

DYSLEXIA ADULT NETWORK NEWS

No 9 Spring 2019



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THIS 9th EDITION OF NETWORK NEWS COVERS

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Dear All

I am pleased to report that momentum is building for positive change for those with dyslexia and other neurodivergent (ND) brains. DAN has provided training for Access to Work representatives and now we are in discussions about BDA training being made available to all civil servants in the form of an e-learning programme.

The discussion about these conditions is also finally shifting from "*what we can't do*" to "*what we may be able to do better than others*". This was amply demonstrated in the new report put out by Ernst & Young, in partnership with MadebyDyslexia, comparing the potential talents of ND individuals with the future skills need.

There is definitely a shift in types of work available nowadays, with a predicted loss of 50% of retail jobs which we can now see in our High Streets. However, there is an increase in IT jobs - and Prof John Stein has just written about the likely strengths for coding in the ND brain.

Whilst emphasising these important talents, we must not lose sight of those with particular difficulties and so it is a relief that this issue is now being taken into account with the roll out of Universal Credit and PIP.

*Margaret Malpas,
Chair of DAN*

1. ND Awareness Training across the Civil Service

Awareness training in the employment sphere has always been one of DAN's main objectives. We were therefore delighted when a meeting in July between our Chair (also Vice President of the BDA) and the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP) advanced this agenda. BDA is offering to make their **e-learning module available to all civil servants**. An important milestone is coming up in November when a meeting will finalise the arrangements.

Awareness Training was the first recommendation of the Report by the Westminster AchieveAbility Commission on Recruitment and Dyslexia/ND – so this is particularly welcome.

We note from our DAN jiscmail correspondence that there is now a Civil Service Dyslexia DCD/ Dyspraxia Network which met recently and is considering where it will focus its efforts.

2. REPORT on 'Dyslexic Strengths and the Changing World of Work'

MadebyDyslexia and **Ernst & Young** have produced a report in which the strengths of ND individuals are matched to the predicted skills requirements over the next few years.

Entitled ***The Value of Dyslexia: Dyslexic Strengths and the Changing World of Work***, it looks in detail at a range of skill areas associated with dyslexia/ND.

The main message is that employers should refocus by taking a strengths-based approach to hiring. Report conclusions include the following findings:

- ▶ When dyslexia is solely associated with challenges, it can inhibit dyslexic individuals from reaching their full potential.
- ▶ When dyslexia is focused on strengths with challenges supported, it can create positive outcomes through a better understanding of ability'

Read the report here <http://madebydyslexia.org/assets/downloads/EY-the-value-of-dyslexia.pdf>

3. DWP, Access to Work & Disability Confident - UPDATE

a) All change in the Department for Work and Pensions - again!

As the Secretary of State, the Minister for Disabled People and key DWP staff change yet again, DAN has worked to establish new links and re-start conversations.. We are hoping that the postponed All Party Parliamentary Group focusing on Dyslexia in Adults will enable us to make contact with Debbie Bradford, a key member of the Department.

With BREXIT considerations occupying parliamentary time and growing disquiet regarding Universal Credit, there has been no noticeable developments in fulfilling the government aim of **Halving the Disability Employment Gap**. Further action points were expected this month but have not materialised.

A few months ago, Melanie (DAN Vice Chair) was approached by the Public Law Project concerning a client who is **taking DWP to judicial review** because of failure to make reasonable adjustments. This relates to accessible communications. DAN was asked to send in any information about communications between the Department and claimants with disabilities. The case should be heard in November.

b) Access to Work (AtW)

Training update

DAN was pleased to learn that the training delivered in February to the Halifax AtW Centre specialising in Hidden Disabilities had been useful and the team was using the resources that had been specially prepared for them (Report in last edition of Network News). Additional training had been requested - also for free, which DAN considered unacceptable.

This has led to AtW Learning reps signing up for the e-learning module. Feedback was good, leading to the proposal that this opportunity be extended to all civil servants.

