

DYSLEXIA ADULT NETWORK NEWS No 3 Autumn 2016



dan-uk.co.uk

All change in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)!

With changes to both the Secretary of State and the Minister for Disabled People, DAN has had to re-establish its links and re-start conversations that had already made considerable progress. We immediately introduced ourselves to Penny Mordaunt, the new Minister for Disabled People; this was promptly acknowledged. Fortunately we maintain good working relationships with senior civil servants in the department who have been most helpful in promoting our access. Meetings that were arranged with Justin Tomlinson are being re-arranged and the work goes on.

We wait to see what priority the new team will give to the government aim of **Halving the Disability Employment Gap**. DAN has provided considerable input into this initiative, as you will read later under PARTNERSHIP WORKING. But our main success since the last edition of Network News is outlined in the next section.



Disability Confident (formerly Two Ticks scheme)

Do you recognise this 'Two Ticks' symbol? It embodied five guarantees from participating employers to people with disabilities, such as an interview if you have the minimum requirements for the post. This is now being replaced by the **Disability Confident Scheme for Employers**.

We are informed that the new Disability Confident (DC) scheme is being tested ahead of a formal Ministerial launch in the autumn. Further information on the scheme can be found on www.gov.uk/government/collections/disability-confident-campaign

Following persistence on DAN's behalf, DWP have amended the Disability Confident website to include all our proposals for more effective guidance on the impact of SpLDs in the workplace—even amending the entry on Asperger Syndrome. The Hidden Disabilities section is located at www.gov.uk/government/publications/employing-disabled-people-and-people-with-health-conditions/employing-disabled-people-and-people-with-health-conditions

Since feedback from employers suggests that the operation of DC is somewhat confused – we shall be keeping it under review

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DAN has formulated its core purposes as follows:

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/SpLD, 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/SpLD
- to work in partnership with others to achieve these aims

National Inclusion Week

As we compose this edition of Network News, we are two days into **National Inclusion Week** (Sept 26th - October 2nd). DAN echoes the remarks of Inclusion Director, Richard McKenna, who writes “There are too many barriers to inclusion at work”, but continues: “Employers can only think creatively about harnessing people’s differences if they understand that differences are assets”; The Inclusion motto is *Every workplace for every colleague* – what a good aspiration for people with Dyslexia/SpLDs in the workplace! Follow them on #everydayinclusion.

Dyslexia Awareness Week (DAW) 3rd -7th October

We believe that this week will be very important in raising more awareness of dyslexia. The theme this year (in England and Wales) is ‘**identification of dyslexia**’. Receiving confirmation of dyslexia via diagnosis is often a big turning point in people’s lives. It can be an extremely positive experience, giving the individual energy and motivation to make positive change for themselves and others. Each day of DAW will focus on aspects related to identification.

Thursday, October 6th has been designated as the Adults’ Day; the theme that day is formulated as a question: “What help is at hand for those with dyslexia?” All the charities in DAN will have material on their websites and be engaging in social media activities. Everyone has agreed to use #dyslexia2016 for Twitter that week, so feel free to use this too.

The British Dyslexia Association has been running a special promotion with Black Farmer Sausages in leading supermarkets for the four weeks leading up to DAW. The CEO, Wilfred Emmanuel Jones, is a very successful dyslexic entrepreneur – one of many who are demonstrating the potential of dyslexia in business life.

News from Dyslexia Scotland

www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk

Dyslexia Awareness Week in Scotland: 7 – 12 November 2016

Dyslexia Scotland works closely with the other UK Dyslexia organisations, sharing the Dyslexia Awareness Week themes in previous years. However, as the dates for the Scottish school holidays are different, this year’s Dyslexia Awareness Week will be held later than the rest of the UK. The Scottish theme this year will be ‘**Dyslexia: Did you know...?**’

Further details about the week and about Ellie’s Blue Ribbon campaign will be posted.

Employment Service for Adults with dyslexia in Scotland

Our new Employment service, started in May 2016 under the direction of Katie Carmichael, is for adults with dyslexia who are seeking work, or are in work; and for employers with an interest in dyslexia in the work place.

Katie has been undertaking a mapping exercise in an effort to find out:

- The support available for job seekers with dyslexia in Scotland
- Where adults with dyslexia are going for help with job searching
- What interest employers have in supporting dyslexia in the work place
- What employees think makes a dyslexia friendly work place



There have been over 400 responses to the survey to date, which is open to anyone living or working in Scotland. The link to our electronic survey is printed below. Paper copies are available from katie@dyslexiascotland.org.uk OR see <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/dyslexiaworks>

The service has already seen significant workplace successes, from helping individuals to identify career changes, to gaining invitations to interview, and to potential job offers after years of no results. Dyslexia Scotland is now an affiliate member of the Careers Development Institute, the single UK-wide professional body for everyone working in the fields of career education, information, guidance, coaching and career management)

Access to Work (AtW)

The discussions and communication that DAN has been holding with Access to Work (ATW) management are still unsatisfactory. Although we believe the points that we have made are very clear, and backed by cases raised by members of DAN, the responses could easily be described as Civil Service brush off.

