



# Wiltshire Dyslexia Association

## 2025 - Issue 2



28 February 2025

Welcome to the latest edition of our WDA newsletters.

### NEWS



## Save the date for DAW 2025

Dyslexia Awareness Week 2025 (#DAW25) will take place from **Monday 6 October - Sunday 13 October 2025.**

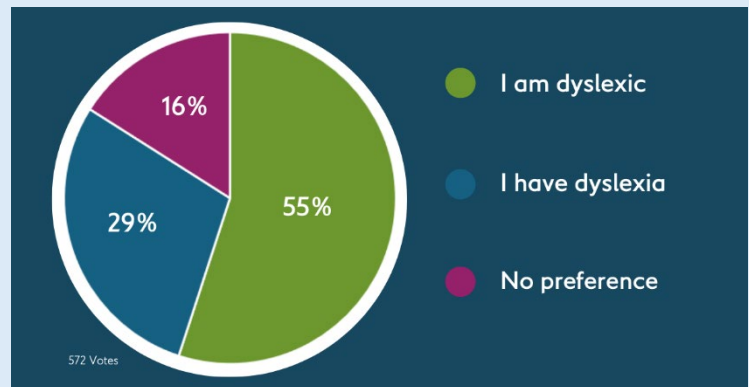
The theme for the week will be **Dyslexia: Raising the Volume.**

We will be sharing further details about our plans and how you can get involved over the coming months. In the meantime, you can [sign-up for updates](#) direct to your inbox and together we will make #DAW25 the best yet.

### Poll Results

In a recent LinkedIn poll, we asked how you refer to yourself: I am dyslexic, I have dyslexia, no preference.

Here are the results!



### AI teacher tools set to break down barriers to opportunity - GOV.UK



The Government has announced plans to develop AI to help reduce teacher's workload "so teachers can focus on delivering brilliant lessons"

<https://bit.ly/4htBliu>



## Maths and English requirement dropped for adult apprentices

11 February 2025

Businesses employing adult apprentices will now have the power to decide whether a Maths and English qualification should be part of the prescribed course, following a rule change by the government.

The Department for Education (DfE) says this could mean 10,000 more apprentices are able to complete courses every year.

More than 90,000 people over the age of 19 began apprenticeships between August and October 2024.

However, more than 45% of apprentices drop out of schemes without completing the course, according to the most recent DfE figures.

The government hopes that relaxing the rules for apprentices over the age of 19 will ensure more students are both applying for, and completing, apprenticeships in sectors where there continues to be high demand, such as healthcare, social care and construction.

Apprentices aged 16-18 will still have to complete an English and Maths functional skills qualification - equivalent to a GCSE - as a course requirement.

Read on at [Maths and English requirement dropped for adult apprentices](#) for comments including "Failing to secure a qualification in Maths or English is one of the key reasons apprentices do not complete courses".

Neurodiversity at work  
**Understanding  
neurodiversity**

## **New guidelines issued to employers on how to manage neurodiversity at work**

Story by Alan Jones PA Industrial Correspondent & Lawrence Matheson

Employers are being equipped with fresh guidance on how to support neurodiversity in the workplace, ensuring sensitivity and legal compliance.

Acas, the conciliation service, has released new advice aimed at fostering inclusive organisations and enhancing awareness of various forms of neurodiversity such as ADHD, autism, dyslexia, and dyspraxia.

"Bosses also need be aware that the strengths and challenges that come with a neurodiverse condition may not be the same for everyone. Our new advice has tips for employers on how to raise awareness, be inclusive, sensitive and stay within the law when managing neurodiversity at work."

Sir Stephen Timms, Minister for Social Security and Disability, underscored the significance of open dialogue: "Having conversations about health conditions and adjustments is the first step to fostering a healthy workplace which is good for employers and employees.

"Having the right culture, leadership, and processes in place to support those who are neurodiverse to join workplaces, to work, and to stay in work is important. It's crucial that businesses create the right inclusive culture and conditions which enable and support those workers to flourish."

Her comments underscore the necessity for companies to actively cultivate workplaces that not only welcome diversity but also empower all employees to succeed.

[Understanding neurodiversity - Neurodiversity at work - Acas](#)

[The-Employers-guide-to-Neurodiversity-Pages\\_compressed.pdf](#)

## NEWSLETTERS



**Here are the latest updates from Helen Arkell Dyslexia Charity!**

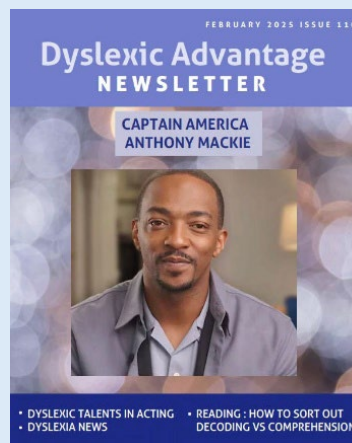
All their latest news including upcoming events and workshops.

You can download [here](#) and also [here](#).

**Dyslexic Advantage**

[February 2025 Newsletter](#)

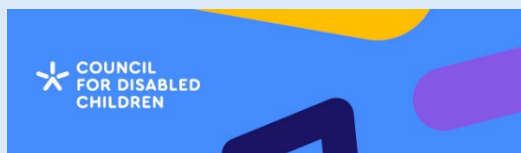
Link: <https://joom.ag/QWMd>



This issue focuses on increasing employment opportunities for learners with SEND, packed with valuable insights, practical resources, and strategies to support SENCOs, practitioners, parents, and carers.

Whether you're an experienced professional or looking to deepen your understanding, there's something for everyone. We can't wait for you to explore what we've curated for you!

[View Connect](#)



## Welcome to the latest Council for Disabled Children's (CDC) monthly newsletters:

Inside this edition, you can find:

- The Council for Disabled Children's response to the introduction of new [specialist places in mainstream schools](#);
- A [new guide](#) for governors and trustees on the Equality Act 2010 and disabled pupils;
- Information about the free What Works in SEND [National Learning Event](#);
- Information about the free celebrating 10 years of [A Better Start](#) event; and
- Details on how young people can submit their artwork for the National Children's Bureau [online gallery](#).

Inside this edition, you can find:

- Information about our new study shedding light on [adverse experiences faced by children presenting to mental health services](#);
- Information about upcoming free RISE training workshops on [Improving Inclusion in Schools](#);
- Healthy Parent Carer's [Reflections from their workshop](#) at the CDC Youth Matters Conference;
- Details on how to sign up for about the free What Works in SEND [National Learning Event](#);
- Free Skills, CV and Interview [support drop-in sessions](#) for D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent people aged 16-25;
- A survey from Contact about your experiences of [getting support for disabled children in England](#);
- RISE Training on the role of [social care in the EHC process](#).

This is rounded off with a range of resources and reports.



## Welcome to Inclusion News!

This is your monthly newsletter from SEND Group, designed to support you in your work with SEND. Inside, you'll find valuable articles, upcoming events, and practical resources - all aimed at empowering your achievement in inclusive education.

### ◇ **The Positives of Dyslexia: Celebrating Strengths**

Dyslexia is more than just a challenge—it's a unique way of thinking! This article explores the strengths of dyslexia, including problem-solving, creativity, and innovation, and how to nurture these skills.

**Read here:** [The Positives of Dyslexia](#)

## ◇ Updated Guidance for School Governing Boards on SEND Responsibilities

A must-read for school leaders - this update covers the latest government guidance on SEND governance, including:

- ☑ Ensuring compliance with the SEND Code of Practice
- ☑ Supporting leaders in meeting SEND needs
- ☑ Holding schools accountable for inclusive education

**Read now:** [Updated Guidance for School Governing Boards](#)

## ◇ Download Our Free Guide


Get our free guide to help navigate the latest SEND updates and improve provision in your setting.


**Download here:** [Access your free guide](#)

## SEND Group – Empowering Your Achievement

At SEND Group, we are committed to empowering professionals working in SEND through:

 **Knowledge** – Training, CPD courses, webinars, and leadership development to deepen your SEND expertise.


 **Support** – A network of professionals, discussion forums, and peer collaboration opportunities to share best practices.

 **Resources** – High-quality tools and materials to enhance inclusive teaching and learning.

## Check out our resource family, including:

 **SEN Books** – The UK's leading SEND specialist bookshop

 **Flexitables** – Multisensory maths learning tools

 **Trugs** – Structured phonics-based reading resources

## Stay Up to Date with Studying with Dyslexia

For the latest articles and insights on dyslexia, be sure to check out [Studying with Dyslexia](#). Our blog is a trusted source for practical tips, resources, and expert advice to support educators, parents, and students.