New Tech Fund

On 27th April the Minister for Disabled People announced a new Tech Fund as part of Access to Work. Previously, medium and large employers had been required to pay a mandatory contribution towards the cost of assistive technology required by disabled employees * but this cost will now be waived.

Announcing the new fund, Sarah Newton MP, said:

“We know that assistive technology has the power to transform lives, helping to break down the barriers disabled people can face at work and so many other areas of their everyday lives.

Access to Work is providing support to disabled people across the country, and I hope that through the new Tech Fund, more disabled people and their employers will be able to benefit from advances in assistive technology that can help create more inclusive workplaces.”

* medium employers paid the first £500 and large employers paid the first £1,000, with both paying 20% of the cost thereafter up to £10,000.

www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-tech-fund-to-support-disabled-people-and-their-employers

Response from the Minister for Disabled People to the Select Committee on Work & Pensions

The questions and responses in this communication make interesting reading.

The six questions, **relating principally to AtW**, are posed by Frank Field, Chair of this Select Committee. They include spend on assistive technology via AtW since 2015; the training process for AtW assessors; the prescribed supply chain list used by AtW assessors and, relating to Jobcentre Plus, referrals by Work Coaches to assistive technology services for disabled clients.

It was interesting to read about the training that contracted AtW providers (purportedly) deliver to their assessors, namely:

Team Meetings (approximately every 8 weeks) includes best practice sharing, peer-led training (refresher sessions/updates).

Internal training (identified through appraisal process and on-going monitoring) tailored to individual assessors in order to up-skill and or develop knowledge.

External Training –delivered to a group of assessors to broaden technical knowledge and awareness or indeed increase product knowledge

The final question (6) was as follows:

Does disability employment support training in Jobcentre Plus contain any specific training on assistive technology?

The Ministerial reply: *The Department’s established learning offering for work coaches includes a range of learning about how to identify and support customers with a disability. Staff in Jobcentres also have access to the services of Disability Employment Advisors (DEAs). DEAs are given the relevant learning to be able to assess the needs and identify equipment and other possible*

adjustments that can assist in the employment or retention of disabled people. They can also offer advice on AtW issues.

Annex B comprises the Prescribed Supply Chain List used by Access to Work assessors. Disability Awareness Training is delivered by three organisations only: YMS Training, Right 2 Write and an autism charity.

There is a longer list of technology trainers. SpLD/ND come under the headings 'Specialist Learning Disability Software' and 'Specialist Learning Disability Coping Strategies' perpetuating the Learning Disability / Learning Difficulty confusion.

The document can be read below (spot the spelling mistake!).

<https://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/work-and-pensions/Carillion/Letter-from-the-Minister-for-Disabled-People-regarding-assistive-technology-20-Februaury-2018.pdf>

This is an important and well-respected Select Committee with prominent back-benchers on it. It is worth visiting their website and taking a look at their forthcoming agenda.

You can write to the Select Committee via their Secretariat (when I wanted to follow something up I wrote to Frank Field, copying in the Secretariat, and received a prompt response). Melanie

c) Disability Confident (DC)

At a meeting with DWP in July, our Chair renewed contact with Brian Keating of DC. He informed us that 7,000 organisations have now signed up to Disability Confident – but that many of these are “not very aware” of dyslexia/ND, despite the guidance which we have produce on the DC website, see link:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/employing-disabled-people-and-people-with-health-conditions/employing-disabled-people-and-people-with-health-conditions

A dyslexia/ND focus was proposed at one of their forthcoming themed events, this would be in 2019.

DC is asking for case studies of SME companies that could be promoted as role models and for 'myths busters' for employers.



4. Forthcoming Events

All Party Parliamentary Group on Dyslexia and other Specific Learning Difficulties

Monday, Nov 19th, 4.00 - 5.30pm, Committee Room 6

This postponed meeting of the APPG is of special interest to DAN, with a focus on **Reasonable Adjustments in the Workplace**. Speakers include Inspector Peter Phillips of Hampshire Police, our Chair, Margaret Malpas, and two speakers from DWP: Debbie Bradford and Ian Milton.



