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# HR&TRAINING Journal

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# Dyslexia in the workplace

## Support and solutions...

**D**yslexia Assessment & Consultancy works with employers to provide specialist services and support in all areas relating to dyslexia and associated conditions, such as dyspraxia and Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The organisation works in private and public companies, government organisations, as well as with individual clients, delivering assessments, workplace skills coaching, company training and advice on 'reasonable adjustments' and related issues.

### The challenge for employers

Dyslexia is recognised as a disability under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA). It is the largest single disability within the UK and it is estimated that dyslexia affects up to 10% of the workplace population, with around 4% being severely affected.

Employers are increasingly aware of their legal responsibility to make workplace adjustments for employees with dyslexia, ensuring that they are not disadvantaged when compared with their non-disabled colleagues. With the numbers of employees in the workforce who have dyslexia, it is essential that they are enabled to work in a way that utilises their strengths and potential, otherwise employers will fail to capitalise on the valuable contribution that such employees can make to an organisation. Many employers remain uncertain about what can be done to support their dyslexic employees, or indeed, where to turn for the advice and services they need if they are to implement the statutory 'reasonable adjustments'. Our expert knowledge and experience will guide employers to meet the challenges of current legislation.

### The challenge of dyslexia

Dyslexia is a complex condition. It can show itself in many different ways,



A training seminar

depending on the strengths and difficulties of a particular individual and the demands made on the employee at work. Dyslexia can be more difficult to recognise in adults, as they may have developed compensatory strategies in some areas, or concealed their difficulties in others. The situation is further complicated because dyslexia is a 'hidden' disability. It is not surprising that dyslexia can be

### Employees commonly speak of how adjustments have 'made all the difference'

Mike, a training officer in a large organisation, described his decision to disclose his dyslexia to his managers as 'a huge relief'. It enabled him to work together with his managers to find ways where he could be supported. He said he had been 'frustrated and stressed', but the adjustments made enabled him to work with a 'new confidence', which had a very positive effect on his work. He has now been promoted to team training manager.

perplexing and challenging for managers and employees alike.

### What is 'reasonable' in the way of adjustments?

Various factors need to be taken into account, such as the practicality and cost of implementing the adjustments in relation to the organisation's size and resources, the nature of the employment, the employee's needs, and the likely effectiveness of the adjustments in improving efficiency. Yet not all dyslexic employees will require reasonable adjustments – some manage their jobs successfully without any changes or with only minor adaptations to the way they work. Thus, the adjustments for supporting individual dyslexic employees will vary, but it is the duty of the employer to ensure that the adjustments made are adequate and appropriate.

### How might a manager recognise a dyslexic employee?

In the work environment, the person with dyslexia is likely to meet the greatest challenges in the following three areas: 'memory', the ability to recall and hold

onto information in the short-term; 'organisation', the ability to remain in control of activity and time; and thirdly, the ability to work with 'speed' and 'accuracy'. Thus, difficulties may be seen across a wide range of work tasks, which are dependent on the efficient processing of information. Further clues indicating possible dyslexia are that the difficulties appear unexpected in the context of the employee's abilities. The employee may be very articulate in spoken language, but in contrast appear much less confident and even careless in written work. Another employee may be very well motivated and working long hours, yet be surprisingly poor at organisation, time management, or administration tasks.

When an employee is not performing to expectations, it is important to consider whether the person may have an unidentified 'hidden' disability.

### Changes at work

A change at work often means that the employee has to work in a different way, which can reveal the dyslexic difficulties. It might be a change of job, or a promotion, bringing new responsibilities that are difficult for the dyslexic employee. There may be a new line manager who introduces a different style of management and different ways of working. A new appraisal system may record performance in a more detailed way: closer monitoring can highlight weak performance. It may be that a change in personnel results in the dyslexic employee losing a particularly supportive colleague who was willing to proofread documents.

The manager should consider if a recent change has affected the performance of an employee.

## Dyslexia Assessment & Consultancy provides solutions

### We conduct specialist assessments

Assessment means that the employee's strengths and areas of difficulty can be properly understood, and when dyslexia is identified, appropriate ways forward can be found.



IT training

### We conduct 'workplace needs assessments'

A workplace needs assessment will make practical recommendations for reasonable adjustments to reduce the effect of the employee's dyslexia. Recommendations may include assistive software and items of equipment. An assessment will also identify specific areas where individual specialist training is needed, and guide managers as to how they can best supervise and support the employee. Our reports can be used to apply for funding to meet the costs of reasonable adjustments under the government's 'Access to Work' scheme.

### We have a team of specialist trainers working throughout the UK

A specialist trainer can improve the skills, performance and confidence of the employee in a significant way. The support is tailor-made for the individual employee in the context of the job responsibilities and the workplace priorities.

### We provide specialist IT assistive software training

We have excellent IT trainers for assistive software, such as Text to Speech, Speech to Text and mind-mapping programmes.

### We provide hidden disability and dyslexia awareness training for employers

The training is designed especially for managers, as well as human resource and occupational health staff, and for all

other groups who wish to develop best practice in relation to dyslexic employees.

### We provide an expert witness service for employment tribunals

We have expertise and experience in writing legal reports and in acting as expert witnesses in employment tribunals.

### We provide a one-stop consultancy service for employers

Dyslexia Assessment & Consultancy works throughout the UK to provide services needed to support dyslexic employees and to create dyslexia friendly workplaces.

### Further reading

'Dyslexia and Employment: A Guide for Assessors, Trainers and Managers' – edited by Sylvia Moody. Wiley-Blackwell 2009.



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