

Specific guidance regarding recruitment and employment.

4 Recruitment

- 4.1 Candidates with dyslexia will have individual requirements, which the recruitment process should reasonably accommodate through each stage.
- 4.2 Asking the candidate themselves about their preferences and needs is good practice.
- 4.3 Evidence of dyslexia should not prevent a candidate being selected for interview where the person meets the essential selection criteria for the post.

5 Job advertisement

- 5.1 This should be:
- A. Written in clear text
 - B. In an active voice
 - C. Presented in clear sans serif size 12 font e.g. Arial, avoiding italics and placed in a box.
 - D. Website job advertisements should also use the same format and the website should offer a choice of background colour and font size.
- 5.2 West Midlands jobs website has an accessibility tab at the bottom of the page which allows individuals to alter the text, remove colour from the page and increase the font size to one they prefer.

6 Application forms

- 6.1 Application forms should be available in different formats, e.g. online or via email.
- 6.2 If you are using online forms ensure the applicant can save it and return to it at a later date.

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7 Interviews for recruitment and promotion

- 7.1 Invitation to interview could include maps, nearest parking, public transport and instructions on what to expect at interview as well as what do on arrival at the venue.

8. Interview process

- 8.1 Wherever possible, interviewers should be made aware of where an interviewee may have special requirements and should be sensitive to the needs of candidates with dyslexia. Further advice is available from the Resourcing team, HR Advisory team and the Equality and Diversity team.

- 8.2 A person with dyslexia may find interviews more difficult and may respond less well than others therefore:

- Short direct questions should be used and multiple part questions should be avoided. Similarly it is best to steer clear from long/complete questions and non-specific questions such as “Can you tell me more?”
- Prompts may be needed where the interviewers can see from the application that they have knowledge/experience in a topic but are struggling with the response. Prompts may also be needed to help where a fuller answer is required or where the person has misinterpreted the question.
- Do not use jargon, acronyms and initials as this may be confusing.
- Repeat questions to give the candidate sufficient time to process the information.
- Be aware that some applicants may find it difficult to give eye contact where others may stare too much.

8.3 Tests

- 8.3.1 Tests should be limited to the job role.

- 8.3.2 For written tests, the following guidance should be used:

- a) 25 per cent extra time should be allowed.
- b) A reader or screen reading facility may be needed.
- d) Test papers should be in a dyslexia friendly format e.g. in a suitable font and on cream coloured paper.
- e) Multi-choice questions can be confusing so should be avoided.
- g) Psychometric testing may need to make reasonable adjustments to aid an applicant with dyslexia.

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9. References

- 9.1 Any comments received within a reference from a previous employer about a person with dyslexia and relating to their disability is not grounds for withdrawing the job offer. This could be seen as discrimination and should be avoided.
- 9.2 The person themselves should decide on whether to disclose their condition as it is a confidential matter, so the condition should not be mentioned in any reference.

10. Dyslexia assessments

- 10.1 When it appears that an employee may have dyslexia, the following link will help gauge whether a further professional assessment is needed.
<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/common/ckeditor/filemanager/userfiles/Adult-Checklist.pdf>
- 10.2 The following organisations carry out diagnostic assessments:
- British Dyslexia Association - Assessments@bdadyslexia.org.uk.
 - Aston University, Dyslexia and Development Assessment Unit Birmingham
 - Genius within – They also carry out workplace assessments.
- 10.3 Assessments currently cost in the region of £500.
- 10.4 Once an employee has received an identification of dyslexia, an Access to Work grant may be available to pay for the practical, reasonable adjustments the employee may need within the workplace. Further details can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work/overview>.
- 10.5 This process is employee not manager lead and there is no cost for the workplace assessment. Similarly, strategy training for employees with dyslexia may also be provided by Access to Work at no cost.

11. Reasonable adjustments

- 11.1 Practical support in the workplace will usually involve minor adjustments.
- 11.2 Often the employee themselves will know what aids and support they will need, so it is good practice to ask.
- 11.3 However, a critical factor in the success of these adjustments will be the support shown by work colleagues and management.
- 11.4 Reasonable adjustments can include:
1. Specialist one-to-one dyslexia skills training, to help the employee work more effectively.

