

# Dyslexia Voice



## Parents and Dyslexia



Dyslexia  
Scotland

June 2014

### **Edition highlights:**

- Latest news
- Education conference 2014
- Articles from parents
- Tips and helpful ideas for parents

[www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk](http://www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk)

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## So long, farewell ...

Dyslexia Scotland would like to say a 'goodbye' and a 'thank you' to our Volunteer Manager, Katrina O'Brien who is moving to pastures new. She has secured a new post based in Aberdeen. We'd like to wish her all the very best in her new venture - we'll miss you Katrina!!!!



## Farewell

As most of you will already know, I have left Dyslexia Scotland to take up a new opportunity in Aberdeen with the Wood Family Trust. I will be working with the Youth and Philanthropy Initiative team. It is a great opportunity for me to work with young people in global development, which is a great passion of mine.

I was very sad to hand in my notice and leave Dyslexia Scotland. I admire all of the staff and volunteers involved in the charity and it is inspirational to see how passionate and dedicated everyone is towards the charity. I am hopefully still going to be a part of Dyslexia Scotland if they will have me. I am planning on perhaps being part of the Aberdeen Branch and Youth Club and I will still be running two half marathons for Dyslexia Scotland after the summer.

I have sincerely enjoyed working with each and every one of the volunteers and I am going to miss you all very much. Your time, effort and passion for your volunteer work is inspiring. You have all made my role enjoyable and made the decision to leave very difficult.

Keep on doing what you do. Best wishes.

*Katrina*

Welcome to our summer edition of 'Dyslexia Voice', on the theme of 'Dyslexia and Parents'.

The articles in this edition include a wide range of perspectives from parents about their experiences of the different stages throughout the 'Dyslexia journey', from identification to support. We hope that you find these articles helpful, as well as the ones written by teachers; and also information for parents on pages 12-18 from the booklets on supporting pupils with dyslexia in primary and secondary schools.

Also included in this quarter's magazine are:

- A news item about an important Education Scotland publication, 'Making sense: Education for children and young people with Dyslexia' that was launched on 12th May – see pages 20 & 21
- A couple of interviews with Kenny Logan and John Stein - carried out by Ross Duncan, on pages 19 & 33
- News from our branches on pages 6 & 7

During the last quarter, we were particularly sorry to say good bye

to Dr. Margaret Crombie, who has stepped down from in her role as Chair of the Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit working group. Our sincere thanks go to Margaret for all her hard work and commitment in this role. Margaret has expertly chaired this working group since 2009 through the development of the first phase of the 'Assessing Dyslexia' Toolkit and the second phase of what is now the Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit. This free online resource for all teachers, schools and local authorities also has sections for parents, children and young people. One of the recommendations outlined in the above-mentioned Education Scotland report is that Dyslexia Scotland should work with local authorities and schools to encourage all teachers to be familiar with and make appropriate use of the Toolkit.

I'd like to extend a warm welcome to the two new Co-chairs of the Working group, Fran Ranaldi and Margaret Glasgow, who will lead the dedicated working group on the continued maintenance and dissemination of the Toolkit.

Another sad farewell this quarter was to Katrina O'Brien, our Volunteers Manager since April 2012, who left Dyslexia Scotland in May to take up a new opportunity at the Wood Family Trust in Aberdeen – see page 3 for

details. We'd like to say a huge thanks to Katrina for all her help over the past 2 years and to wish her all the very best in her new role.

On 1st May, we visited our President Sir Jackie Stewart to share updates on Dyslexia Scotland's recent developments, funding and future plans – following the Board of Director's annual review day in April. See the photo below.



Sir Jackie with our Chair, David Shaw, Finance Director, Jim McGregor and myself.

On 10th May, supporters Robin and Ruth Jeffrey opened up their home, Inverquhar castle, near Kirriemuir, for a very special art exhibition to raise funds for Dyslexia Scotland. Artists from Angus Open Studios generously contributed 15% of their proceeds from the event and volunteers from Dyslexia Scotland Angus helped behind the scenes on the night. Many thanks to Robin, Ruth, Angus Open Studios, Jonathan Mitchell and the branch volunteers for making the event such a tremendous success, raising £1,700 in total. See the photo – a stunning setting for such a memorable evening.



We are delighted that Robin and Ruth have already kindly offered to host another event next year, so watch this space.

By the time you receive this magazine, our Ambassadors will have met for a planning lunch with Sir Jackie on 18th June in Edinburgh – we'll provide a full update in our next magazine.

As this quarter's magazine theme has proved so popular with contributors we have run out of space – so instead, we are enclosing as a special insert our annual statistics on our Helpline, membership, tutor service, website and social media.

I do hope you enjoy this edition. As always, we welcome your feedback.

Cathy Magee,  
Chief Executive





Pictured above are representatives from Dyslexia Scotland branches who attended our branch residential weekend in May. The weekend was a chance for branches to meet up with others and share ideas and experiences. We discussed lots of different aspects of running a branch, from recruiting new members and finding speakers to lobbying local education authorities and setting up youth groups.

Here are some of the things people said:

*It was fantastic to meet others that do the same work as you. It gave us a bit of a shake and inspired us to keep the group going.*

*Discussions over the 2 days were open and non-threatening, with everyone joining in. Speakers were well-informed, to the point and easy to listen to.*

*It gave me a sense of being supported while spreading awareness of dyslexia. I have more inspiration and ideas about raising awareness.*

We were delighted that people travelled from all over Scotland to attend and following feedback we hope to make it an annual event.

A group in Glasgow, which hopes to become the newest branch of Dyslexia Scotland, held a very well attended meeting at the beginning of May, showing the need for a branch in the city. Work has also started with a small group of people in Caithness to set up a branch in the area.

Congratulations go to our North East Branch Youth Group, XdysleX, who have completed the production of their DVD 'The Dyslexia Experience'. The film contains dramatisations, interviews and animations which outline common experiences among the young people. The DVDs will be available to schools through our branches for a donation of £10 and will also be available at our Education Conference on 20 September.

If you live in the Inner or Outer Hebrides, keep an eye out for our roadshows in August which promise to be a little bit different – the Dyslexia Scotland van will be on the road and we hope to make it to quite a few locations throughout our mobile tour. The roadshows will be supported by our Hebrides and Skye and Lochalsh branches. Information will be posted widely on our website and on social media.

Branches have been really busy over the last few weeks and in the run up to the summer holidays when they tend to wind down. One of the big events for our branches is Dyslexia Awareness Week which will be on 3 – 9 November this year and plans are already underway to organise events during the week.

Lots of parents of children with dyslexia come to our branch meetings – we can't guarantee the answer to everything but branches can help connect people who might have had similar experiences or just give a bit of much-needed support. Here is an email to one of our branches:

*"Thank you for all your help so far, I have bought a couple of books and have been to the CALL Scotland information day you recommended. All are proving useful. I would like to carry on the journey to learning ways to overcome spelling and reading difficulties as much as Jane's potential will allow, and to support in other ways. Also I like computers to make life easier. I would like to come to another meeting soon. The more info I get, the better I can support Jane. Thank you again for your care and support, it means a lot."*

Our branches are all led by volunteers and they are always looking for more help, even one or two hours a month. If you would like to get involved, or to find out more about our branches, please contact our National Development Officer Lena Gillies at [Lena@dyslexiascotland.org.uk](mailto:Lena@dyslexiascotland.org.uk) or phone 01786 446650.

All branch and other events can be found at [www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk/events](http://www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk/events)



Do you have something at the back of your mind that you would like to achieve, but is really far too difficult to even think about? Well, setting up a course for dyslexic, underprivileged children was like that for me. So what happened to pull it from that comfortable 'nice idea' place to actually happening in July this year?

It all started with the Chartered Management Institute setting up a National Advisory Committee for Women in Management (the link to dyslexic children may be hard to identify!). This committee brought together representatives from all over the UK who wanted to make a difference for Women in Management.

It was at my second meeting that I met Liz Hoskin, from Scotland. We started talking about our work and we arranged for me to visit her workplace when I was next in Scotland (I live in Devon). The meeting happened and it was apparent that Liz and I could work well together, until we started to talk about our families. Then the fire was really lit.