[Read the latest article on dyslexia today and stay informed!](#)

## INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN TESTING A NEW FONT

**The WDA received this letter from Sue White, Head of Education, Widgit.**

I'm reaching out to you as we are currently in the testing phase of a new font. This font is going to be used by our clients that have a range of learning and communication challenges, as such the font needs to be fully readable and accessible. We are looking for organisations / schools / people that can help us test this new font and ask if you would be willing to help.

### **About Widgit**

We are a pioneering company developing software and a symbol language to support learning and communication. Symbols help many people including those with SEN, different learning needs and autistic people. We empower individuals to express themselves independently through symbols, aiding comprehension and understanding across any environment. You can read more about us by visiting our [website](#).

### **About Dalton Maag**

We have been working with a well-known London based company, Dalton Maag that designs custom fonts. The company was founded in 1991 and they work with clients to enhance their typographic expression, from logo refinement and licensing to custom font suites. Their clients include the BBC and Netflix.

### **How you can help**

We recognise the unique challenges people with SEN, different learning needs and autistic people can face when reading traditional fonts. Our new font aims to make reading easier, more intuitive, and less stressful for users who may struggle with conventional font types.

We'd love to invite you to participate in testing this font and provide feedback on how it can be improved to best meet the needs of the people you support. Your feedback will be invaluable in ensuring we create a tool that can have a positive impact.

At this phase of font development, only a selection of letters will have been created, and there will be options for some letters (such as choosing between a u-shaped or v-shaped letter 'y'). And we want to cover considerations such as making sure there is distinction between a capital 'l' and lower case 'l'. We will supply materials with words created from these letters.

Please let us know if you'd like to take part.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to hearing from you!

**Sue White – Head of Education**

**01926 333680**

**[sue@widgit.com](mailto:sue@widgit.com)**

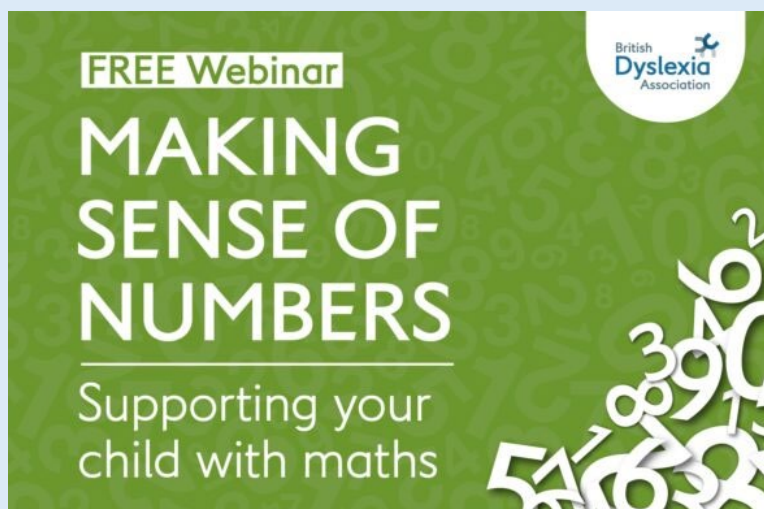
**[www.widgit.com](http://www.widgit.com)**

## Free Dyscalculia Webinar - Making Sense of Numbers

Monday 3 March 2025, Online

### Join Us for Our Free Dyscalculia Day Webinar

For Dyscalculia Day, we are hosting a free webinar to help raise awareness and provide practical insights into supporting individuals with dyscalculia and maths learning difficulties.



Whether you're a parent, educator, or simply looking to learn more, this session will cover key topics to help you better understand and assist those who struggle with maths.

[Book now](#)



### Home Education Masterclass : Wednesday 12th March at 8pm

I have another exciting **FREE online masterclass** coming up. The topic is Home Education with dyslexia, and I will be joined by the incredible Liz Day who will share her extensive experience in the world of Dyslexia and Neurodiversity and home education. We will offer our insight into the topic and share advice and tips.

This workshop is taking place online on **Wednesday 12th March at 8pm**. We understand how busy life can be so don't worry if you can't make it as we will be sending a video to everyone who registers. Secure your place today by clicking below....

[\*\*Register here for your free space\*\*](#)

# What's On

**Dyscalculia Day**  
3 March 2024

**Dyscalculia Day**  
For Parents  
Monday 3rd March

## Parent Conference

Monday 3rd March 2025

9am - 3.30pm GMT

(nine o'clock in the morning until three-thirty in the afternoon)

**Dyscalculia Day**  
For Parents  
Monday 3rd March

### Agenda

#### About Dyscalculia

Rob Jennings

#### Get me out of here: How to take maths outdoors

Jo Clanfield

#### Helping your child to divide

Karen Go Soco

#### Should I stay or should I go now? Home Education Maths – Lived Experience

Chloe Myers

#### Building Bridges: Collaborating with Your School SENCO

Fiona Johnson

#### Practical things to do at home - Secondary

Nichola Evans

#### SEN, EHCPs, the law and practical guidance

Laxmi Patel

Online and recorded

**Dyscalculia Day**  
For Adults  
Monday 3rd March

## Adult Conference

Monday 3rd March 2025

6pm-9pm GMT

(six o'clock in the evening until nine o'clock in evening)

**Dyscalculia Day**  
For Adults  
Monday 3rd March

### Agenda

#### Dyscalculia Uncovered: Maths, Mental Health, and Thriving Beyond Numbers

Amelia Shipton



#### How Dyscalculia Impacts Your Personal Finances

Maddy Alexander-Grout



#### Get Together- Talk Cafe

Join our Adult Advisory Board and chat all things Dyscalculia

Online and recorded

Launch of two new website pages especially for children and young people (Primary and Secondary)

Launch of our new Dyscalculia Network Mascot – 'Bloc'

Launch of our new 'Workplace' website section

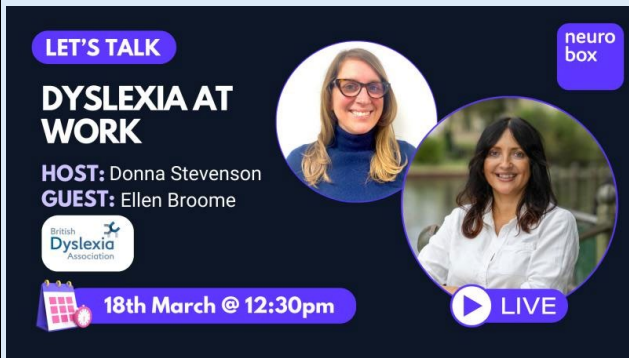
A new set of FREE downloadable activities for Primary/Secondary schools

Raising awareness through the launch of a new 'Dyscalculia' pin and our social media campaign

Renaissance



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



Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> March @ 12:30 PM

Let's Talk Dyslexia at Work

Linkedin Live

[Donna Stevenson](#) • Head of Training Services @neurobox

Those who know my back-story, will know I spent 17 years at the [British Dyslexia Association](#)... 🙋

It's a very special place to me ❤️ ❤️ ❤️

So, here's a very special [neurobox](#) Let's Talk with the BDA's CEO [Ellen Broome](#).

Come join us as we spill the tea 🍵 on [hashtag#Dyslexia](#) at Work 🙋

Joined by [Ellen Broome](#) from the [British Dyslexia Association](#), [Donna Stevenson](#) discusses some of the big questions surrounding the adult dyslexic community, especially in the professional world.

We always love to hear your opinions during these sessions! Donna and Ellen will answer as many questions as they can during the Live so come with any burning questions you might have!



**Wednesday 26 March : 10am - 3pm**

SENCOs, school staff and teaching professionals: are you looking for practical advice on supporting neurodiversity in education? We're delighted to invite you to join us for our free SEN conference. Learn directly from the experts, as they share top tips and practical strategies to support your pupils in the classroom.

[Learn More & Register](#)

## Techedology

AT Fest is back! 5 days of free online assistive technology webinars, covering software demos, feature updates and Q&As from all our assistive technology experts, in jam-packed one-hour sessions. Plus, you'll hear some truly inspiring case studies from users too.

Two live presentations daily, running from Monday 17th March to Friday 21st March. Recordings of all sessions will also be available.