The APPG is chaired by Sharon Hodgson MP, Shadow Minister for Public Health. We shall report back via our DAN Jiscmail and social media outlets.

BDA Conference: Neurodiversity and Co-occurring Learning Differences, Nov 8th in London

Please find full details via the link: www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/events/view/name/conference-neurodiversity-and-co-occurring-learning-differences

5. NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERSHIP ORGANISATIONS

Dyslexia Scotland

www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk

Dyslexia Awareness Week in Scotland: 5th – 10th November 2018

Dyslexia: My Wider World

This year's Awareness Week theme will highlight the many ways that dyslexia can play a part in someone's life. Full details of the range of events, activities and campaigns, including our stunning poster campaign and Ellie's Blue ribbon campaign can be found at the following website link:

<https://www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk/dyslexia-awareness-week>

Career Development Service

The Career Development Service (formerly Employment Service) recently recruited four new volunteer Career Mentors. They will work one to one, providing coaching and practical support in self-understanding, career choices, strategies for de-coding and writing applications forms and CVs, preparing for interviews, disclosing dyslexia at work and requesting accommodations, accessing complementary services and opportunities for growth, understanding dyslexia and harnessing individual career potential.

Over this last year the service provided satellite learning and development individual and group opportunities to address common dyslexic challenges and strengths and a focus on sectors with over-representation of dyslexic employees. These include: a **Creative Dyslexic Network** for those in or aspiring to careers in creative industries, a **Dyslexic Business Start Up seminar**, supporting dyslexic adults to develop entrepreneurial skills and start their own business, and partnership work with the Royal Highland Show to provide careers guidance to young farmers. We are delighted to have become an Arts Award Centre, and are piloting delivery of Arts Award Discover, Explore, Bronze and Silver for dyslexic children and young people, enabling them to access wider learning through the arts as their vehicle.

Introduction to Dyslexia and Inclusive Practice Module

This free Open University introductory module aims to provide practitioners who work in a Community Learning and Development (CLD) setting (post school) with an improved awareness of what dyslexia is, its impact, how it is assessed in different contexts and how it can be supported within an inclusive learning environment. It was developed by a collaborative partnership between Education Scotland, Dyslexia Scotland and the Community Learning and Development (CLD) Standards Council Scotland. www.open.edu/openlearncreate/dyslexia-inclusive-practice-CLD

Cathy Magee, CEO of Dyslexia Scotland and DAN member

British Dyslexia Association Dyslexia

www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

The BDA had an extraordinary Dyslexia Awareness Week at the start of October, with an astonishing 32 million hits on social media! The Week included daily Webinars, free on-line learning and new resources.

The Secretary of State for Health, Matt Hancock, has disclosed his dyslexia in the Guardian, writing about how important early diagnosis is. Work behind the scenes will hopefully build on this with the BBC.

We are looking forward to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Dyslexia, for which BDA now has the Secretariat [SEE SECTION 4]. This will be a good opportunity to raise the profile of workplace issues for people with dyslexia/ND.

Margaret Malpas, BDA Vice President and DAN Chair

Dyspraxia Foundation: Awareness Week and new Resources

Eleanor Hayes, CEO of the Dyspraxia Foundation, writes: Dyspraxia was flagged up when a new character in 'Doctor Who' identified as dyspraxic. Helpfully, the new series of Doctor Who launched on Day 1 of Dyspraxia Awareness Week; this helped to create media interest. It was followed up with a feature on BBC Breakfast on Sunday 14th October with DF's Dr Sally Payne and, Ben Smith, a member of our Youth Group.

During our Awareness Week, we launched our updated **Drivers' Information Sheet**, including tips and advice about taking that step of learning to drive with Dyspraxia/DCD. From concentration and hand-foot coordination to judging speed and distance and sequencing, driving makes heavy demands on some of the core dyspraxic weaknesses. Many people with dyspraxia are unaware of the support available to them as learner-drivers or even unsure whether they can or should drive.