I have a dyslexic son, James, who at the age of seven went on a summer holiday course for dyslexic children and it really did change his life. He realised he wasn't 'thick' but learnt differently from other children in his school. He gained confidence to try out new ways of learning and also to talk to adults about what they could do to make it easier for

him. He also realised he wasn't the only one who struggled in this way.

James is now 22 and just finishing a university degree to be a senior school teacher. He is well adjusted, works hard and is passionate about helping children to learn. I have always been grateful that we found that course and that we were able to afford to send him on it. The rest has been down to James.

I discovered Liz had a similar story. Her daughter, Cara was not recognised as having dyslexia until she was 15. Once her dyslexia was identified, Liz and she were able to work to develop their own strategies and researched to see what else would help her. She then understood why learning seemed more difficult to her than others. She went on to achieve top marks in school and is now a Service Advisor with Nissan.

"I would love to be able to run a course for children whose parents can't afford to send them on a course like James went on" I said when we met in December. Liz, in her usual positive way, didn't

discourage me from such an enormous idea, but instead set about making it happen with me. W.I.L.D. (Working on Improving Learning with Dyslexia) planning had begun.

Within an hour the farmhouse I run as a holiday let in Devon was withdrawn from rental for the week of 19<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> July. We now had a venue, somewhere for the course experts and staff to sleep and the children could camp out (with some responsible adults) in the field adjacent to the house, adding to their experiences. All we needed to do was source equipment (including tents, specialist teachers, flights from Edinburgh to Exeter, a minibus, and a few other minor matters - like funding!). A draft timetable for the residential week was drawn up and a list of people we should make contact with was devised.

I haven't mentioned the children yet! How many? What age? How to select? What other courses were available? After some discussion we decided that this year (as a pilot!) we would run

the course for 7-11 year olds, and aim to take 12 children from schools in the Grangemouth area (Liz already does some work with schools in this area).

After discussing the idea with Cathy Magee at Dyslexia Scotland, we realised just how unique the residential course we were creating would be. Head teachers in the local schools have been enthusiastic and we are reassured that there are likely to be far too many children wanting to attend.

Aislinn Ryan a Psychologist and a dyslexia specialist from Dublin has offered her time to design and run the course and we already have volunteers to run confidence, creative art, music, den building, nutrition and cooking and many other sessions, together with people who have volunteered to sleep in the tents, cook all the meals, and organise the logistics.

So all that's left to do now is finalise the timetable, select the children and enjoy the course (and raise the £14,000 needed to make it reality – Children in Need and other grant applications being completed as I write!) and let you know how it goes!

If you or anyone you know are in a position to help financially, or with other areas of the course, please contact Liz at [liz@positivequalities.co.uk](mailto:liz@positivequalities.co.uk) or me at [kate@kbcd.co.uk](mailto:kate@kbcd.co.uk)





## ASK AN EXPERT! - Audio Interviews

In a series of audio interviews with [www.parentchampions.org.uk](http://www.parentchampions.org.uk), Bernadette McLean, Principal of the Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre, offers support and advice for Parents and Carers.

These Interviews are in the form of MP3 files which are available free to download. There are three specific interviews for parents:

- ▶ **Support Your Child At Home – Top Tips for Parent and Carers of 5-7 year-olds**
- ▶ **Support Your Child At Home – Top Tips for Parents and Carers of 7-11-year-olds**
- ▶ **Nurturing Sibling Harmony - Team-building tips for parents of children with specific learning difficulties**

To download and listen to these visit:

[www.arkellcentre.org.uk/support/parents-support-for-dyslexia](http://www.arkellcentre.org.uk/support/parents-support-for-dyslexia) (you need to scroll past the first section)



## GINGER SOFTWARE - A Review

I have been using Ginger Software on my computer for two months now. The main benefit for me is that it is compatible for all documents I use – Word, Outlook emails, and other Microsoft suites. I only have the free version, however here are the details for the full package:

Pricing model (It is an American programme so the pricing is in dollars):

- There is a free version - with limited facilities
- Basic version = \$4.90/month OR one-time payment of \$39
- Premium version = one-time payment of \$89

### Positives:

- Picks up on grammar and all spelling mistakes
- Ginger also picks up less obvious spelling errors for example 'form' instead of 'from'
- You can customise words so those you use most frequently, or English spellings of words can be saved to your own personal dictionary

### Negatives

- The free version only gives you a limited usage allowance per week so if you use it a lot it runs out until the following week starts – however you can still see the correct spellings and manually fix.
- As it is an American programme, it picks up some words which are correct in English, because it is looking for American spellings e.g. 'recognise' will be highlighted with 'recognize' given as the alternative.
- You can change your setting to English UK but it still identifies some English words incorrectly.

On the whole, Ginger seems to offer a lot, especially when you have a 'paid for' version of the package.

It does have a few downfalls but I would recommend it to anyone using Microsoft Office and emails on a daily basis as it is very helpful for someone who struggles a lot with spelling and major grammar issues. To find out more visit:

[www.gingersoftware.com](http://www.gingersoftware.com)



## 'Supporting Pupils with Dyslexia at Primary School' Supporting Parents

Parents are often unsure how and when to approach their child's school for support when they believe that their son or daughter is struggling to learn at school. Their child finds learning a challenge despite the amount of effort and time spent on homework. There may be signs of disengagement, school refusal or a worrying change of personality, from the happy, healthy child who started school to a fretful, angry child complaining of sore tummies, headaches and the like.

Parents are in the unique situation to be observing these changes in their child. It is important that these concerns are collated and shared with the school and that parents' and children's views are taken seriously in order to have the best outcomes for the young person's future education.

The series of booklets '**Supporting Pupils with Dyslexia at Primary School**' were written by Meg Houston for school staff. The information was also intended to be shared with parents and carers.

Parents need up-to-date and relevant information on how to approach their child's school with concerns, for example, getting an assessment, homework, child's lack of progress, what is appropriate support and involvement in planning meetings. These booklets address all these issues and more.

The three titles covering '**The Early Years**', '**The Middle Primary**' and '**The Upper Primary**' all give invaluable information, strategies for identification and support for children right from the nursery stage through to the transition to secondary school.

There is further information and checklists for identification of dyslexia at all stages of primary schooling. These are helpful for parents as well as teachers to consider when compiling information in order to support a request for an



investigation into any additional support required or for a full assessment for dyslexia.



**Homework** can be an overwhelming issue affecting families. This is discussed and addressed by suggesting that schools adopt a 'Dyslexia Friendly Homework Policy' which would make sure that children, parents and teachers are all working together. Specific details are in the '**Working with Parents**' booklet.

This booklet also contains invaluable information for parents which includes a '**Parents' checklist**', '**Contributing Factors**' section and a '**Guide for meeting with the teacher**'. These can be very useful to collate the relevant information required to get the required outcomes from meetings at school. It is also recommended that parents take a supporter along to meetings as an observer and to take notes. Emotions can run high when your child is involved. It is important to maintain a good parent/teacher/school relationship for the best outcome for your child.



Anne Warden

Tutor and committee member of Dyslexia Scotland South East branch

'Supporting Pupils with Dyslexia at Primary School' is a set of eight information booklets which can be viewed online at [www.supportingdyslexicpupils.org.uk](http://www.supportingdyslexicpupils.org.uk) and [www.dsse.org.uk](http://www.dsse.org.uk)

For members of Dyslexia Scotland copies can be downloaded, free, from the members' page [www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk](http://www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk)



## Supporting and Working with Parents of Dyslexic Pupils

by Moira Thomson

The teachers' guides for both primary and secondary schools include a booklet that offers advice to teachers about working in partnership with parents to support children with dyslexia. These provide advice sheets that teachers may issue to parents (as appropriate) but the booklets do not directly address many issues causing parental concern.

Sometimes parents have no idea that their child is beginning to struggle in school although they may note changes in attitude and behaviour at home especially when homework is involved. The child may become reluctant to do homework and may even deny that any homework was set. Some children whose dyslexia has not yet been identified may say they 'forgot' to write down the homework or have written it down incorrectly. While it is 'normal' for most children to try to avoid homework from time to time, especially when they are busy with other activities, when this attitude persists for some time, parents may be observing the emergence of difficulties related to dyslexia.