Book your space at this link: <https://www.techedology.com/at-fest-2025/>





**12th March 2025**  
**National SEND & Inclusion Conference**

Use Code: **SEND25NASEN** <sup>£145</sup> **£90** for an exclusive discounted ticket rate

#SENDCONF25  
Eastwood Hall, Nottingham  
12 March 2025

Book tickets: 

www.sendconference.org

**NATIONAL SEND & INCLUSION CONFERENCE**

**Phase:** All  
**Delivery:** In person event - Nottingham  
**Suitable for:** Early Years Practitioner, Other, SENCO  
Use code **SEND25NASEN** for discount

[Book now](#)

**18th March 2025**  
**Maximising Teaching Assistant Impact: Insights and Strategies from the Education Endowment Foundation - 15:30 - 17:00**

**Phase:** All  
**Delivery:** Online webinar  
**Suitable for:** Assistant Head Teacher, Consultant, Deputy Head Teacher, Head Teacher, Senior Leader, Governor, Inclusion Manager/Leader, Newly Qualified Teacher, SENCO, Support staff, Teacher

[Book now](#)

**SAAShow** Mapping the Future of Your School  
**Plan. Procure. Prosper.** Co-located with **edtech INNOVATE** **School Estates SUMMIT** **SEND CONFERENCE**  
**15th MAY, Excel LONDON**  
**REGISTER FREE TODAY**

**15th May 2025**  
**Schools & Academies Show**  
**Phase:** All  
**Delivery:** In person event - London  
**Suitable for:** All

[Book for FREE](#)



## New Free Course to Support Parent Carers of Neurodivergent Children and Young People

### You Said, We Did...

As a result of engagement work with parent carers, led by the WPCCC in partnership with Wiltshire Council colleagues, a new course for parent carers of neurodivergent children and young people is being launched.

**Supporting My Neurodivergent Young Person (SMNYP)** has been designed to help parent carers develop a better understanding of their child or young person who may have any or all of the following: inflexible thinking, differences in communication and social interaction, sensory differences and difficulty maintaining attention and focus or following the adult's agenda.

The focus of the Supporting My Neurodivergent Young Person course is to help parent carers understand reasons which may lead to certain behaviours or responses, and some practical strategies to try. The course content is designed primarily for young people who are in mainstream schools and/or use or are developing verbal communication.

**Children and young people do not need to have any diagnosis of autism or other special educational need or disability in order for their parent carers to participate in the course.**

The course is initially being offered online only via Microsoft Teams; in the next academic year (**from September 2025**), there will also be a trial offered of some face to face sessions.

#### Sessions will cover key areas such as:

- Understanding neurodivergence
- Communication and social interaction
- Developing attention
- Sensory differences
- Behaviour

#### There are two course offers:

- SMNYP: Primary is for parent carers of primary-aged children in **Reception to Year 6**.
- SMNYP: Teens is for parent carers of **young people in school years 7 to 13 (secondary school and post-16 age)**

#### How do I Sign Up?

Families who would like a place should **apply online** by downloading, completing and returning this [application form](#). If you have any difficulties completing the form, please contact Wiltshire Council on: **01225 718095** and a member of the SEND Business team will be able to support you.

Please return completed form to: **SMNYP Administrator, Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Service, Floor 2, County Hall, Trowbridge BA14 8JN**, or email it to: [TSL.OperationalOffice@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:TSL.OperationalOffice@wiltshire.gov.uk).

An online webform option will be added **in February 2025**.

More information about the SMNYP course is available on the [Local Offer website](#).



The Wiltshire Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice, and Support Service (SENDIASS), delivered by Family Action, offers regular face-to-face support across the community.

The Family Action SENDIASS team will be available at the following locations and times:

- **Warminster Library:** Second Monday of each month, 12:00pm – 2:00pm
- **Trowbridge County Hall Family Hub:** Third Monday of each month, 11:30am – 1:30pm
- **Chippenham Library:** Fourth Tuesday of each month, 11:00am – 1:00pm
- **Salisbury Library:** First Thursday of each month, 10:30am – 12:30pm

You can find out more information and contact the SENDIASS team via [Family Action: Wiltshire SENDIASS \(opens new window\)](#) or phone them on 01225 255266.



**Department  
of Education  
Event**



*Empowering Educators  
Unlocking Literacy  
Transforming Lives*

## Ongoing Free Webinar Series to Support Dyslexic Learners

[Register Now for March Webinar - Strategies and technology overcome difficulties with memory & processing, on Tuesday 4th March 6-7pm.](#)

Kingston University's School of Education and the Driver Youth Trust are sponsoring a free remote workshop to equip educational professionals and parents to use technology and strategies effectively to ensure children and young people who struggle with literacy are supported to achieve their full potential at school.

[Introduction to KUDYT and how it can help raise attainment for students that struggle with literacy](#)

[Overview of content of the five webinars in this series](#)

[Recordings for all four webinars are available on our website](#), under recordings of past webinars section:

- [Link to recording: Stop dyslexic learners underperforming in exams.](#)
- [Link to recording: Technology to overcome reading difficulties.](#)
- [Link to recording: Technology and strategies to help overcome difficulties with writing.](#)
- [Link to recording: Why is learning hard for students that struggle with literacy?](#)

For more information and the links to either the book a place or to access the past webinar recordings, please check [HERE](#).

## Digital assessment arrangements with exam.net

We had an excellent additional webinar from Nic Cardwell of exam.net and Andy Auld and Adam Llewellyn from Larbert High School.

If you're interested in using iPads, Chromebooks or Windows devices for digital assessment arrangements, check out the archive recording of the webinar.

## January-June 2025 Webinar programme now live!


Does Assistive Technology form part of your PRD targets?

Are you looking to upskill your knowledge of the world of AT to better support your learners?

### **Free webinars**

#### Upcoming and previous webinars

30 minute online workshops delivered to your desktop.



**CENMAC's**  
**Thursday Thirty**  
Online Training Recordings



## Exploring Widgit's New Learning App - Symbla

### Thursday 27 March 2025, 15.30 – 16.00



**Sue White**  
Head of Education  
Widgit

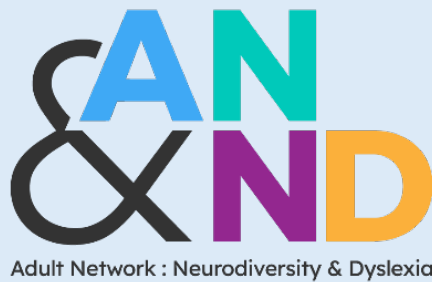
In this session Sue White will introduce Widgit's new Learning App – Symbla.

Find out how students can interact with Widgit Symbols through activities designed to enhance vocabulary, introduce new concepts and support the process of learning to read.

Discover the hundreds of readymade activities and how to easily adapt, edit and create your own resources to support the curriculum.

[> Reserve your spot](#)

Missed a Thursday Thirty session? Take a look at our recordings page!  
[> Access the recordings](#)



**Most recent recording:**  
**Session 12 - Neurodiversity Insights and My Journey**  
**(with Dr Helen Ross)**

Catch up with our webinars on our [Adult Dyslexia Centre \(ADC\) - YouTube](#).



**Full details now available at:**  
**Book Your Tickets Now**

The Neurodiversity Show 2025 is the UK's premier event dedicated to neurodiversity, bringing together educators, parents, individuals, and workplace professionals to explore the latest insights, innovations, and strategies for supporting neurodivergent individuals.

Whether you're looking to expand your knowledge, discover new resources, or engage with industry experts, there are multiple ways to attend the event – including general admission, which allows you access to the exhibition and featured content, or ticketed options that include seminar access for a deeper learning experience.

**General admission is available at no cost for education professionals, parents & carers, and neurodivergent individuals, providing access to:**

- ✓ The exhibition hall with a wide range of exhibitors
- ✓ Networking opportunities with organisations and industry experts
- ✓ Featured content throughout the show

However, if you want to gain additional insights, individual seminar tickets are available.  
**Full details at: [Book Your Tickets Now](#)**

## Have you listened to the [Sen in Ten](#) podcast yet?

Our friends at the SEN in Ten podcast have some amazing new episodes that are now live!

Hosted by [Darren C.](#), SEN in Ten brings you expert insights and valuable content in bite-sized episodes, making SEN education easily accessible. The 10-minute podcasts are packed with essential SEN advice and inspiring stories for a quick and valuable listen!

Listen now 🖱️ <https://ow.ly/Q8KI50UKi9U>

**Listen to the latest episode** of the SEN in Ten podcast where our host [Darren C.](#) speaks to [Abigail Hawkins \(FCCT\)](#), founder of [SENSible SENCO CIC](#).

Click the link to listen to the episode

🖱️ <https://okt.to/RCZ0dz>

You can also listen on Apple Podcasts and Spotify.



My advice to parents of children with dyslexia

“

Technology is the way forward. Anything is possible with the right teaching and tools.

Community sharing - BDA FB follower



### [An Introduction to Assistive Technology](#)

2-3 hours

FREE eLearning

The development of technology that can support those who have dyslexia or other neurodiverse needs with tasks that they may find difficult, has transformed the landscape of options that are able to individuals. This mini eLearning module provides an overview of the typical product range that is currently available for children and adults and also points to some of the considerations to be aware of when choosing assistive technology for learning or work.

Developing an awareness of assistive technology can be a vital piece of the support package provided to an individual, as many of assistive technology products can help dramatically improve an individual's independence and performance within a learning or work environment. Assistive technology also provides an opportunity to help break down the barriers to successfully gaining, maintaining and succeeding in employment for those with dyslexia.