We hope everyone of all ages will find our updated driving information sheet helpful

<https://dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Driving-Sheet-Sept-18.pdf>

The GMB Union have released a document for employers about those with Dyspraxia as part of their 'Thinking Different at Work' campaign. DAN member and DF trustee Richard Todd has been instrumental in producing this resource

<http://www.gmb.org.uk/neurodiversity-dyspraxia-guide.pdf>

Finally, the Dyspraxia Foundation are delighted to launch 'Dyspraxia: A guide for employees' available as a free download on their website. <https://dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/DyspraxiaFoundation-WorkplaceGuidelines.pdf>

Follow links to adult section of the DF website www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk

DAN: Update from our Communications Officer

Becki Morris' report includes items arising out of her post in the Heritage sector, along with her role in DAN

ACAS East Mids Autumn Conference: Diversity Driving Productivity: The Final Frontier?

Members of DAN and AchieveAbility recently attended and spoke at this event - both on the findings of the Westminster AchieveAbility Commission (WAC) Report: **Neurodiverse Voices: Opening Doors to Employment** and as part of an Expert Panel relating to recruiting and retaining neurodivergent talent. Other speakers included Nancy Doyle of Genius Within and Anna Price, Director of Rural Business Group on her life with ADHD.

The event was action-led, with the focus on communication, positive action to change and developing inclusive practice to go beyond compliance in regard to the Equality Act 2010 but more towards inclusive culture for everyone in the workplace.

Disability Confident event at the Natural History Museum, September 2018

The Disability Co-operative Network in Museums (DCN) co-hosted their inaugural meet up at the Natural History Museum in September. The event focused on the Government scheme **Disability Confident**, which has lacked profile and promotion in the past. This issue was highlighted in the WAC Report in which Recommendation 5 relates to increasing awareness and monitoring of the scheme, this is a priority for the Heritage Sector.

We had speakers from the Department of Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, the Tate, Victoria & Albert Museum, Natural History Museum and DCN itself. A key topic was the importance of inclusive workplace practice including recruitment and flexible working in attracting disabled and neurodivergent talent to the Heritage Sector.

The event was filmed and will appear on DCN's online subscription area shortly.

There are additional support materials available on the website:

<https://www.musedcn.org.uk/category/workplace/disability-confident-and-access-to-work/>

DCN runs two networks in relation to disabled and neurodivergent staff working in the Heritage Sector and has an online portal of free resources.

Cultural Inclusion Conference, October 2018

This exciting event at the Lyric Theatre Hammersmith, had key messages in relation to the importance of inclusive cultural experiences for families and children. During the event, I produced a workshop on social barriers relating to text and information in the context of Visual Stress / Visual Disturbances.

Jess Starns (Dyspraxic) is included in the Disability Power 100 list 2018

Jess Starns, founder of 'Dyspraxic Me', was announced as one of the most influential people with a disability in the UK at a reception at the South Bank Centre on Oct 17th. She set up 'Dyspraxic Me' in 2013 as she couldn't find any suitable support for young adults with dyspraxia offering practical help to develop skills; this evolved into monthly workshops in London with practical and fun activities. Attendees can meet other people with dyspraxia and learn a wide variety of skills including cooking, sports, ballet, blogging, and training to develop assertiveness and social skills. Jess works at the British Museum as the Youth Volunteer Coordinator and is passionate about making museums inclusive. She is currently combining these interests with her master's degree in Inclusive Arts Practice. For her MA she's researching how we interpret and curate the history of labelling people with specific learning differences/NDs.

The Shaw Trust Disability Power 100 List is an annual publication of the 100 most influential disabled people in the UK selected, this year, from over 700 nominations. The full List can be found on www.disabilitypower100.com

Dyslexia Assessment & Consultancy (DAC) www.workingwithdyslexia.com

DAC continues its on-going work of raising awareness about dyslexia and neuro-diversity in companies and organisations across the public and private sectors. We spend our time talking to HR teams, managers and their teams and individual employees, providing support, guidance and training. There are of course many aspects to this work and many different areas / themes I could pick up on, but in this newsletter I comment on two current issues.