Some parents may observe that their child seems to be acting and developing differently from other children in the family, but they are not aware that these 'differences' might be linked to dyslexia. A young child who shows problems with direction/position such as confusing left and right, above and below or with counting in order, reciting days of the week, but is otherwise bright and alert, may be assumed by parents to lack focus.



All children are likely to experience some problems with some activities at times, according to the demands placed on them by classroom activities. These activities may not always cause problems in the classroom for children with dyslexia because many of them develop good coping strategies at an early age. For example, some dyslexic children learn to read fairly well but they have difficulties with other activities, so they develop strategies for coping with these e.g. illegible handwriting to hide poor spelling. Teachers may comment on the poor handwriting and perhaps complain of 'careless' written work but not identify a child's dyslexia, perhaps reporting coping strategies as 'attitude' or 'behaviour' issues. Some issues that seem to have been resolved may reappear at a later stage in children with dyslexia as their coping strategies fail, often after transfer to high school.

Many parents assume that dyslexia will be identified and assessed at primary school, and that relevant information will be passed to secondary teachers as part of transition arrangements. But there are some aspects of dyslexia that do not become apparent until students begin to experience difficulties within the secondary curriculum, perhaps having reached a stage where they are no longer able to use their coping strategies to compensate for dyslexic difficulties. In some cases, this may not be until they sit timed examinations.

Even when a child's dyslexia is known and supported at primary school, the move to secondary school will present new challenges that require a different type of support and intervention than that provided in the primary school setting. Differences between the primary classroom and the busy secondary school timetable may cause coping strategies to fail or the move to secondary school may have eliminated some of the support strategies that dyslexic learners used successfully in the primary classroom. Time-limited subject lessons often create new problems for dyslexic students who have been accustomed to having all the time they need to complete set work.



Secondary subject teachers may be the first to recognise that some students are meeting barriers to learning in the curriculum, but they may assume that these are already known to parents and the learners who may not be aware that their difficulties in some activities may be due to dyslexia. Some may believe that they are just 'no good' at a subject when their dyslexia makes it difficult for them to learn in the 'style' preferred by the subject teacher. Though subject teachers may identify a mismatch between a learner's apparent ability and the quality (and quantity) of written work produced in the classroom, they are more likely to look at a student's classroom behaviour/ attitude for a reason than consider the impact or of dyslexia on learning their subject. Parents and teachers may attribute incomplete work to lack of attention or laziness, though students with dyslexia may be working much harder than their classmates but do not admit it. Dyslexic difficulties are sometimes deliberately concealed by teenagers who are desperate not to be 'different' from their peers.

### How can the subject guides help parents?

The 12 subject teachers' guides cover most of the secondary curriculum. Each guide has a section listing possible barriers to learning for students with dyslexia in that subject, followed by a list of reasonable adjustments (support strategies) that may be made by individual subject teachers to ensure that all students can access the subject curriculum. Parents (and primary 7 teachers at the transition stage) have used these individual subject guides with dyslexic children to identify what they are most likely to find difficult and then to locate what adjustments might make their learning of a subject easier.

### School-based group activity

A set of 'transition' activities could be devised for all P7 pupils – not only those with dyslexia - and each pupil asked to highlight barriers and adjustments for both familiar and new subjects using the lists provided in the subject guides. Their responses could then become the basis of group discussions about any apprehension they feel about transition to secondary, as well a lead to consideration of new skills individuals might need to develop to cope



with change. For those who have dyslexia, this exercise would extend into an exploration of the skills they might need to acquire to access the curriculum at secondary and inform P7 teachers' planning of the final stage of primary education.

### Individual activity

Parents (or teachers) could use each of the guides with an individual learner with dyslexia to identify 'barriers' and 'adjustments' for each subject. This will take a long time, and result in a very long list of possible problems and suggested adjustments but some 'short-cuts' are possible. Some subjects may present the same barriers and adjustments, those that require:

- a lot of reading and listening in class
- much writing and copying/note taking
- following sequences of spoken instructions
- time limits placed on activities
- memorising information (e.g. language vocabulary)

It may be easier to group the 'barriers to learning' together with suggestions for 'reasonable adjustments' into 'activities' e.g. writing activities; spoken instructions etc, then present these as information for all subject teachers. However the list may be different for some 'practical' subjects such as PE or Art/Design.

Ideally, parents (or P7 teachers) would be able to meet individual subject teachers in advance to discuss the 'barriers' and the need for 'adjustments' but this is rarely possible and it is more common for Pupil/Learning Support staff to act as intermediaries and pass on the relevant information to subject staff. Even in the best of systems there may be hiccups e.g. when supply teachers



come in, so parents should monitor the provision of the agreed adjustments and intervene if problems occur. There is usually an opportunity for parents to meet individual subject teachers during the school year, so they should review their lists of 'barriers' and 'adjustments' with their child prior to this and take copies of revised lists with them to leave with individual subject teachers. There will be changes, as the student will have more experience of the subject than the teacher concerned. Parents could identify successful teaching input and tell the teacher about the positive impact of this, preferably before requesting further adjustments.

The subject guides include descriptions of strengths of some people with dyslexia in subject areas and list a few well known individuals who have been successful in each subject. Parents should encourage their children to identify their own strengths and consider role models they might wish to emulate, in order to develop self esteem and to help them realise that, though they might struggle in some subjects, they will succeed in others.

'Supporting Dyslexic Pupils in the Secondary Curriculum' is a set of twenty information booklets which can be viewed online at

[www.supportingdyslexicpupils.org.uk](http://www.supportingdyslexicpupils.org.uk) and [www.dsse.org.uk](http://www.dsse.org.uk)

For members of Dyslexia Scotland copies can be downloaded, free, from the members' page [www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk](http://www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk)



Prof John Stein is a research neurologist at Oxford University who set up the Dyslexia Research Trust (DRT) in 1995 with Sue Fowler. Patrons include his brother, Rick Stein - the TV Chef, and Colin Dexter - the creator of Inspector Morse.

Professor Stein's main passion is research to help people with dyslexia overcome their problems. He has developed the 'magnocellular' theory of dyslexia. The movements of the eyes during reading are mainly controlled by this component of the visual system in the brain. Its development seems to be impaired in many dyslexic children and that is why they complain that letters seem to move around, so they can't see what order they're meant to be in.

An example:- Take the word 'DOG'. If, out of your control, your eyes move from looking at the D to the G, then you may see the G in front of the D and read 'GOD' instead. Professor Stein believes that is why so many children make these kinds of reading errors, although not all people with dyslexia will have this problem.

As part of a research controlled trial, one half of a group of children were given a placebo and the other half were given yellow filters to use. At the end of the trial the results indicated that the children with the yellow filters increased their reading age by 4 months.

Professor Stein found that either yellow or blue filters work best in different children. He said that most children with visual problems are better with one or the other, although a few do well with either. According to Professor Stein there is no strong evidence out there to suggest that a lot of different coloured filters are necessary.

Professor Stein's work also includes running clinics to use his research to help people with dyslexia. The clinics have helped thousands of people as well as helping to fund further research. Thanks must go to Oxford University for its contribution.

**For more information about the Dyslexia Research Trust visit: [www.dyslexic.org.uk](http://www.dyslexic.org.uk)**



## IMPORTANT EDUCATION PUBLICATION!

Education Scotland published an important report on 12<sup>th</sup> May called **Making Sense: Education for Children and Young People with Dyslexia in Scotland**.

This report is the outcome of an independent review of education for children and young people who have dyslexia. It was carried out on behalf of the Scottish Government, following a request by Dyslexia Scotland for an update since a previous review in 2008.

The review covered the experiences of learners in primary, secondary and special schools. It also looked into the provision made by local authorities and at the programmes of initial teacher education currently offered by universities in Scotland.

The report identifies that although there have been improvements in practice since the last review in 2008, there is still considerable inconsistency and variability in practice. It also shows that young people with dyslexia attain significantly less well than their peers who do not have additional support needs.

The report contains a number of significant recommendations, summarised in the Table opposite, that aim to address these inequalities. In the full report, actions are outlined under each recommendation for different partners, including the Scottish Government, Education Scotland, GTCS, Dyslexia Scotland, local authorities, schools, universities.