#### **Who is it suitable for?**

This mini eLearning module is suitable for anyone wishing to develop their knowledge and understanding of Assistive Technology.

Further details at: [An Introduction to Assistive Technology - British Dyslexia Association](#)



### [Neurodiversity 101](#)

These newsletters by Prof. Amanda Kirby MBBS MRCGP PhD FCGI discuss all things relating to neurodiversity and provide practical strategies to help all.

### [Neurodiversity 101: Why we miss the girls?](#)

#### **Gender Differences and Neurodivergence: Why Females Are Often Missed**

Neurodivergent traits and spiky profiles impact individuals very differently. We certainly have different lens we look through. This can mean we see or miss challenges. Our research has been historically biased towards males and is particularly evident in neurodevelopmental conditions, where girls and women may present with subtler or very different manifestations of traits that can lead to them being overlooked or misdiagnosed.

In this post, I will explore how gender differences may influence the identification of neurodivergent traits in females, across several common neurodevelopmental conditions.

[Keep reading on LinkedIn](#)

### [Neurodiversity 101: Rethinking Education and Assessment for Tomorrow's World](#)

I think a lot about my grandchildren's futures and if we are preparing them for tomorrow's world.

As technology is moving fast we can see we need to redefine the skills needed for tomorrow's workforce, one critical question arises: Are our current educational systems - and their methods of assessment - fit for purpose?

For neurodivergent children in particular, these reflections are crucial, as traditional models often fail to capture their diverse strengths and potential. But even more important what was problematic in a neurotypical world may become less of an issue with the emerging technologies. Think about having spelling and writing difficulties - spell checkers, text to speech, and speech to text software is all around you - on your phones, and in your homes.

So does everyone need to be able to spell perfectly now or in the future... bold questions or real questions? As I type this now I am being corrected as a I misspell/mispel a word!

[Keep reading on LinkedIn](#)

## What's making my dyslexic child so nervous about exams?

January 8, 2025



If you're a parent or guardian to a young person with dyslexia, you likely already know the basics: reading comprehension and writing under pressure are tricky for students whose dyslexia impacts those skills, which can make exam season an extremely high-stress environment.

But it goes well beyond the ninety minutes they spend in the exam hall, too - so today, we're opening the fact file on the deeper reasons why students with dyslexia often have an anxious January exam experience, as well as 5 super-simple things you can do to support them.

### Exam housekeeping

Many dyslexic learners struggle with [timekeeping](#), organisation and [sequencing skills](#) too.

And so much of taking an exam is watching the clock and dividing that time between tasks. Things like losing track of time or not being able to accurately judge how long something will take you can be 'make or break' in a timed test environment, so it's no wonder many dyslexic students worry so much about the logistics of the exam process.

### Peer visibility

There's an emotional element to consider too: when grades come in low, it's often very visible to peers and teachers, which can lead to feelings of embarrassment or shame.

### Previous exam experiences

It only takes one stressful test experience to foster low exam confidence. This might be doubly so for anyone who's re-taking exams, where those low marks have impacted their progression.

When students go into an exam feeling like they're destined to get a low grade, often, that's what happens: low confidence can be a self-fulfilling prophecy, because nobody performs their best under test conditions when they're stressed, unhappy, or feel like it's a foregone conclusion that they won't get the marks they need.

### Revising isn't easy!

Revision isn't easy for many dyslexic students: dyslexia can compromise memory and organisation skills, as well as make reading from textbooks arduous. So when students don't feel prepared (and are likely juggling multiple sets of revision, too), it's easy for the nerves to creep in long before they turn over their papers.

### Worries about the future

Another thing that might be playing on your dyslexic learners' minds this time of year is the future, especially if they're sitting end-of-stage qualifications. So for many, these marks *matter*, for everything from transitioning into High School, to heading to college and university, or progressing into an apprenticeship or career.

### So how can parents support dyslexic students this exam season?

- Make sure they've got the tech they need to succeed. Heading into an exam with a trusty reading pen that's JQC-approved and helps you decode the words on the page faster and more accurately removes a lot of stress from the process! [Here's how it all works.](#)

- Work with learners to help organise revision, and **revise interpersonally and visually**: lots of dyslexic students are incredibly articulate and great at talking concepts through, even if they struggle to get them down on the page. Quizzes, study walls and general back-and-forth can really help ideas get realised, and information go in.
- Remind students that a set of bad exam results doesn't mean they can't achieve their dreams. There are re-sits and different post-16 paths to consider— no one path closes off entirely, and summer exams still represent a great opportunity to make some marks up too.
- It's not the most fun activity, but sitting a past paper under test conditions at home is a great way of helping learners understand exam timing and identify problem areas before the big day.
- And where appropriate, consider supporting the children and young people in your life to seek help if things feel like they're getting too much. You can find mental health support for exam stress at [YoungMinds](#), [NHS England](#), and your local GP.

To everyone sitting exams this January— you've got this!  
And good luck from all of us at SP. ❤️



My podcast is going from strength to strength with exciting guests sharing all about how dyslexia has shaped their lives along with my personal tales about how dyslexia effects my day to day life. I have so many wonderful ideas for the podcast for 2025.

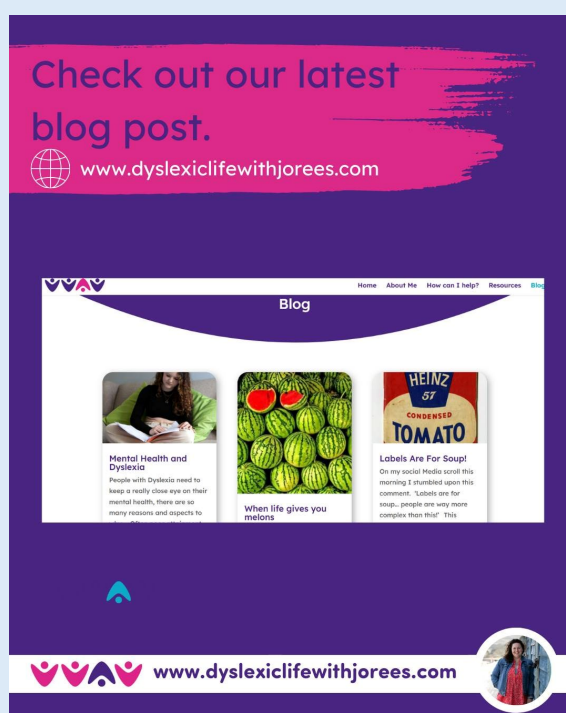
You can listen back to all episodes via the link below...

[Listen Here](#)

Have you seen the Blog page on our website?

This is where I share my thoughts, feelings, advice and tips on life with dyslexia. Keep an eye on the page for lots of exciting updates and information from me. If you've got an interesting idea about something you would like me to share my thoughts on in a blog post let me know.

[Read our blog](#)



## We don't have enough dyslexia support in schools. Can we blame that all on funding woes?

The cost-of-living crisis has rapidly become a cost-of-learning crisis.

SEN students everywhere are seeing life-changing delays in support provision. Whole-class inclusion support simply isn't affordable. **EHCs are going unfilled for months**. LEAs, educators and parents are often involved in a complex game of 'no, you pay for this' buck-passing— *and* schools are finding they need to **make educators redundant to balance the books**.

You don't need to be a maths teacher to see how this one pans out for dyslexia support. But is that lack of funding the only barrier between our SEN students and the vital measures they need to succeed?

**There are huge systemic issues in play, too— we just don't talk about them as much.**

Cash is king when it comes to support provision. But it's not the only reason we've got a sea of learners reaching out for support, and an educational establishment that's struggling to resource it.

**Teacher training doesn't train teachers to support dyslexia . . .**

**[Keep reading on LinkedIn](#)**

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## Why talking to your loved ones about dyslexia isn't always easy

"But it's good to open up," they say. "A worry shared is a worry halved!" – have you tried talking about your dyslexia with a pal or new partner, recently?

**It's actually kinda stressful— even if we trust them completely.**

Even in a neurodiversity-positive age, we can find ourselves battling the misconception that dyslexia is a deficit... whether that's in others, or even just within ourselves. It's not easy to un-learn something you internalised decades ago, at the back of the classroom.

That's why it's often tricky to make that first step in 'taking dyslexia outside the family'. Our parents and siblings are often the first people who know we're dyslexic, and for most of us, they're a source of comfort and understanding. **They might even have dyslexia themselves**. But many of us feel that there are no such guarantees with friends and partners, and we're waiting— just *waiting*—for that instant rejection where somebody can't be bothered to accommodate us, talks it down or assumes we're not very smart.

...How on earth do you navigate that?