In particular, we have raised the issue of an inconsistent approach to the requirement for diagnostic assessment before ATW support is provided. The formal guidance document says "where a dyslexia diagnostic assessment has not taken place **and** the customer does not know how this impacts on workplace day-to-day activity, signpost them to the HR Department, if available, or to a specialist organisation to do an assessment."

The important word above is **and** it appears many advisers rather than helping the individual identify their workplace difficulties are putting the onus back onto the individual and their employer. Applicants still advise that they are being asked for formal diagnosis.

Rather than a clear statement that diagnosis is not needed, the latest response from ATW says "we may ask questions about when they were diagnosed, how this affects them in the workplace, what is their disability (this list is not exhaustive)".

Our second major point concerns the absence of a quality check on the advice provided to those who are successful in obtaining a workplace assessment. Despite three years of making the clear and undisputed claim that the quality system is based on achievement of administrative and report structure targets, there has been no change towards implementing any form of peer or professional review of the appropriate content for individual needs. There is no routine survey of satisfaction of the customer, or the employer, re the effectiveness of the advice given.

The number of complaints received by DAN members of poor assessments means we shall continue to press for an appropriate quality regime. DWP have commissioned a consultancy review on how ATW is delivered, that review includes the idea of outsourcing the whole process. DAN is concerned that placing the provision of this essential service into the hands of profit-making organisations could be another step in making the process less accountable.

New Commission announced on the Recruitment of people with Dyslexia/ Neuro-Diversity

The DAN Chair has been invited to sit on a commission to investigate the barriers to recruitment experienced by this population. Chaired by Barry Sheerman MP, initiated and convened by AchieveAbility, this commission will run for twelve months from this October. Our Adviser is Lord Addington but we are also seeking cross-party support from parliamentarians.

The formal call for evidence will go out in the New Year, and further information will be provided by 'expert witnesses' called to give evidence to the commission. Issues will include barriers to employment, the identification of the recruitment processes that disadvantage neurodiverse people, and how these might be improved. The neurodiversity of those who will wish to contribute will be born in mind in the ways that we receive and elicit information.

Our report should be accessible, with clear recommendations, and launched during Dyslexia Awareness Week, 2017. The report will provide other campaigning groups with a platform from which to push this agenda further. Having raised the issue at the parliamentary level, it will be harder for the DWP to ignore our input, aligned with the government's stated aim of Halving the Disability Employment Gap. With a Green Paper on employment on the way, there could be no better time to highlight the employment needs of this large population and point to better recruitment practices. See www.achieveability.org.uk for the latest information.

Update from our Communications Officer



Social media

A major summit on inclusion at the Rio Paralympics 2016 provided key statistical data regarding the social barriers that many people face globally and within the UK. Key points were:

- Inclusion is everyone's responsibility, not just policyholders or key providers.
- Assistive Technology is a critical part of universal design, and therefore should be part of an overall strategy for inclusion.
- Assistive Technology product and service delivery must be developed in consultation with user groups.

There are a number of groups and international organisations who are committed to well-designed accessible assistive technology. We shall keep you updated with further news.

Warwickshire County Council has recently launched a policy on the recruitment and retention of dyslexic talented people at the County Council. This was with guidance from adults from Dig-It Tamworth and DAN committee members. See: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/dyslexiaguidance>

On Thursday 29 September, Becki Morris from DAN spoke at a '**Group for Education in Museums**' workshop on inclusive working, both for the workplace and visitors to museums, arts and heritage sites. Becki and her colleagues at the Disability Co-operative Network have already written articles for Museum Practice on inclusive workplaces and forming consultation groups. They recently hosted "Museum Hour" (an international social media discussion group) on how museums don't have to be labels and cases, but offer a range of opportunities to engage with objects including tactile, listening and visual. It was an extremely positive discussion.

Prison Reform – How could this affect offenders with Dyslexia?

When I (Melanie Jameson) became Chair of DAN, I hoped that we would not neglect one of the most disadvantaged groups with Dyslexia/SpLDs – (ex-)offenders. And when Michael Gove became Secretary of State at the Ministry of Justice and instigated a review of prison education and general reform, there seemed a chance that the needs of those with Dyslexia/SpLDs would finally be highlighted. The Coates Review *Unlocking Potential* did indeed flag up these needs (though, as always, linking them to those of prisoners with Learning Disabilities, as LDD). However now there is a new team in charge, and the process appears to be stalling.