1. Teachers, support staff, learners and parents should have access to up-to-date practical advice and guidance on dyslexia.
2. Teachers, support staff and local authority staff should have access to a wide range of high quality career-long professional learning opportunities at school, local and national level related to meeting the needs of children and young people with dyslexia.
3. Initial teacher education and postgraduate awards and courses should give a high priority to developing knowledge and skills in relation to dyslexia and additional support needs.
4. Schools, local authorities and national partners should take action to improve the quality of educational outcomes for children and young people with dyslexia.
5. The availability and use of reliable information on children and young people's needs, development and achievement should be improved.

It is crucial that the recommendations are acted upon, to ensure that all children and young people with dyslexia are given the opportunity to reach their full potential, wherever they go to school.

The Scottish Government will publish a response to this report in due course.

Dyslexia Scotland will provide updates about the Scottish Government response and the actions to be taken forward on our website, social media and in future magazines.

Ken McAra from Education Scotland will be presenting a lunch time session:- 'Outline of the findings and recommendations from the Education Scotland report, Making Sense: Education for children and young people with dyslexia in Scotland' at the Dyslexia Scotland Education Conference on the 20th September. See page 49 for more information.



## TOP TIPS FOR PARENTS by Alison Hay

- ◆ Always expect the unexpected and don't expect the mainstream.
- ◆ Be patient and don't lose your cool, it never makes things any better.
- ◆ Be very well informed about dyslexia. Read, visit websites, talk to other parents and teachers.
- ◆ Know your child's rights in law or find someone who can advocate for you.
- ◆ Remember, your child will have their very own version of dyslexic traits.
- ◆ Build a relationship with your child's teacher in primary. This won't always be a good and easy relationship, but the onus is on you to maintain it.
- ◆ Don't do homework if your child is tired.
- ◆ Be open to try anything and everything which helps, from post-it notes to numdrums.
- ◆ Enroll in an audio library and make listening to a story, part of the bedtime routine.
- ◆ Put picture or word labels on drawers so your child can find their clothes!

## HANG IN THERE

Ten per cent of the school population is affected by dyslexia. A recent Education Scotland report shows that only 17.1% of students with dyslexia go on to higher education, less than half of those with no additional support needs. The same report also identifies inconsistencies across schools, across Scotland in what we can expect from our education service.



As a mum of three teenagers - two boys with dyslexia and a girl with a very untidy room – I am absolutely puzzled and astounded as to why we, as a civilised, forward-thinking, first-world country, would say that we are getting better at meeting the needs of dyslexics in schools. My direct experience has been both positive and negative.

I speak to parents regularly who are absolutely despairing of the attitudes of teachers in their local schools. They feel completely bereft of support from the people they have to trust to educate their wee ones. Why would you tell a parent of a dyslexic and dyspraxic seven year old that their son is just lazy and disruptive? Why would one secondary school teacher, who disagrees with the other teachers of a teenager looking for exam support, be in a position to deny extra time for exams?

But I was really lucky that my boys went to a small village school within slipper stomping distance of my back door. I knew Struan had some sort of learning issue pretty early on. He was my third child and wasn't keen to do things which involved pencils, drawing or books. He was terribly confused by time. I'd say: "we'll go tomorrow" and he'd say "but is tomorrow today?" and I'd say, "No, it's tomorrow" .... and so the cycle went on. And at 13 he still judges his day by his stomach, which turns out to be the most reliable timepiece he has.

Things have gone downhill a lot since he moved to secondary, but to his credit, it's Struan who takes control when he can and solves his own problems. Some teachers have already written him off, some teachers are quite happy with 600 unpunctuated words of unfettered creativity. And when he can't cope with daily life, we continue to call the school for assistance and advice and often make ourselves unpopular.

I'm hoping this new Education Scotland report, and the issues it raises, is going to go some way to making the system sort itself out and make tangible change.

If not, I hope you'll still be joining me at the door of every school in Scotland and speaking up for our kids as there are plenty out there who don't have the same support network and need us to keep up the good work on their behalf.



## Essentials for Supporting a Child with Dyslexia 1- 10 by Dawn Roberts

**At 1 – Talk:** If there is any risk that your child might have a literacy difficulty, talk to them from birth and don't stop! Sing songs; recite nursery rhymes; a running commentary when making the tea! Submerge them in language.

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**At 2 - Stories:** From as young as you can, read a bedtime story. Ask them to predict what comes next... What if... Talk about the pictures. Find things beginning with.....ending with.... Don't stop reading to/with them until they are fluent readers.

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**At 3 - Games/Rhymes:** Play 'eye-spy'. What can you find that begins with..? What rhymes with..? Choose rhyming books. Get them to predict rhyming sentence ends. Say nursery rhymes.

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**At 4 – Environmental Print:** Draw attention to words and logos around them. McDonalds, ASDA, Tesco.

Teach them to recognise and write their own name.

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**At 5 - Magnetic letters:** Stick them on the fridge. Make and play with 3 letter words. Leave messages for them. Match them to animals. Talk about letter sounds, not names. a = ah.

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**At 6 – Self-esteem:** Find what they are good at. Try everything and make much of successes! They may already notice that they are not as able to do some things as well as their peers. Find what they can do better and promote it!

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**At 7 – Type:** Make it fun. Race them. Use free internet games such as 'Doorway online', 'Tux Type' and 'BBC Dancemat'.

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**At 8 – Honesty:** If your child has been identified as having dyslexia, tell them and reassure them! Explain what it is, how it affects them. Seek out support and those in a similar situation, perhaps through your local branch.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEpBujdee8M>

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**At 9 – Audio Books:** By now they are likely to be able to understand and enjoy literature more complex than they can actually read. Allow them to listen to audio books that are age appropriate whilst still reading simpler books to increase fluency. Your local library will stock both.

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**At 10 – Technology:** Word-process homework tasks using Wordtalk or whatever software they use at school if you can. Try to be patient when doing homework and negotiate 'easier' ways of presenting with the teacher.

Ivona minireader is free and will read aloud PDFs and web pages.

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## Learning to Drive

Having just gone through the process with my daughter, who is severely dyslexic, I thought I would pass on some information about learning to drive.

My daughter has great problems with left, right and sequencing. As you may know, all dyslexics are different, so these are some things that might or might not apply to you.

Choose your instructor well. Think about the problems. After numerous phone conversations and being told, "We have a high success rate in x number of weeks and that 2 hour lessons is the only way forward.", I settled for an instructor who said he was prepared to take time and not rush and was not perturbed by the fact I said my daughter tended to close her eyes when asked to think about left and right. She did find it very tiring and after an hour would come home exhausted but she did gain confidence. Her instructor told me she was ready for her test long before she felt confident to go for it.

Theory Test: If you are dyslexic you can have headphones so the questions can be read to you. However, you need to provide written evidence of dyslexia. Although she had good theory knowledge it took a long time for her to be confident. She kept saying that she needed a little longer. Her first shock came when she found out how long she would have to wait to get a test as she needed a Saturday. The day arrived and she found the person very helpful and reassuring. She passed first time!



You do not need proof you are dyslexic for the actual driving test, although you must tell them when you apply to do it. Make sure that on the day of the test you tell the examiner that you are dyslexic and what you find difficult. My daughter did not do so well on the actual driving test. After a bad experience at a set of traffic lights she was convinced she had failed, but she only had a minor for it. However, things then went downhill, resulting in a mistake which did gain her a fail.

She went out the next week with her instructor, but was low in confidence. She had decided she would fail the next time and that she was wasting her money. She gave up for 6 months. By the time she decided that she was being silly and should start again her instructor had retired due to ill health. After soul searching and advice from a mum of a dyslexic who had the same thing had happened to them, we decided to go it alone as it were. Her first time out was a great boost to her confidence as she found she still could remember everything her instructor had taught her. We put in lots of practice, applied again and this time was successful.

Please remember your child might:-

- ▶ Need time to build self esteem
- ▶ Find the whole process tiring
- ▶ Be very critical of themselves
- ▶ Be prepared that it could be a long process

**I hope that you find these tips helpful!**

**Dorothy Bowey**



Recently I designed and painted a large canvas, which I donated to Dyslexia Scotland. It is currently being displayed in their Board Room in the Stirling office. I am immensely, enormously and gratefully proud of this ... and more than a little amazed and dazed that Dyslexia Scotland wants to display it so prominently.