## Friendships with Dyslexia

We've all been there: some bright spark suggests starting a book club. Another friendship group communicates solely on WhatsApp since you all live in different cities. Your work bestie sends you a dozen memes on Slack a day in grainy, hard-to-read formats.

We don't want to feel like we're a problem, but when friendships become inaccessible, we struggle to maintain them. So how do we address it?

The most important thing to...

[Keep reading on LinkedIn](#)

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## [Disclosing dyslexia on a job application? Read this first...](#)

Telling a hiring manager you're dyslexic is stressful. Whether you need support at the interview, or even just feel better disclosing— "*what if they don't shortlist me because of it?*" still plays on your mind every time.

Thankfully, it's illegal under **The Equality Act** to reject someone's application based on dyslexia (though proving this can be difficult). And as awareness of neurodivergent talent increases, more people feel secure in seeking support throughout the job application process. But it's not the most linear or well-documented process to get your head around, either: what do you say? Can you say it wrong? Who do you say it to? And when should you kick it all off?

Breathe in and out— let's take a look.

### **When should I tell a prospective employer about my dyslexia?**

An application can't ask if you have a disability, but many encourage you to tell them so you can access support. But even so, *you don't have to tell them if you don't want to*: that's entirely your decision.

You're also allowed to tell them at any point in the process. Whether that's on application, after you've had an interview confirmed, when you start or three years later, it's entirely in your court. That said, if you *do* need application adjustments, it's better to give as much time as possible as it can sometimes delay the process.

### **Where do I tell them, and who do I tell?**

Your cover letter is a good bet. If there's no cover letter requested, add it to yo...

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## SEND: why there should be a universal screener for Year 1 | Tes

### **The case for a universal SEND screener in early primary**

SEND provision is in crisis. A critical step towards a better system would be a universal screening process for all five- and six-year-olds, delivered and managed by teachers, argue these researchers: [Joel Talcott](#) [Susan Gathercole](#) [Jo Van Herwegen](#)

In his first speech as inclusion adviser to the government, Ormiston Academies CEO Tom Rees told an audience in the north-east of England that one of the critical problems contributing to the special educational needs and disabilities crisis is the fact that we are spending “too much time carrying out the process of statutory assessment”, which for children and for families “lacks dignity and is adversarial in nature”.

He went on to state that there is much we can do earlier to help children who are struggling in school, but that those things “go wrong” as they tend to be used at moments of “escalation” and to “access resource”.

Basically, the help comes too late and is skewed to the wrong objective, so at this point those support attempts “stop being of benefit to children”.

In this sentiment, he echoes the clear position set out by the minister he is now serving: education secretary Bridget Phillipson. She has repeatedly spoken of the benefits of earlier identification and intervention for children who struggle at school and the need to improve that in the system.

For example, in a keynote at the Confederation of School Trusts' annual conference last year, she outlined pledges for the system that included the following: “Early intervention is vital - so there's increased training for early years providers to identify and support children sooner.”

We completely agree that early identification of learning needs is key to improving outcomes for all children in the education system. And we believe one of the ways to achieve that is to implement a screening programme for all children in Year 1 in all primary schools. Here's why.

### **The cost of failure on SEND**

The National Association for SEN (Nasen) has estimated that nearly one in five children now has identified special educational needs, with numbers increasing every year.

Many other children have difficulties that are unrecognised and unsupported, particularly in communities with high levels of social and economic disadvantage.

Low literacy levels in the UK are estimated to cost the economy more than £81 billion per year, with upwards of a quarter of all children leaving secondary education without the basic level of skills needed to be productive in the workforce.

Estimates of [the cost of poor numeracy](#) vary, but have been put at up to £25 billion by the charity National Numeracy.

By failing to address SEND, inequalities in wellbeing, academic attainment and wealth are being compounded year by year. The financial opportunity costs of inaction for government and society are immense. The personal costs to those badly served by the status quo are immeasurable.

### **Why the current system does not work**

Formal identification of SEND typically involves ascribing diagnostic labels, such as dyslexia and dyscalculia (persistent difficulties in maths), based on under attainment in one or more educational outcomes despite adequate educational experience, compared with expectations based on a child's age.

While having a formal diagnostic label remains a primary route for unlocking additional resource to support emerging difficulties, the existing health, education and social care systems responsible for diagnosis are neither equitable nor inclusive for all. Indeed, at present, these systems play a role in magnifying the impact of inequalities on educational achievement.

Difficulties in attaining state-funded assessment for their children drives parents to seek diagnoses obtained privately. Long waiting lists for professional services serve only to impede the delivery of timely diagnosis and the onset of subsequent intervention. Delays are exacerbated by economic inequalities, with inter-family variability in the ability to fund private assessments increasing the gaps in provision between those who can pay and those who cannot.

### **'The personal costs to those badly served by the status quo are immeasurable'**

Tying diagnostic labels to SEND provision raises other challenges, too.

First, the labels neither identify the intervention approach that might derive maximum benefit for an individual child, nor strongly predict their educational outcomes. The reason for this is that the specific cognitive challenges of children with particular diagnoses vary widely: some children with dyslexia, for example, are particularly slow to process information whereas others have marked short-term memory difficulties.

A single diagnosis may also fail to adequately capture the needs of the many individuals who have more complex patterns of difficulty, such as dyslexia or dyscalculia with additional symptoms of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Conversely, children with difficulties not severe enough to meet rigid diagnostic thresholds at the point of assessment may nonetheless have additional learning needs that would benefit from timely classroom accommodations and tailored support.

This substantial population of children in the grey area of having needs that are not formally recognised risk their learning difficulties becoming entrenched as they progress through education.

What we need is to decouple the process of formal assessment for learning difficulties from in-classroom identification of children who would benefit from additional support and accommodations, irrespective of any diagnostic label.

One way of achieving this is through universal screening of all children, administered by teachers during the early primary school period in the first instance.

### **The case for Year 1 universal screening**

Universal screening in English primary schools is currently restricted to a single DfE phonics test administered by teachers at the end of Year 1. It is widely considered to be of limited value in the early detection of educational risk for individual children due to limitations in its content and use.

Other screening programmes have been adopted in a minority of regions but are nationally inconsistent in their scope. They are also frequently restricted to the core skills linked to reading, neglecting other key achievement domains including maths.

In other areas, early screening is restricted to those children already considered to be experiencing difficulties. This non-universal approach to early screening has the clear potential to compound existing inequalities and misses an opportunity to augment the learning of the majority of children with needs that are more moderate in severity.

In March 2023, a project group formed of the three authors here, along with parliamentary officers Jack Stephenson and Tom Higginson, presented an initial policy framework to the all-party parliamentary group (APPG) for dyslexia and other SpLDs (specific learning difficulties) to address the systemic limitations outlined above.

We proposed the necessary steps to improving academic achievement through the national implementation of light-touch screening for educational risk by class teachers, before any learning-related difficulties become entrenched.

### **'The existing health, education and social care systems responsible for diagnosis are neither equitable nor inclusive'**

The proposed screening tool would be administered to *all* children in Year 1. It would assess a small set of key cognitive skills that support current and future learning (phonics, vocabulary, working memory and sustained attention) through teacher ratings and light-touch assessment.

Its design would allow ease of administration, scoring and interpretation by teachers, with supporting training and documentation.

The resulting individual profiles of *strengths* as well as weaknesses would act as a guide for:

- Identifying individual pupils who would benefit from tailored support incorporated into classroom practice at both the classroom and small-group level.
- Augmenting the recognition of emerging needs for specialist SEND assessment in children with identified marked difficulties at this early stage of their education.

The screening profiles of individual children would be presented in accessible forms suitable for sharing with families. Data ownership should be restricted to schools and families, with no formal external reporting.

## Universal early screener proposals

In March 2023, the policy framework was formally supported by the APPG for dyslexia and by NGOs including the SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC), British Dyslexia Association, Social Mobility Commission and NESTA.

The proposal was personally endorsed by more than 50 MPs across the major parties.

The feasibility of implementing a universal early screener - and the additional need to provide classroom-based guidance for teachers to support pupil needs identified through screening - have been subsequently explored in three phases of consultation involving education charities, practitioners in special educational needs, teacher surveys and focus groups of teachers, SENDCOs and researchers.

The outcomes of the consultations are summarised below:

- The large majority of education professionals consulted considered that teacher administration of a new light-touch Year 1 screener would be highly beneficial for maximising and reducing inequalities in educational achievement.
- Teacher-based administration is feasible with adequate resourcing of staff time spent in training and assessment.
- The value of the screener rests on the availability and signposting of accessible specialist resources enabling classroom and specialist teachers to provide effective support for pupils with specific needs identified through screening. These resources need to be developed alongside the screening tool itself, drawing on current evidence and consensus regarding best educational practice. We have already started this with MetaSENse and we are now also looking at components of these interventions so that they are not related to labels and can be applied within a universal context.