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2. Assistive technology and technological aids, such as: read back and text proofing software, e.g. Texthelp/Claro Software, speaking dictation software, e.g. Dragon, Digital recorder for meetings/training, portable Personal Digital Assistant – which offers laptop functions such as time management, note taking tools, to do lists, reading and editing documents and software packages for reports and presentations, e.g. Mindgenuis or Inspirations¹

11.5 ICT/ ICT procurement may be able to offer further advice regarding purchasing suitable software and equipment. Help can be found via; by phone 01926 41 4141 or <https://sites.google.com/a/warwickshire.gov.uk/ict-systems-strategic-commissioning/home/ict-support-guidance>

12. Training and development

- 12.1 A discussion should happen for any employee with dyslexia, prior to the employee taking part in any training or development to ensure their needs are addressed.
- 12.2 A Workplace Needs Assessment or Access to Work report should identify what reasonable adjustments are needed for a dyslexic person relating to training provision.
- 12.3 Trainers should be given full information about the training needs by the individual as there is no “one size fits all”.
- 12.4 General things to consider when delivering training;
 - a) People with dyslexia are usually visual and kinaesthetic learners, i.e. being shown how to do the task or by seeing images rather than just by verbal or written instruction
 - b) Ensure the training is multisensory, i.e., visual, auditory and hands on.
 - c) Sessions need to be broken down into bite sized chunks.
 - d) Access to a computer and/or a digital recorder may be required for some dyslexic learners.
 - e) Hand-outs should be provided to minimise the need for them to take notes at the same time as listening.
 - f) Hand-outs should be on cream or pastel coloured paper (ask the trainee what the best colour is for them).
 - g) Trainers should not select individuals to read out loud or write on flip charts or in group work tasks.
 - h) If a person is not grasping any point, it may need to be repeated and/or worded in a different way.

¹ Some equipment is not efficient in an open plan office so care needs to be taken when deciding what software is suitable for the employee

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13. IT and new systems training

13.1 People with dyslexia may need extra time for this type of training and standard training methods may not be suitable.

13.2 Individualised training models are more suitable and the following should be considered;

1. Sessions should be no longer than half-day at a time and spread over subsequent days if necessary.
2. Follow-up sessions may be needed to reinforce the training and help with processing the information.
3. Any software should have dyslexia friendly style or the option of changing the font size and background colour.
4. Where a dyslexic person is provided with assistive technology, the employee should be offered training on how to use it.

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Frequently Asked Questions:

Where can I find out more information about dyslexia?

Organisations specialising in dyslexia can be found on the internet:

British Dyslexia Association (BDA) - www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/

Dyslexia Action UK <http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/>

Dyslexia Scotland – www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk

We or the employee suspect they may be dyslexic and that it is causing problems for them with their work. How can dyslexia be confirmed or identified?

When it appears that an employee possibly has dyslexia, the following screening link will help gauge whether a further professional assessment is needed.

<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/common/ckeditor/filemanager/userfiles/Adult-Checklist.pdf>

The following organisations carry out diagnostic assessments:

- British Dyslexia Association - Assessments@bdadyslexia.org.uk.
 - Aston University, Dyslexia and Development Assessment Unit Birmingham
 - Genius within. They carry out workplace assessments
- Assessments cost in the region of £500.

As an employer, do we have to fund diagnostic tests?

A diagnostic assessment for any staff that may be dyslexic helps gives the employer protection under the Equality Act and to ensure that reasonable adjustments are properly tailored to the individual.

What support is available when an employee is identified as dyslexic?

- 1) Access to Work offer workplace assessments and some funding for the implementation of reasonable adjustments.
- 2) Occupational Health may be able to offer practical suggestions on coping strategies and IT equipment. They will often signpost to Access to Work if this has not been explored.
- 3) Warwickshire County Council Disability staff network can offer support. There are various members of the group who may be willing and able to offer support around the type of equipment that they use etc...they can be reach via: disabilitynetwork@warwickshire.gov.uk
- 4) British Dyslexia Association offers practical tips and strategies on coping with dyslexia in the workplace - <http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/employer/reasonable-adjustments>

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What support is available to an employee who has IT equipment but is having difficulty using it?

As specific needs and disabilities can vary so widely, ICT (information communication technology team) treat each case individually so it's difficult to provide a list of what they offer. However the basic procedure would always be the same: as with any IT purchases, a call would need to be logged with the ICT Service Desk Online describing what was required.

Equally with training, a call should be logged with the ICT Service Desk Online outlining what training would be needed. ICT Learning will then see whether this could be delivered internally or whether they would need to look to their external agency to source it, especially if it was something they hadn't come across before.

Alternatively, users could do a search on WILMa (the online learning portal) to see if any relevant face-to-face training or eLearning is available, for example there is currently training available on Dragon software. Below are links to the ICT Service Desk and WILMa. There are also icons on your desktop for each of these.

<https://sites.google.com/a/warwickshire.gov.uk/ict-systems-strategic-commissioning/home/ict-support-guidance>

<http://warwickshire.learningpool.com/>

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