Dyslexia Scotland also wanted to print a photo of it in this 'Parents' issue of 'Dyslexia Voice' and I can barely contain my pride.

The message of my canvas is extremely appropriate when thinking about children and childhood, along with parents and parenting.

The wind beneath a dyslexic person's wings could ensure a lifetime flight over the rainbow, high above the clouds, and way beyond the stars.

In my opinion nurturing self belief, confidence and esteem in all individuals along with resisting negative thinking is the way forward to a better future.

'Dyslexia Monsters At Work' - by Doreen Kelly



Close ups



## TIPS FOR PARENTS by Liz Tangney

I was a new parent to Scotland and its education system and I had 4 children with dyslexia going through the school system. This is a structure of what I would have liked to have known.

The most important element is to maintain the child's self esteem.

**Record dates and discussion in writing as it will help you see if progress is made.**

- Find local support
- Approach Class Teacher with concerns
- If you feel support and/or assessment is needed for your child contact your Head Teacher.
- Ask for an assessment and know who will carry it out, usually the class teacher, but also the support for learning teacher
- This should be available quickly as it is an on-going requirement for all pupils
- Arrange a meeting at the school after you receive a copy of the assessment results.
- Discuss the assessment with the class teacher/support for learning teacher/Head Teacher
- Establish a plan of action
- Take small steps and keep up self esteem
- Know who will offer support and involve the pupil /home and school
- Evaluate the progress

Where next?

Dyslexia Scotland helpline 0844 800 8484

[www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk](http://www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk)



## Foreword

*Some people there are who, being grown, forget the horrible task of learning to read. It is perhaps the greatest single effort that the human undertakes, and he must do it as a child.... I remember that words – written or printed – were devils, and books, because they gave me pain, were my enemies.*

John Steinbeck (Introduction, *The Acts of King Arthur and his Noble Knights*)

Steinbeck was writing about his children trying to learn to read. He recognised the 'appalled agony' in the faces of the children as they tried to master reading. His children weren't dyslexic. It is frustration, befuddlement and despair that I see in my child's face – he is dyslexic.

Interestingly, no resentment is projected externally by him. There is no word of complaint or anger aimed at those around him or even towards the seemingly bottomless depths of the contradictions and complexity of his own language that in written form confounds and confronts him, and countless others. There is only a growing suspicion that it is he that is somehow broken. It must be so, he thinks. The world that surrounds him and the school system in which he invests so much of his time, effort, hopes and life must be doing their bits. His friends get it. It works for them. But, of course, he isn't broken, he is dyslexic and he is perfect! My first job is to help him see himself as his

mother and I see him: perfect!

What I have come to realise is that whether his school system works for my son rather depends. It depends on having a local authority that recognises its role in supporting and advancing all their learners. It depends on having head teachers that make this happen in their schools and instill this value in their teaching staff. It depends on having a teacher or supported learning team that know how to adapt their teaching styles and skills to ensure all are challenged and engaged actively in learning. That is a lot of 'depends' that have to be in place at the same time and that have to line up together.

I live in a local authority where this alignment of dependencies can feel more like a fortunate accident than any good planning or design. Others across Scotland, look to be much, much better served. So, yet another

postcode lottery in education.

Others, in schools elsewhere within the local authority, where there is a head teacher or teacher with direct experience of dyslexia (either with family members or through professional development), look to be much better served. Dyslexics are not alone in this. It is a gamble that also seems to be experienced by parents with children with ADHD, dyspraxia or those dealing with other challenges.

Where do you go as a parent from here? The truth is I don't know. What I have done is to use the services of one of Dyslexia Scotland's recognised dyslexia tutors. My son does this instead of school time, not on top of school time. It is not his fault that this level of support or expertise is not available to him in school, so I have taken some of the school time back from the school so I can more purposefully use it to allow him access to the right kind of learning support. This isn't too expensive; £20 a week in six week blocks. He is responding very well and loves it, and the amount of teaching and learning techniques that have been developed to help children is incredible and they have really began to unlock reading for him. By the way, these are not just

good dyslexia friendly teaching techniques, these are just plain good teaching techniques that can benefit all learners. Why there isn't a wider realisation of this in education and a greater uptake of them by schools is a mystery. All learners would benefit.

I gave him a Kindle Fire as a present. This way as every child reads in class he doesn't have to sit doodling. He can read a book on his Kindle and if he can't read a word it will tell him it. These Apps, rather than ebooks are in the Kindle Fire shop and most Dr Seuss books are available for £2-3. As I discovered, do not overlook or under estimate the value of Dr Seuss in helping a child with dyslexia to read. There is a range of books for all reading abilities and the rhythm and rhyme really help with confidence and word prediction and help him get close to being able to read at a good speed and hear himself do it. This is that horrible word automaticity – this reading fluently and not in bits of sounds and words. One Fish, Two Fish is a great starter; Green Eggs and Ham – also brilliant.

We really worked on his pencil grip to see if that helps. He had been left to develop a peculiar pencil grip that encouraged letter and number





reversal and altering his grip a little and instilling the mantra of 'top to bottom and left to right' as a general rule of thumb for writing, with practice started to reduce the reversal of letters and numbers. We had to do this and reinforce it because it seems schools are generally happy with the ability to mark-many can miss how the wrong mechanics in holding a pencil can make it harder to get the writing rules. The right grip helps - I believe there is a right grip. I think that makes me some kind of education heretic, these days. Moving him on to cursive (joined up writing) also helped quite a bit.

I must have bought and read every book available on dyslexia. This was something I felt I could do to try and deal with my lack of understanding of what it must be like. I'm not dyslexic. This helped me, quite a bit. Surprisingly, the 'Dyslexia for Dummies' (I am not a fan of the series because it is a bit hit and miss) is surprisingly good and if you only buy one book this is not a bad one, in my opinion. The biggest benefit though was in teaching me that I had to change. I began to understand that junior was disorganised not through choice, his fleeting and flitting attention frustrated him sometimes just as it had frustrated me. So, I read to understand, got a bit weepy, felt a

bit guilty but realised what was wrong – me! I'm still working on changing more, but I am changing as I understand more. Now he can tell me what is going on and communicate with the articulation of a defence or prosecution lawyer depending on my guilt or innocence also keeps me straight.

Taking doors off cupboards so our son can see what is on his shelves helped him remember what he has to play with. A quick trip to IKEA for transparent storage and clear containers also meant that he could quickly see what was inside. I have to admit I'm a bit naughty here and have been known to take a toy or game and hide it only to bring it out a month or so later when it has been forgotten about. It then is enjoyed all over again as if new – does that make me a bad person? I hope not!

Now, with me changing, our home adapting and him getting proper help and using proper resources, he is beginning to see himself as we see him. Perfect (but cheeky!).

**Barry Smith**



## TAKING HARD KNOCKS

Former international rugby union player Kenny Logan is now an Ambassador for the charity Dyslexia Action. Ross Duncan took the opportunity to interview Kenny to find out more about how he uses his own experiences to support others with dyslexia.

For a man so used to taking hard knocks playing international rugby union, tackling the difficult and awkward issue of having dyslexia at school presented a very different challenge for Kenny Logan.

Just like so many people in a similar position Kenny didn't excel at school, but instead shone when it came to using his physical rather than mental ability. In fact, one of the positives with dyslexia can mean having an aptitude to problem solve - which is a useful skill when running with the ball and trying to avoid a head-on tackle.

It wasn't until after Kenny had left school that he addressed his issues with dyslexia. Kenny says, "At 17 or 18 I didn't know what it meant. But when I turned 30, I decided to do something about it."

Although not able to turn back the clock, Kenny now uses his profile and role as Founding Director of Logan Sports Marketing to good use to explain to business leaders the merits and advantages in employing dyslexic staff. He uses his personal experience to try to break down the stigma, and to promote that people with dyslexia have a valuable contribution to offer any employer willing to provide the correct support and the right opportunities.