The principal outcomes of the proposed programme are:

- Improved and more systematic identification of the needs of the individual child for support.
- Reduced current systemic processes contributing to the compounding of existing inequalities.
- Earlier opportunities to understand and provide the support required by the individual child via both the classroom context and specialist SEN support where required.
- Closer child-centred partnerships between schools and families.

More generally, the benefits extend to better-informed teachers who are confident and empowered in their abilities to:

- Support their pupils on a day-to-day basis.
- Adapt practice dynamically through such universal classroom approaches to children's needs.
- Incorporate and deliver teaching goals with learning benchmarks that are increasingly focused on the child and less on the static curriculum.
- Share insights based on individual assessment with children and their families.

## Next steps for universal screening

We are currently validating the screener and preparing information about the evidence-based interventions likely to be most appropriate for children's individual patterns of strength and weakness.

These two elements will come together in a toolkit, available to schools on a non-proprietary basis, that will be available from the autumn.

At present, the inefficiencies inherent to current systems in supporting children experiencing educational need increase both financial and opportunity costs to families and other stakeholder groups, and risk delaying access to appropriate and sensitive diagnostic services.

The non-proprietary universal classroom approach we propose provides an equitable and systematic means for recognising the current and future learning-related needs of children, which also guides additional support and diagnostic assessment before learning needs become entrenched.

In doing so, it offers a key element for advancing the UK levelling-up agenda and United Nations sustainable development goals to enhance both the academic achievement and opportunity for the current generation and those who follow.

*Joel Talcott is professor of developmental cognitive neuroscience at Aston University; Susan Gathercole is professor of psychology at the University of Cambridge; and Jo Van Herwegen is professor of developmental psychology and education at the Institute of Education*



**LOUISE SELBY**  
DYSLEXIA SPECIALIST

## Let's Bring Dyslexia Back in the Room

I've been in this field long enough to witness a tragic decline in services for students with persistent specific learning difficulties. Honestly, I don't desperately care whether we call it dyslexia or something else. What I care about—deeply—is whether we meet the need. And this is a real, persistent need that affects how and whether a child learns to read and write. This is not a luxurious extra.

[Read full blog](#)



# THE STUDYING WITH DYSLEXIA BLOG

[The Studying With Dyslexia Blog](#)

## The Positives of Dyslexia: Celebrating Strengths

February 6, 2025

Dyslexia is often viewed through the lens of challenges, but it's equally important to recognise and celebrate the many strengths associated with it. Dyslexia is not just about difficulty with reading or writing—it's a unique way of thinking and processing information that can lead to incredible creativity, problem-solving abilities, and resilience. Let's explore some of the positives of dyslexia and why we should embrace neurodiversity.

### **1. Creativity and Innovation**

One of the most recognised strengths of individuals with dyslexia is their creative thinking. Dyslexic brains are wired to think outside the box, making connections others might miss. This ability to approach problems in novel ways has led to countless innovations in science, technology, art, and business.

Famous dyslexic individuals like Richard Branson, Steve Jobs, and Agatha Christie have shown how creativity can drive success. Dyslexics often excel in fields where imagination and innovation are key, such as design, engineering, and storytelling.

### **2. Problem-Solving Skills**

Dyslexics are often skilled problem solvers. Their ability to view situations from multiple perspectives allows them to identify solutions that others might overlook. This skill is particularly valuable in fast-paced, dynamic environments where adaptability is essential.

Many dyslexics have a knack for finding patterns and solving complex puzzles, which makes them well-suited for careers in technology, science, and entrepreneurship.

### **3. Big-Picture Thinking**

While others may focus on details, dyslexic individuals often excel at seeing the bigger picture. This ability to grasp overarching concepts and long-term goals can make them exceptional strategists and visionaries.

In leadership roles, dyslexics can harness this strength to inspire teams, drive innovation, and shape the future. It's no surprise that many successful CEOs and entrepreneurs are dyslexic - they have the vision to imagine what others can't.

#### **4. Resilience and Determination**

Living with dyslexia often requires overcoming significant challenges, which builds resilience and determination. Dyslexic individuals learn to navigate a world not always designed for them, developing a strong work ethic and an ability to persevere in the face of adversity.

This resilience often extends to other areas of life, making dyslexics highly capable in managing stress and overcoming setbacks.

#### **5. Empathy and Emotional Intelligence**

Many dyslexic individuals have high levels of empathy and emotional intelligence. Their experiences of overcoming difficulties can make them more attuned to the feelings and needs of others.

This strength is particularly valuable in roles that require collaboration, leadership, and interpersonal skills, such as teaching, counselling, and team management.

#### **6. Visual and Spatial Reasoning**

Dyslexics often excel in visual and spatial reasoning, which allows them to interpret and manipulate information in three dimensions. This strength is invaluable in fields like architecture, engineering, and the arts.

Many dyslexics thrive in hands-on, practical roles where their ability to think spatially gives them an edge over their peers.

#### **Changing the Narrative**

By focusing on the positives of dyslexia, we can shift the conversation from challenges to strengths. Dyslexia is not a limitation but a difference that brings immense value to society. When supported and nurtured, dyslexic individuals can thrive and make extraordinary contributions to the world.

If you're dyslexic or know someone who is, take pride in these strengths and remember that neurodiversity is something to celebrate. Together, we can create a world that recognises and embraces the unique talents of every individual.

Stay connected with the *Studying with Dyslexia* blog for more insights and inspiration.

#### **Stay Up to Date with Studying with Dyslexia**

For the latest articles and insights on dyslexia, be sure to check out [Studying with Dyslexia](#). Our blog is a trusted source for practical tips, resources, and expert advice to support educators, parents, and students.

## INFORMATION & RESOURCES



### Higher & Degree Vacancy Listing - Amazing Apprenticeships

#### Explore thousands of higher & degree vacancies

Explore 2,400 Higher and Degree apprenticeship vacancies in the **January 2025** edition of the Higher & Degree listing.

#### Discover vacancy details from over 80 employers, including:

- Vacancy locations
- Salary information
- Direct application links

Download the Higher & Degree listing in PDF format or find out more about the listing, who it is for and how to best use it in our FAQs below.

The Higher & Degree Listing is a bi-annual publication, with the next release planned for October 2025!

[Download Now](#)



#### Wiltshire Libraries update

Has your child discovered their love of reading yet?

Dive into exciting tales and explore new ideas with a free bookstart pack from your local library.

We've already gifted over 4,000 packs to families. Have you collected yours?

[View locations and opening times of our libraries](#)

## Free resources from Bett 2025

We loved connecting with educators at Bett, sharing insights on how our tools can enhance learning for all students.

Couldn't make it to a demo? No problem! Explore our innovative literacy, maths, and accessibility solutions with our on-demand resources.

- Check out our Bett highlights
- Watch customer success stories
- Try our tools for free

### **Get started today**

#### **Next steps: Let's make an impact together**

Continue the conversation! Book a chat with our team to see how Everway can support your school or organisation.

### **Book a demo**

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With a growing number of neurodiverse and disabled students navigating university with complex and overlapping needs, it's essential for needs assessors and study tutors to stay informed about the latest assistive technology and its ability to support a range of challenges.

That's why we created the [DSA Resource Hub](#), where you'll be able to see what solutions support different needs and common tasks students face daily at university and on placements. The resource hub will provide you with a catalogue of solution recommendation guides and videos.

### **[Explore and favourite the DSA Resource Hub](#)**



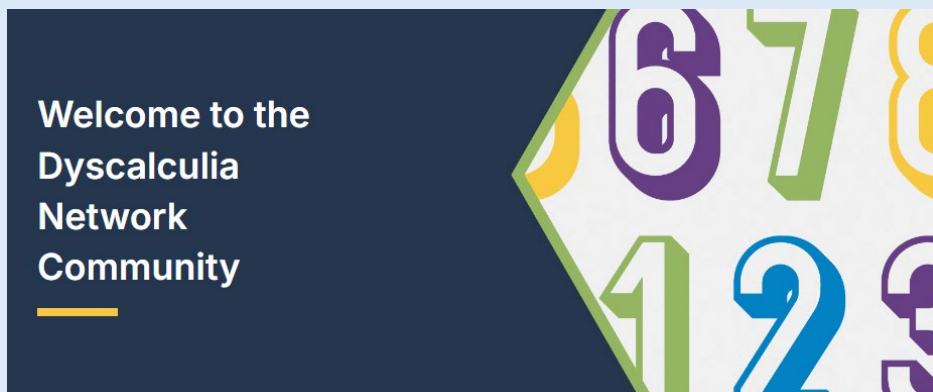
### Buds and blooms [Download Free](#)



Did you spot them yet? The first snowdrops are peeking through, a sure sign that spring is almost here. As February melts into March, it's time to bring a little sunshine into learning with our Spring Pack. Featuring a vibrant storybook, a Five Senses activity to explore the season, and themed worksheets for counting, colouring, and building vocabulary, this pack is all about embracing the fresh energy of spring.