Spotlight on 2 Areas

i) There are currently thousands of new graduates entering the workplace who know that they have dyslexia / neurodiversity, because they had an assessment while they were studying at university and they accessed the support and funding of the Disabled Student's Allowance (DSA). Yet they are not telling their employers. They are choosing not to disclose. There is one MAIN reason for this. They are afraid to. Why? They are afraid to because they are now in a culture where there is a lack of awareness of Dyslexia / ND in their workplace. In another Newsletter, I can talk about 'disclosure', but for the moment, I really encourage those who know of their Neurodiversity to share this with their employer. By doing so, they will be helping to increase understanding of dyslexia/ ND at work and they would also be able to consider if any adjustments would help them to be more efficient and productive in their career paths.

ii) It is so important for workplace coaches who are delivering strategy skills training to employees that they liaise with line managers. Discussions might be around identifying training priorities, or to share and receive feedback on progress but without contact with managers, the training is isolated from the full context and there is a lost opportunity to recognise the contribution that line managers can make and to increase awareness and understanding and to work together as a team.

Katherine Kindersley, Director of Dyslexia Assessment & Consultancy and DAN member

NeuroDiversity and the Labour Party Conference

John Timms of Prospect Union writes:

The recent Labour Party Conference in Liverpool included a fringe event on Neurodiversity. The Shadow Chancellor, John McDonnell, made a presentation promising far-reaching changes to benefit neurodivergent people to be included within the Labour Party manifesto.

There were also speeches from Mark Serwotka (PCS Union General Secretary), Richard Reiser (Director of Disability Equality in Education), and Thelma Walker MP (PPS to John McDonnell), followed by Austin Harney (LPAND Manifesto SG member / PCS Union Officer).

I noted that autism features most prominently within the ND Manifesto, however dyslexia, dyspraxia and ADHD are covered. In my opinion many of the measures referred to will benefit people with all of these labels, as many of our needs for change are similar. However more focus on dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD etc. would be helpful in view of the greater numbers of people with these differences.

Links to the speech and the labour ND manifesto follow:

www.youtube.com/channel/UCa2F657HXvHGsvsTvNhTLyQ/videos?view=0&sort=dd&shelf_id=0
<https://neurodiversitymanifesto.com/>

Resource from PROSPECT UNION

<https://www.prospect.org.uk/help-at-work/equality-diversity/neurodiversity/>

6. Outcomes from Westminster AchieveAbility Commission on Recruitment

Katherine Hewlett, CEO of AchieveAbility, updates us on further initiatives linked to the work of the Westminster AchieveAbility Commission on Recruitment and Dyslexia/ND [full report in the previous number of Network News].

On 15 October 15th AchieveAbility convened a **roundtable discussion on Creative Sector Apprenticeships for Neurodivergent People**, within the Palace of Westminster.

The main themes were addressed by invited speakers who focused on:

- Apprenticeships in the context of creative industries
- Engaging employers and learners
- Support needs of both employees and employers.

The overarching aim was to identify partners who would be interested in working to develop an exemplar project which would open up apprenticeship opportunities for neuro-divergent people seeking to work in this area. Another objective was the development of an employers' network, consisting of employers from the creative industries who have a positive attitude towards encouraging the ND population.

A number of key outcomes arose out of the discussion, these included:

- The development of pilot projects
- The development of the evidence base relating to the employment of neurodivergent people in the creative economy
- Advocacy – in order to change policy and enhance access to good quality advice and information.

Achieve Ability have given priority to working with others to enhance the quality of support given through Access to Work. [Recommendation 4 in the WAC Report.]

Next steps: We are now planning a research seminar in May 2019 at the University of Westminster. The aim is to profile good practice in the workplace for Neurodivergent employees. There will be 40-50 participants.