Since retiring from rugby Kenny is now able to concentrate on other pleasures like playing golf, but he also uses his time as an Ambassador for Dyslexia Action, a charity that provides support and encouragement for children and adults with dyslexia. Kenny says, "Even today dyslexia is still not recognised to the extent it should be, but thanks to the work of organisations like Dyslexia Action people with dyslexia now have somewhere to turn to for support and advice."



## Advice for Parents of children who are dyslexic - Doreen Kelly

Firstly, full disclosure: I have no children! And I am remembering my mum's pearl of wisdom: 'Anyone who has not had kids; has no right to pass judgement on those who do.'

*If you can cope with amazing talent coupled with absolute inability,*

*And face both with the same attitude;*

*If you can trust your talent when all around you want to focus on your disability,*

*But understand the world turns on the printed word;*

*Or listen to misguided authority figures claim you are rubbish, but never pass on the hate,*

*And don't get too big for your boots, nor use your verbal talents too much;*

*Yours will be achievement and self esteem*

*And what's more you'll be a Dyslexic my child!*

You can find this on "A Life Less Ordinary" Dyslexia Scotland blog in September 2013. I wrote the post (up until now I did not want many people to know that I wrote it)

I believe and suggest that part of the job of a parent is to help:-

- Children to use their extremely short formative years to develop and nurture their sense of self (so that they never hand over control of this to anyone).
- Develop winning, dynamic and strong neural pathways while the child's physiology is still at its most malleable. (For more information about this see "A Framework for Understanding Dyslexia" (ISBN: 1 84478 159 3) which can be borrowed from Dyslexia Scotland's resource centre)
- Protect and promote self belief, self confidence and self esteem.
- Children to uncover their own unique innate talents, by organising individualised, enriching and enjoyable learning experiences.



I also believe:

- If we want to produce adult learners with ambition, we need to be careful about how children are treated when they are learning; especially now that everyone is expected to aim for lifelong learning.
- Children and adults have the right to know that they are dyslexic, to own the label and be able to talk freely about dyslexia.
- Parents and teachers should not stand over children when they are trying really hard to acquire an incredibly difficult skill such as neater handwriting.
- Sometimes getting by in a certain skill is good enough. Carve out time to develop what the child is just naturally good at. It might be more advantageous in the long run.
- Frustration can lead to stressful lessons for everyone.
- Experiential learners may not always look like they are focused. However, remember that mistakes are just part of the learning process. Mistakes, especially in crafting, tend to create new techniques.

I used to love it when my older sister used to suggest we become 'word detectives' therefore making the whole reading and spelling thing into a game.

Parents can forget about dyslexia and walk away from it! But a dyslexic person carries the dyslexia monster with them! Always!

Lastly, parents, please remember:-

- School is not the be all and end all.
- Most successful and famous dyslexic people found their raison d'être (reason for being) out-with school.
- Many financially successful entrepreneurs have achieved great things with few/no qualifications.
- To ease up on yourself – you're doing a great job!



## HELPFUL THINGS TO DO - by E. Jane Smart

**Be aware** that certain activities may be genuinely difficult:-

- Recognising and processing symbolic material (reading, including music)
- Expressing thoughts on paper using symbolic material (writing)
- Expressing thoughts in correct order, orally and in writing (sequencing)
- Remembering sequences ie. times tables, lists of instructions, poetry
- Copying text from one source to another eg. book to jotter or blackboard to jotter
- Awareness of time – in day, week, month etc.

### USEFUL GAMES AND ACTIVITIES

**encourage awareness of rhyme** read rhyming poetry together  
make up some funny rhymes  
play 'I Spy' something which rhymes with ...

**use visual memory** play 'Kim's Game' (objects on a tray)  
play pelmanism (pairs, cards face down)  
play 'snap'

**use auditory memory** play 'I packed my case and I took...  
'In my Christmas stocking I found ...  
sing songs involving memory and sequence eg. 'Old Macdonald Had A Farm'

Gradually increase memory load by adding items or words. Take turn about and see how many things you can remember correctly AND in the right order!



**Use movement and touch** (kinaesthetic memory) to help recognition and memory of sounds and words – With eyes closed draw on forehead, back of hand, arm, back etc. first shapes, then lower case letters, then words. Make up funny messages to be 'read' by touch eg. 'mum is cool'! Take turn about. Keep it simple and GOOD FUN!

### CREATE SITUATIONS OF SUCCESS WITH READING AND WRITING

- Go shopping together. Ask child to get certain things for you. (even if you don't really need them!) Choose products with names which are phonically regular eg. 'pasta'. 'dog food' or 'mustard' etc. If the reading is a bit more difficult then give some clues. LOTS OF PRAISE FOR BEING SO HELPFUL.
- On the bus or in the car ask the child to read signs. Make sure it's fairly simple (Gala, Selkirk, Kelso) Use any excuse – 'My glasses are steamed up.' It's difficult to read and drive at the same time.' – depending on age of child!
- At home write messages to each other at every opportunity – on steamed up windows (a pan of boiling water does the trick) – very naughty! Write messages in flour if you're baking or in sand at the seaside.
- Do some cooking together. Rewrite some simple recipes and ask the child to read them out and help with the preparation.

### Boost confidence - raise self-esteem – VERY IMPORTANT

Make sure your child knows that you think his/her work is good. Display drawings and pieces of work, nicely mounted, in public rooms in your house. (kitchen cupboards are good)

**GIVE LOTS AND LOTS OF PRAISE** - Most of all **HAVE FUN!!**



## Memory Aids - By Joanne Mills

### A parent of a child with dyslexia

Children with dyslexia may have difficulty in short-term memory, so they will need extra thinking time and repetition of verbal information. If the information given can also be backed up by visual pictures or gestures this will help the child to plant a stronger image of the given information to memory. New words can also take longer to hold meaning and so might sequencing of events from zipping up jackets, to tying laces, to getting ready for swimming. Try to make every day activities into games, give yourselves extra time and praise those small achievements.

#### Check List to Aid Memory

- Always make sure you have the child's full attention before giving instructions. Coming down to the child's height for this is helpful.
- Don't give long sentences. Chunk the information into short phrases and make sure the child has understood each phrase.
- Use visual support from a picture of an item to bring down from upstairs to mind mapping for older children.
- Natural gestures or signs will also help to reinforce the instruction.
- Give your child the strategy and confidence to say that they do not understand and please could you say that again.
- Encourage repetition/rehearsal of the instruction.
- Also practise with the child picturing an item requested in their head. 'Picture that hot-water bottle and off you go'. Hopefully the hot-water bottle will come down from the bedroom.
- Use specific praise when the child remembers to let the child know what they have done well in. 'Good remembering'. This builds confidence to keep trying.



- When the child goes to school start to play a game for the child to remember to tell you one thing that the teacher said today.
- Make a weekly calendar to put up on the wall with your child and make it nice and colourful. Put everyday items to remember such as lunch box and homework and also put on after school activities so that if football is on Friday then the football kit needs to go in. Check the timetable with your child every morning and gradually your child will be able to do this on their own.

#### Memory Game for the car (as age appropriate)

I went to the market and bought a cow

I went to the market and bought a cow and a sheep

I went to the market and bought a cow, sheep and cauliflower etc

#### Memory Game for home

Put 2 or 3 items on a tray. The child names the items. Put a cloth over the tray and see if the child can name. Very gradually increase the items. Take turns in this game with your child.

Reverse the game: have 3 or 4 items on the tray. The child turns away and you take an item off. Can the child tell you which item has been taken off? Take turns playing the game. Try to build a picture in your head of where each item was placed.

#### Simple Sequencing Game

Touch your nose, then wiggle your ear.

Jump up and down, then blink your eyes, etc.

If these instructions are tricky for the child to follow, demonstrate the requested actions as you say them. Gradually reduce the demonstration.



## MY STORY ABOUT JASON by Mary Coyle

We knew from the nursery stage that my son Jason had a "problem." The parents meeting in January prior to him starting P1, I was informed that they thought he was dyslexic and colour blind because he could not recognise numbers or colours.

In the February at a parents' meeting for my older son (13) at Forfar Academy, his English teacher asked if she could have him tested as she thought he was dyslexic. Light bulb moment - ha ha! What had alerted her was something as simple as the fact he didn't use capital letters or full stops when he wrote something down.