### Flip, flip, hooray! [Download Free](#)

We've cooked up a delicious resource that's perfect for building life skills while having a bit of fun – whether it's Shrove Tuesday or just a day that calls for something sweet. With this simple, symbol-supported recipe, learners can follow each step with ease and get creative with their choice of toppings. So, grab a pan and let's get flipping!



### [Dyscalculia Network | Leading Support Network for Dyscalculia](#)

Dyscalculia impacts approximately 6% of the population. In the UK that equates to about 1 million (one million) children and young adults, but we know many more have maths difficulties – approx. 25% (twenty-five percent).

Unfortunately, dyscalculia is under-represented in the field of neurodiversity and knowledge of dyscalculia is limited throughout society and even within the education system.

We want to help change this lack of awareness and knowledge so we can together make sure all learners have every opportunity to reach their full potential.

[See brilliant information and resources now on their website . . .](#)

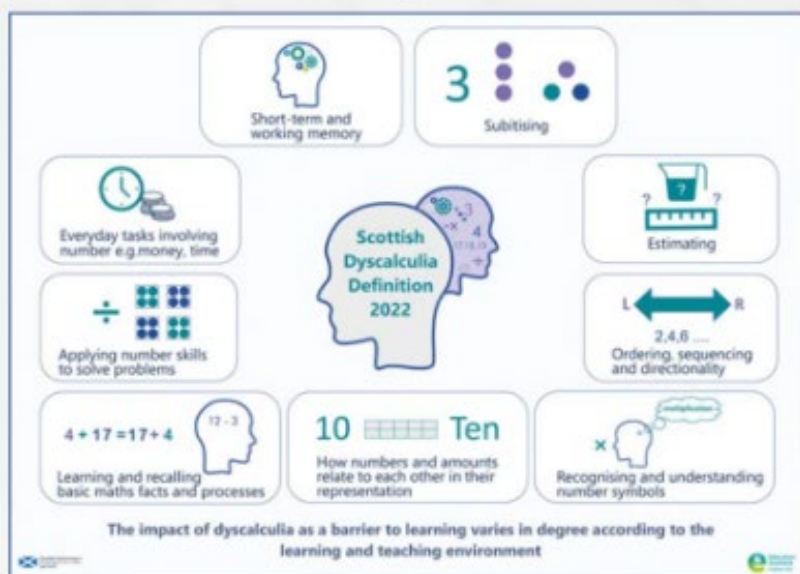
## What is dyscalculia?

Dyscalculia is defined as a specific and persistent difficulty in understanding and dealing with numbers, which can lead to a range of difficulties with mathematics.

It occurs across all age ranges, levels of education, and abilities.

It can occur on its own or can co-occur with other specific learning difficulties, mathematics anxiety, and medical conditions.

## What are the indicators of Dyscalculia?



## Top tips for parents/carers of a dyscalculic child

- Liaise with your child's school: **good communication and good relationships are essential.**
- Ask the school what you can help with at home and practice with your child: **little and often, revise and repeat, is key to success.**
- Use hands on manipulatives at home: **preferably the same manipulatives that are being used in school.**
- Talk about maths positively at home: **your enthusiasm as a role model will rub off on your child!**
- Use real life examples of maths around you: **talk about maths in everyday situations such as when baking, doing DIY or craft or at the supermarket.**
- Give your child/young adult pocket money in cash: **help develop budgeting skills by having money boxes for spending and saving.**
- Use the power of 'yet' when they say they can't do it/don't understand: **say you can't do it/don't understand it yet.**
- Use praise as much as possible: **hearing we are good at something goes a long way to improve confidence.**
- If you consider an assessment or a tutor privately ensure they have the correct specialist dyscalculia qualification/s: **an index can be found on our website.**
- Find support for you: **being well supported you will be in a better position to help your child.**

For more information visit - [www.dyscalculianetwork.com](http://www.dyscalculianetwork.com)

Download: [Dyscalculia-Information-Sheet-For-Parents-Carers](#)



I was diagnosed with dyslexia at 14 and a half. It had taken that one teacher to listen to my parents concerns, as they were previously called pushy and they were expecting too much from me and not to compare me to my siblings.

I had always struggled with reading and spelling throughout school. I would often have tantrums when it came to having to practice reading and spelling in primary school, I would try and think of ways I could put it off and not do it. That feeling of dread followed me through to high school especially when I would have to read out loud- I would always struggle to get my words out, lose my space and get flustered which affected my confidence.

**“Having dyslexia has made me more determined as an individual, because of the obstacles I've had to overcome”**

With dyslexia, you will always need work ten times harder, and you might find your own way of achieving it. You may find you take the long way round of doing it but you will find your way that works for you. Especially with being deemed slow and lazy until I had my diagnosis, I felt like I had to prove myself and show my worth, as I had always enjoyed learning however the aspect of reading, writing and spelling made this difficult and affected my confidence.

But having dyslexia meant I was able to excel with communication, my organisational skills, problem-solving and being able to think outside of the box. It has also made me the person I am today and allows me to see things differently to others which is a great skill to have.

### **School versus University**

Whilst I was in high school, for my exams I was provided with extra time which was really beneficial as I did not have to stress when it came to reading the questions. I was also provided with a visor to assist with my Meares- Irlen Syndrome.

However, when it came to me receiving support in university, this was a different story. My university wouldn't accept my school assessments, they wanted me to be reassessed, but I couldn't afford the test, and the most frustrating thing with this test is that it was means tested. So I felt like I had been let down in my education again. I just managed university but struggled with no support.

## Workplace support make all the difference

One achievement I'm proud of is my current job. I work as a Research Administrator in the NHS, which is a job I love. I remember before I started this role I was quite nervous as I knew there would be a lot of reading, paperwork. I remember my first day in the job I'd made the right decision, I sat down with my manager and she asked what she could do to help me, what my needs were and what adaptation I needed for me to succeed in this new role.

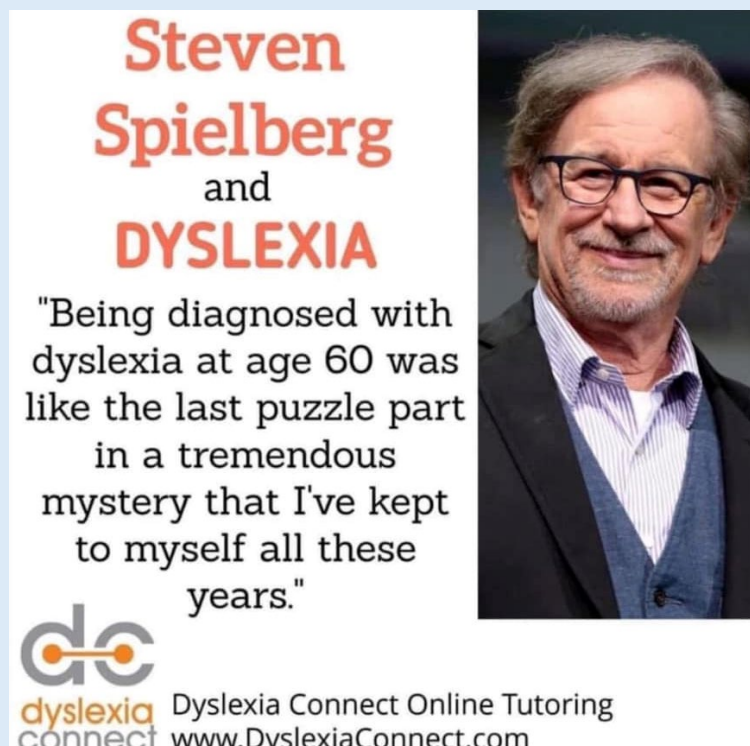
Finally, after years of struggling I felt like someone other than my family understood dyslexia and how it can impact on someone's day to day life. With in the first few days these adaptations had taken place, I was provided with my laptop, a DSE assessment, buff paper had been ordered and communication with occupational health for further support in the work place.

The working environment can have a massive impact on you as an individual, and having a supportive manager and team around you can help you excel more as a person. My manager also makes a point in checking in on me, seeing how I'm getting on and if there is anything else that I could benefit from to assist with my working day. This just shows that someone having an understanding of dyslexia, can have a positive impact on their experience all be it in school or workplace.

It's a massive relief once you have your diagnosis, you finally feel you have an answer to your struggles. Carry on believing in yourself and never be ashamed of having dyslexia. You just learn in a different way to others.


I hope that in the future that there is more education for teachers so they are able to spot the signs of dyslexia from an early age. As getting an early diagnosis is everything, the sooner support is given the more of a positive impact this can have on a child's education. Hopefully then less children will be branded slow and lazy with regards to reading, writing and won't be overlooked.