News of this event and all other AchieveAbility initiatives on www.achieveability.org.uk

7. Digital Exclusion and the Courts

There has been a growing move to make court processes available on-line, as part of the court modernisation programme. However recent Office of National Statistics findings reveal that nearly 5 million people in the UK have never used the internet before, making accessing online court services a challenge.



The charity JUSTICE had already pointed out that justice is denied to many ordinary people simply because they cannot afford it (*Delivering Justice in an Age of Austerity*, 2015). They now turn their attention to the 'digitally excluded' and 'digital with assistance' – populations that are also a concern of DAN's.

JUSTICE believes that it is vital that the needs of users are put at the forefront of designing and building the Online Court. To that end they convened a Working Party to examine closely the opportunities and challenges of digitisation and of doing justice online and virtually. Their main focuses were as follows:

- a review of how people access online services in a range of fields
- identification of the necessary features of simple/ accessible online interfaces
- an evaluation of the support required for users with differing needs.

Their Report is available via this link <https://2bquk8cdew6192tsu41lay8t-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Preventing-Digital-Exclusion-from-Online-Justice.pdf>

Various groups at high risk of digital exclusion from modernised justice services were sought – including homeless people and detainees. The Assisted Digital project being rolled out by HM Courts & Tribunal Services is examined in some detail – more information below <https://www.onlinecentresnetwork.org/projects/hmcts-face-face-assisted-digital-support>

JUSTICE: Our vision is of fair, accessible and efficient legal processes, in which the individual's rights are protected, and which reflect the country's international reputation for upholding and promoting the rule of law. <https://justice.org.uk/>

Comment from Editor of Network News (DAN Vice Chair) Melanie Jameson

Since I have links with JUSTICE I will keep DAN updated on the situation in the courts.

Digital exclusion is an issue that we raise in all initiatives under consideration – and something which should always be flagged up by Equality Impact Assessments.

It was encouraging to read of so many different activities in this edition of Network News, all focusing on raising the profile of ND in the workplace. As we work together to contribute to this agenda, we increase our impact.

Finally, a piece of good news from the All Party Parliamentary Group on Assistive Technology: **Robert McLaren writes:** the government has just introduced (September 2018) new regulations for public sector websites and apps, particularly relevant to further and higher education. This means websites should work with text-to-speech and have good colour contrasts.

Further information at <http://bit.ly/2PZ1NDP> and <http://bit.ly/2wVAS3O>

8. Joining our JISCMail list www.jiscmail.ac.uk/dyslexia-adult-network-dan

An important part of sharing information and initiating discussion is **DAN's email discussion list**. This is provided by Jiscmail, which is part of the UK Higher Education information services. It is free and open to all. It is spam-proof and well supervised, with a functioning helpline.

To join the list, go to the internet address www.jiscmail.ac.uk/dyslexia-adult-network-dan (which is the Home Page of the list), click on "Subscribe or Unsubscribe", and follow the instructions. You will receive an email asking for confirmation, click the link in the email, and after that you will be a member. You will then receive the list messages and can reply if you want to. You can also visit the Home Page to look at past messages (with their attachments).

To send a new message to the list, write to dyslexia-adult-network-dan@jiscmail.ac.uk . The address of the Helpline is: helpline@jiscmail.ac.uk

If you have documents to place on the Home Page for permanent reference please contact the List host at dyslexia-adult-network-dan-request@jiscmail.ac.uk .

However this List is currently under-used. Don't worry about cross-posting: as we are all in different groups, different information comes our way – so just share it, to keep us all informed.

Use the list to keep us all posted of up-coming events and to raise matters of concern.

It is up to YOU to engage this List was set up for you!

The core purposes of DAN

DAN exists in order to undertake the following work:

- to influence, and be influenced by, Government and Society to make the world a better place for adults with Dyslexia/ND, through a network where the group is greater than the sum of its parts*
- to share information on the workplace and political environments in order to make us all more effective in our work for adults with dyslexia/ND*
- to work in partnership with others to achieve these aims*