However the reforms were accepted in the Queens Speech and a NOMS (National Offender Management Service) employment and education team will start work next month. I am assured that one strand of their workload will be LDD. Meanwhile I have researched all the screening tools in use in prisons, and am poised to make recommendations about how those who screen positive could be assessed and supported. It is in vain that I have tried to separate Learning Disabilities from SpLDs – according to research by Dyslexia Action in 2005, the SpLD cohort accounts for almost 20% of the prison population (LDs are around 7-10%).

The Prisoner Learning Alliance, on which I have a brief relating to dyslexia/SpLDs, has good links with government and is working hard for the implementation of the Coates Review. Having arranged a meeting with Dame Sally Coates, I found her to be passionate about these reforms. The full Review is available via this link; you will find that LDD is well covered:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/unlocking-potential-a-review-of-education-in-prison>

This week is the deadline for submissions to the Justice Committee inquiry on Prison Reform. I have submitted a response which can be found on the DAN website.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Disability Rights UK & 'Halving the Disability Employment Gap'

DAN has submitted written evidence to the All Party Group on Disabilities, under the secretariat of Disability Rights UK (DRUK), regarding particular aspects of **Halving the Disability Employment Gap**. Several of us have also been invited to appear at witness sessions. Our Chair was asked to consider how the disability definition is being used, and whether the climate in general is worsening or improving – DAN organisations were quick to feed in that, on the whole, it is becoming more challenging for people with dyslexia in the workplace.

Our full submission is up on the DAN website and has been circulated to our Jiscmail list. Here is a summary of the main points in our submission:

- People with Dyslexia/SpLDs demonstrate skills and abilities much valued by employers, but are held back by barriers to employment.
- Since adults with Dyslexia/SpLDs form the largest disability group amongst working age adults, we need employment processes that take account of their differences and range of support needs.
- Individuals with Dyslexia/SpLDs are over-represented amongst the long-term unemployed. There are a number of reasons for this, including the challenges of the recruitment process.
- The benefits of their distinctive skillsets and abilities are lost to the country if they remain unemployed.
- Employers need easily accessible information on Dyslexia/SpLDs, including workplace 'reasonable adjustments' (Equality Act 2010).

We expect a report arising out of this inquiry to be launched in October. Meanwhile DAN will be working more closely with DRUK on overarching disability issues, and specific areas such as offenders with disabilities, to include those with Dyslexia/SpLDs.

Prospect Union

DAN is grateful to Prospect for providing meeting facilities in London. Prospect have recognised the importance of the correct environment for people with Neurodiverse profiles, such as dyslexia and dyspraxia, to thrive in the workplace. They have some resources available for public access on their website, and more material available to members, see <https://www.prospect.org.uk/at-work/neurodiversity>

DAN is holding discussions as to how that material may be enhanced, and together we may identify good practice provision, and what a best practice employer might look like.

NEW RESOURCES, SURVEYS and TRAINING

Watch out for the publication of a new report **Neurodiversity at Work** from the National Institute of Economic and Social Research with support from ACAS; it is planned to be published on October 3rd, during Dyslexia Awareness week.

During Dyspraxia Awareness week, on October 10th, **the Dyspraxia Foundation** will be publishing the results of its **Dyspraxia at Work** survey into employment opportunities and access.

The Helen Arkell Centre are pleased to announce that they will shortly be launching a new e-learning course '**Dyslexia in the Workplace: Thinking Differently**'.

The course will be in two parts, each of one hour's duration:

Part 1 What is Dyslexia? Part 2 Working with a Dyslexic Colleague.

The course will be suitable for employers, employees, HR Personnel and workplace trainers. More information will be provided shortly on the Helen Arkell website www.helenarkell.org.uk

HINTS and TIPS

Many people with dyslexia or dyspraxia find the organisation and management of their electronic documents troublesome. In a world where people use phones or tablets to take notes, it is easy to forget which piece of hardware was used to carry out a particular piece of work. There is also the possibility of deleting work which is needed later, or discovering the file has disappeared for no apparent reason. Then there is the issue of arriving at a distant meeting, and finding you have left the important document you have been working on behind.

For some the use of **Dropbox** has proved very useful. Dropbox is a free cloud-based storage area which can synchronise files between computers as well as providing access through smart phones and tablets.

Documents “in the cloud” can be accessed via the Internet using a web browser and personal password. When the initial storage capacity is full it will request a fee, but for most people the standard free offer has sufficient capacity.

If a file is deleted on the local computer, it will be put into storage for a limited time in the cloud and will be recoverable. Dropbox also allows individuals to share folders with colleagues. Further details are available at www.dropbox.com.

Website www.dan-uk.co.uk

Twitter @DyslexiaAdult

Email via the DAN website OR

Join our JISCMail list at: www.jiscmail.ac.uk/dyslexia-adult-network-dan

Notes on participating in our jiscmail discussion list

DAN’s email discussion list 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 expertly 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, reply if you want to. You can 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. DAN committee members are tightly stretched, following up DAN priorities on top of the day job and do not have the time to be frequent correspondents.

So it is up to YOU to engage



this List was set up for you!