## More stories at: [Your Stories - British Dyslexia Association](#)



**Steven Spielberg and DYSLEXIA**

"Being diagnosed with dyslexia at age 60 was like the last puzzle part in a tremendous mystery that I've kept to myself all these years."

 **dyslexia connect** Dyslexia Connect Online Tutoring  
www.DyslexiaConnect.com



## Dyslexia-friendly Bristol publisher lands titles by bestselling authors

6 Oct 2024

Alistair Sims: 'A couple of people even cried. So it does make a difference to people's lives.'

Photograph: Adele Williams

Books on the Hill Press, which uses different printing format, will release novellas by Lee Child and Karin Slaughter among others.

The world's biggest publishers dream of signing up bestselling authors such as Peter James, [Lee Child](#), Karin Slaughter and Bernard Cornwell. Now a tiny Bristol publisher that specialises in books for dyslexic adults has secured a major deal to publish novellas by each of those authors.

Books on the Hill Press is the UK's first dyslexia-only publisher. Its books use a different format, including a larger font and wider spacing between lines – adaptations that reduce processing demands, "unlocking the joy of reading a printed book" for dyslexic readers.

The publishing house is a one-man band headed by Dr Alistair Sims, 37, who also owns an independent bookshop in Clevedon near Bristol. Having been diagnosed as dyslexic aged nine, he was unable to read until he was 13. Thanks to a dyslexia unit at his school, he went on to study history and archaeology at university, completing a PhD.

Three years ago, he founded his publishing company because he struggled to find books specifically designed for adult readers with dyslexia.

It is estimated that about 10% of the UK population is dyslexic. While a range of books are published for dyslexic children, there is almost nothing available for anyone over the age of 14.

In his bookshop, Sims has certain shelves headed "quick read dyslexic friendly". He said: "I've had people come into the shop and once they've looked at those books, they've said: 'that's something for me specifically, I can read this.' A couple of people even cried. So it does make a difference to people's lives."

The crime writer Peter James recalled similar reactions when his novella, *The Perfect Murder*, was offered in a dyslexic-friendly version: "A middle-aged lady came up to me in tears and said that, for years, all she could read were children's books and she was too embarrassed ever to be seen reading one in public. But now ... she could enjoy my novellas and those of other authors and feel extremely proud to be seen as an adult reader."

The historical novelist Bernard Cornwell said: "I hope my book with Books on the Hill will also bring people into reading more books."

Sims is campaigning to change attitudes within the book trade. He is calling for publishers to produce 1% of their fiction in dyslexia-friendly formatting and for booksellers to give such books the shelf-space they deserve.

He said: "People assume that, if a book is for dyslexic adults, then it's simplified in plot and language, but it's not. We're not really changing the contents, we're changing the formatting to make it easier to read."

His book-covers look like novellas from any of the "big publishers", he said, "because we want to make them look as good as possible so they wouldn't seem out of place".

Sims and his sister, who is also dyslexic, were among those who conducted extensive tests on print formats. Their texts are left-aligned rather than justified, which makes a huge difference to dyslexics, for example.

Noting that readers often complain about the small print size in traditional books, he said: "I have people who aren't dyslexic look at our dyslexia books and say: 'That's easier for me as well,' people who have had strokes and dementia."

Sims believes that it is up to the big publishing houses to focus on major volumes, which are too expensive to produce for a tiny company like his. He said: "It's on them to bring these dyslexic books to adults with our help and us being there. We'll keep doing novellas and shorter stories. Also, some people are scared of big books."

Speculating on why publishers have not seen this opportunity, he said: "Part of it is that a lot of people in publishing have no problems with reading."

He expressed delight that Bloomsbury is now responding to this need. The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini is among dyslexia editions with "a large, more readable font" that will be launched on 31 October.

A Bloomsbury spokesperson said: "There are currently very few adult dyslexia-friendly books to choose from in the market ... Dyslexic readers have the option of e-readers, but sometimes people just want to be able to read a physical copy of their favourite book."

## Dyslexia: 'I bluffed my way through life'

23 February 2025

**A man who left school illiterate in the 1980s due to undiagnosed dyslexia has said learning to read in his 50s was "one of the best things I've ever done".**



Stephen Oldfield, from Newbury, said he had "bluffed his way through life", spending nine years in the Army before becoming a delivery driver for the past 27 years. Until two years ago, he said no-one but his wife and two children knew he could not read or write.

But a road accident changed all that.

"...while driving for work - a car hit me - and I had to do all the paperwork, it completely threw me," he told BBC Radio Berkshire.

"At the time, it was around Christmas, and [television presenter] Jay Blades was on TV with his documentary about being dyslexic and my wife decided, behind my back, she would put me forward to Read Easy UK."

The volunteer-led group helps adults learn to read and Mr Oldfield was paired with coach Jessica from the charity's West Berkshire programme.

Over the space of a year, they would meet on a weekly basis to work on his literacy skills. Mr Oldfield admitted he was "very nervous" confronting the issue after so many years, but added: "It's one of the best things I've ever done. I wish I'd done it sooner, I'd recommend it to anybody with dyslexia, there's help out there."

Mr Oldfield found school hard and said in the 1980s "dyslexia at that time was about but nobody knew much about it".

He explained words would jump about on the page and blur before his eyes when he tried to read.

### **'There's help out there'**

After the school alerted his parents, he was seen by two different opticians.

Mr Oldfield said the first one told his mum and dad: "There's nothing wrong with his eyes, he's just lazy."

The second said he had strained his eyes so much he was in danger of losing his sight, he said, adding: "From then, I never really caught up."

In the Army, he said he did not tell anyone he was dyslexic for fear of being treated as the "class clown".

"To be honest, I must have bluffed my way through life. If you can't read, it is one of the biggest struggles.

"Nobody knew until two years ago that I was dyslexic.

"Having an accident was not a very good thing but a positive has come out of it because it caused my wife to put me forward to learn to read."

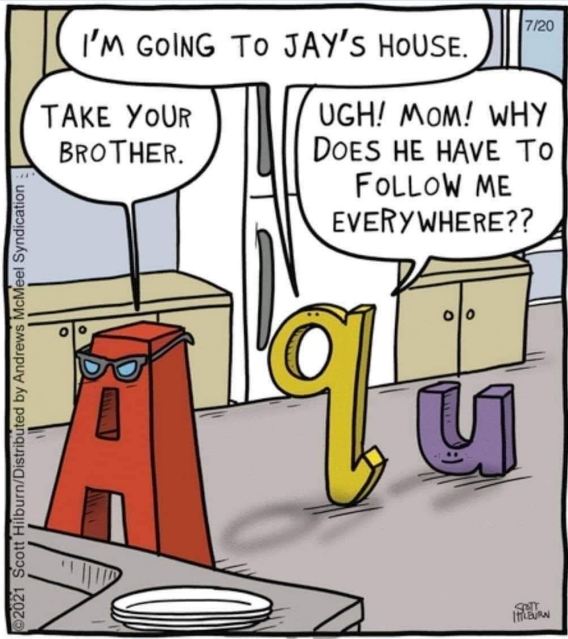
Mr Oldfield urged anyone struggling to read: "Don't be afraid to come forward and say that you've got dyslexia, it's not a disease and there's thousands of people with it. "At the time, I felt I was the only person with dyslexia, you have that mindset that there's nobody else, it's only me.

"There's help out there. If I can do it, anybody can. It doesn't matter how old you are."



[Homepage - ReadEasy](#)

## And finally . . .



I think the label dyslexia is an important label....

I think that if you don't use a label, those children's difficulties are not easily recognised. The problem becomes hidden and that has all sorts of negative ramifications further down the line in development.

Professor Maggie Snowling



## Caroline Fowke

Caroline Fowke  
Volunteer Administrator & Helpline  
Wiltshire Dyslexia Association

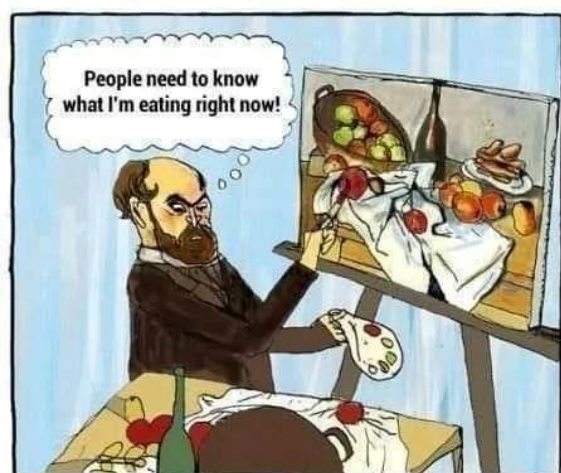
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