It took until the end of P3 before we were told by the educational psychologist that Jason was dyslexic and had no short-term memory. Being a parent of a dyslexic child is frustrating, rewarding and challenging, just like every other child.

I don't like the term learning disability, I prefer learning difference and you need heaps of patience!

Instead of trying to get your child to learn your way, you need to learn the best way to teach them, their way.

Time has no meaning to them, trying to explain in 3 days time or a weeks time etc., his way of learning was to say next tomorrow. He would say 'next tomorrow' until he got to the number of days he needed. A dyslexic child likes structure. If you are doing anything different you face a million and one questions, how? why? where? when? how long?

My son's primary school, each of his teachers and his learning support, the speech and language therapist have all been great.

He was being teased at school once about his dyslexia and he came home and told me. My advice to my son was "If he starts again, just say I know I'm dyslexic, what's your excuse?"

I forgot to mention that you also need a sense of humour!



## LOW COST ASSESSMENTS FOR ADULTS

Dyslexia Scotland offers a low-cost assessment service to adults.

This service aims to offer an assessment to those adults who are finding it difficult to fund, or obtain funding from other sources. The service is open to any adult including those who are employed but who maybe on a low income.

The cost is £50 but those that are in employment are expected to donate a little more to the service.

The service is provided courtesy of Assessors who have generously agreed to waive their usual fees to allow this service to exist.

If you would like to apply or for more information call (01786) 446650 and speak to Sharon.

## ASSESSORS

Are you an assessor with an assessment qualification of a level that would be acceptable for the AMBDA award? And/Or do you have an Assessment Practising Certificate?

Would you like to be included on Dyslexia Scotland's list of Assessors?

If you would like to know more about assessing and/or being on Dyslexia Scotland's list contact Sharon on (01786) 446650 or get in touch by email: [sharon@dyslexiascotland.org.uk](mailto:sharon@dyslexiascotland.org.uk)



When I was a child, my school days were a nightmare. Teachers just didn't understand how hard it was for me, not able to read out loud and write things down in the time they ask me. I was always the last to leave class. I was a very lonely child inside of me asking myself what is the matter with me. My brain isn't working, I'm stupid, thick never get anything right, never able to take a message, can only remember the first, two or three things when my brain is not working. I was fine with doing gym, cooking, and woodwork.

I have a sister and she was always top of the class in everything she did, we'd walk to school together, had our breaks and lunch together, but she didn't know how hard it was for me. Other children called you names that you're stupid, thick and saying look at her she's nothing.

High school was just as hard. Other children study for exams, but not me. There was a lady at high school trying to help me with my reading, but I didn't like her because it made me feel more

stupid. I left school when I was 16 years old and I was so glad I didn't need to put up with people calling me names anymore.

I got a job at a bakery making cakes, etc. I passed my driving test first time and, over the years, I've had a few different jobs.

I eventually gave up my job and went to college at the age of 37. It was very hard, but it was the best thing I have ever done. I chose to study Horticulture at Level 2.

At first I didn't know how I would be able to get on and off the bus to go to college. I didn't know how would able to learn all the Latin names of plants and I had 5 plants to learn every week. I spoke to my teacher and told her that I wasn't good at reading and writing so she said she would speak to the learning support teacher. She was very nice and after a few weeks she asked me if a guy could come and speak to me and do a few tests. After the tests the guy said that I had very severe dyslexia, that I was not stupid and thick

and that there was a reason for letters jumping in front of my eyes.

I didn't tell anyone at home or any of my family. I decided that I would only tell them if I had to.

At college, I decided I would like some extra help with reading and writing so I went to the local centre and got what I needed. We started with words that a 5 year old would do starting school, but here I was starting to learn. I moved on to nouns, sentences ... I went every Thursday night for 2 hours for 2 years. All the while I told my parents I was going to a computer class.

The time had come; I had to tell my parents what I was doing. My name had been put forward for an award and I was going to be in the newspaper. It was a bit scary telling them, all my mum said to me was we always knew you were slow in learning

but we thought you were lazy and careless. My heart felt really sore with pain, but I was more determined to do well. I also won the most improved student at college in my class.

I won my award which was so good after all my hard work, light at the end of the tunnel.

You never get anywhere by just sitting waiting for things to happen. I have a important job now. I'm in charge of an entire department and I'm also a supervisor and can drive a forklift. I'm now doing an open learning course. Things are never easy but you always find ways around things and, yes, I get very frustrated with myself.

People will always criticise, but never give up, help your children and give them the love and support that they need. It can be a dark lonely life. But thanks to Dyslexia Scotland, life is brighter in every way.





Justin is now 9 years old, but I knew from a very early age he was learning in a different way from his older brother and younger sister.

While he was at nursery he was reversing letters and unable to sound out very easy words. I mentioned my concerns, but the answer I was given was, "All children do this at some stage of learning." During his 2 years of nursery I voiced my concerns on a number of occasions but the school didn't seem concerned at all.



During Primary 1 and 2 again, I spoke to the school a number of times as Justin began to show signs of not being able to read and getting very upset when it came to going to school and homework. Again, no support!

He had a large number of days absent from school, mostly due to an upset tummy (this all made sense later).

As a family we moved to a larger house which put us in the catchment for a different school which I moved all my children to. Justin was very worried about moving and again became quite ill because of this.

During a parents' evening at the beginning of P3, I voiced my concerns to his new teacher. She admittedly said she has never had to deal with a situation like this, but would pass over my concerns to the support for learning teacher. After a talk with her we both agreed Justin should be tested for dyslexia especially giving the history. I remember her phone call like it was yesterday... Justin indeed has severe dyslexia. I cried for what seemed like hours due to relief, worry for his future, his learning and the fact that after 4 years someone listened.



We had a meeting with the school to discuss how this would affect his learning and what strategies they would put in place.



This is when I contacted Dyslexia Scotland to ask for help and advice. Fantastic support and I have been part of setting up the Angus Branch.

During this time it has become apparent that his number skills are of a very high level so no concerns there. But it hasn't been easy for Justin. His short term memory isn't very good and he is a very emotional boy. Changes worry him, especially moving to a new class at the end of term. This is when we find most of his time off school or school phoning as he worries he won't manage or his teacher won't allow him to learn in his own way. One example of how his teacher helps is that she doesn't mark his spelling as being wrong. As long as Justin can tell his teacher the word he means then spelling doesn't matter. He works alongside a fantastic support for learning teacher, Mrs Florence, who takes him for additional support. He gets Toe-by-Toe and if at any point he feels worried or scared he has a card he shows his class teacher and he can go speak to Mrs Florence.



His absences from school are now less than before and the school hardly ever calls me now. Which is reassuring as he is much happier.

I am in contact with the school on a regular basis about Justin's learning, but also to keep them informed of the work Dyslexia Scotland are doing which has helped other children in the school.

Just lately Justin's teacher has said Justin no longer wants to do his work on green paper or have lines highlighted for him to write on as he feels different. Part of me is glad he was able to talk to his teacher about this and not worry himself, but, on the other hand, he has come so far using these techniques I don't want him to regress. Still an ongoing process and it always will be. But now the support is there from both school and Dyslexia Scotland we are all much happier.

Karen Evans





## A PARENT'S VOICE

Knowing dyslexia is hereditary, I watched for signs of this in my son from a very young age.

In anticipation of possible language delays, we pursued baby sign language. What struck me was that it was such an easy way of dealing with a possible barrier that could lead to frustration on my son's side, and a feeling of hopelessness on our part in not understanding him.

On reflection, 12 years on, I can see that this is a pattern we have lived by in supporting our son with his dyslexia. When we see (or even perceive) a barrier, we work together to deal with it. If it can be overcome – we will find a way. I noticed that finding alternatives to the “norm” and adapting as we go along is what gives our son confidence in communicating with us and rising to challenges in education and life in general.

Dyslexia is a lot more recognised in the Education system today, but there is still a lot of misunderstanding of the other challenges it can bring. In anticipation of this being a barrier, we made the conscious decision to be very proactive in his education,



confident we were the best ambassadors for our son.

Within a few weeks of him starting a new year, I would make an appointment with his new Teacher. I would explain how he may react when given an instruction or faced with a new task in a noisy class, being aware his reaction to certain situations could appear rude and disrespectful. Armed with this knowledge, his teachers have been able to support him in difficult and challenging situations over the years, and better understand him.

There have been many tears shed at homework time. His Learning Support Teacher assured us if he did spelling every night, he would improve. The only thing that happened was hours of crying, procrastinating on the homework – he even got ill. As a result, we visited several medical specialists over the years.

The emotional journey of seeing his frustration was very difficult. I have found it a challenge to always be positive and proactive in finding solutions or alternative methods of helping him. If I am being honest, I gave up trying for a while.

I am not proud of this, but fortunately this changed. I took a step back and took a long, honest look at the situation. I knew we were the best ones to help him deal with what he was going through – I just didn't know how.

With regard to his illness, we eventually found out he had a condition which was triggered by stress. This was the wake up call I needed!

We decided to reduce the days we did spelling and reading. We also stumbled on a strange alternative – that worked!

One day whilst we were all relaxed, I asked him to get his spelling out. The word itself nearly caused a riot! I kept it light, but insisted he get the book. Before I gave him his first word, I asked him to stand on one leg and touch his nose – then asked him to spell a word.

He was so distracted from his usual response, that he spelt it correctly with no problem – and a smile on his face! RESULT!! We continued in this way, with a daft action for each word. When I said that he had done enough, he wanted to continue!! Normally he couldn't get away quick enough! As well as adjusting his routine, we continued to work on his self belief and confidence.

In P7, his class was given a reading challenge. It was to read as many books as possible throughout the year. He presented me with the letter. I will never forget his reaction – he never flinched or got upset, he just handed it to me and said this is what they have been asked to do, but he wouldn't be able to. He was resigned to this fact.

I had to mask my reaction – we had all worked so hard over the years, especially my son, to deal with his challenges and build his confidence. In one letter, it felt like it had all fell apart and knocked the confidence from him. I asked him to leave it with me and I would have a think about it. He just shrugged and walked away saying there was nothing to do.





Through my frustration [and to be honest, my anger!] I took a rational view of the task. Over a few days we threw around a few possible ways of him achieving this task. He initially would not engage with us over this, but started to put his views across. Eventually, we decided to approach his teacher together and suggest he listen to the books. He felt like this was cheating, but agreed to give it a go. The teacher was delighted we had come to her, and agreed this was acceptable. We helped him see that it was gaining the information that was important – not the method he used to gain this.

There were to be 3 prize levels – bronze to gold, depending on how many books he read. He really enjoyed this challenge, actually CHOOSING to read some of the books instead of listening to them. He expressed his belief that he may attain the bronze prize – he won the gold! He was delighted with his achievement - we never doubted him for a minute.

During his last year of primary, he ran a marathon with his two Uncles. He raised £260 which they donated to his schools Learning Support Department

– to be used specifically to purchase items which would support current and future children with dyslexia.

I would like to finish on stating how our son's confidence grew over the years. Firstly, his health has improved. From hating school, doing what he could to avoid going – he has blossomed into a young lad whose confidence is lovely to see. He faces challenges every day – and always will. But he now has the self belief that he can do things that are difficult. He may need to work harder than the average child in the education system, but he CAN and WILL do it. In life in general, nothing holds him back. If he can, he will. He has the confidence and we are always there to support him through his education, and life in general.

We can't be more proud of our son. The best thing for us is seeing him happy and confident.

By 'A PROUD MUM'



# Dyslexia Scotland

Education Conference

## "Dyslexia: Practice Makes Perfect"

Saturday 20th September 2014

Inchyra Grange Hotel, Polmont



### KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

◆ Nicola Morgan

"Reading is not spinach - a brain-boosting diet for those who don't like greens."

◆ Dr. Amanda Kirby

A leading expert in specific learning difficulties including dyslexia.

### Ken McAra, HMI - Lunchtime Session

Will outline the findings and recommendations from the Education Scotland report, Making Sense: education for children and young people with dyslexia in Scotland.

### PRACTICAL WORKSHOPS:

- Fiona Dickinson: Dyslexia and Memory
- SQA/CALL Scotland: Digital Exams and SQA assessment arrangements
- Speaker to be confirmed: Dyslexia Practice in the Classroom
- Dora Warrilow: Phonological Processing
- Edinburgh Libraries Dyslexia Chatterbooks Group
- Toolkit Working Group: Accessing Literacy through the 'Addressing Dyslexia' Toolkit: a practical workshop to familiarise teachers with this free online resource.

Early Bird rate £95 for members; £110 for non-members  
After 1st July: £120 members; £145 non-members

**HAVE YOU BOOKED YOUR PLACE??**



As a parent, when I was informed my daughter had dyslexia all I thought of was the negatives and labelled them as difficulties of dyslexia.

Characteristics of dyslexia found in my daughter:

- ▶ Difficulties in spelling, spells phonetically.
- ▶ Left/right confusion - as described below.
- ▶ Slowness of reading, especially when challenged with smaller type and too many words on the page. My daughter will choose books that are bigger print with pictures, but she may not particularly enjoy the story but the book titles her peers are reading are too challenging for just now.
- ▶ Visual Tracking is hard to sustain. She becomes tired very quickly.
- ▶ Difficulty in reading long words, good at guessing.
- ▶ Stressed when tasked with organisation for multi tasks. Perhaps out of an instruction of 4 tasks, 2 would be completed and excuses for the forgotten 2.
- ▶ Auditory perceptual skills, especially with new tasks or fatigue.
- ▶ Regular reinforcement required.
- ▶ Mental maths is very hard to visualise and seems to destroy confidence.

My daughter accepts these characteristics, but we concentrate on the compensating strengths.

### CREATIVE STRENGTHS

She shows great ease in chatting sociably about a day, or event and has great recall skills about persons, date, time, what someone had in their hair or what polish they had on their nails. She is currently using and developing these skills in her stagecoach drama and is very at ease at learning scripts and confident on stage.



### PHYSICAL CO-ORDINATION

My daughter loves sport, most days she is involved in a different physical activity. She loves the physical and social side to sport. She especially loves athletics, cycling and her main love is riding. Her nature is to challenge herself to her extremes and loves to compete in shows and telling great stories of her personal triumphs and failings. She finds sport funny, exciting and loves to share with her friends. She uses this strength of her physical co-ordination to learn her tables whilst on a balance ball, help her spelling when we throw bean bags at one another. We use a physical activity when her school works seem to be too challenging for example, if she has a speech to remember or when her interest has gone from sitting at a desk and chair. She has discovered a love and calmness to taking part in any sporting activity.

### EMPATHY WITH OTHERS

She has a great skill in remembering details, events and names of who was there at an event even down to the detail of clothes and behaviour of who was there. She does not like to see others hurt, upset and will often console and listen to other children that need help. She has an awareness that there are two sides to a story and can often recount both sides of an argument that she has heard with other children. She is popular in class and does not like to see other people being talked to inappropriately and will seek help from an adult. My daughter enjoys many friendships at home and school of a variety of ages. Her calm, humorous, empathetic nature is a wonderful treasured quality to have.



My daughter is Eleanor Shaw  
and she is 14.

Her horse is called Cooper.



## MAGAZINE SUBMISSIONS

If you would like to submit an article, in the first instance, contact [sharon@dyslexiascotland.org.uk](mailto:sharon@dyslexiascotland.org.uk). Details of the aims as well as layout particulars can be obtained from Sharon.

**DEADLINE DATES:** 18th August 2014 (for September Magazine) and 20th October 2014 (December edition).

Please note the submission of an article does not mean automatic entry. Submissions are reviewed and approved by the Chief Executive.

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Charity No: SCO 00951  
Registered No: SC 153321

Dyslexia Scotland endeavours to produce a dyslexia-friendly magazine. We'd welcome your feedback on how useful you find articles particularly those that are more in-depth and if you would like to see more along similar lines. We also like to get feedback on the general layout, topics etc. In the first instance email [cathy@dyslexiascotland.org.uk](mailto:cathy@dyslexiascotland.org.uk)

This edition of the magazine has been printed by Aberdeen Asset Management.

**Aberdeen**