

Dyslexia Scotland response to the Education Scotland report 'Making sense: Education for Children and Young People with dyslexia in Scotland' (May 2014)

Introduction

Dyslexia Scotland is a national Scottish charity which aims to enable people with dyslexia, regardless of age and abilities, to reach their potential in education, employment and life.

Dyslexia Scotland welcomes the publication of the Education Scotland report **Making Sense: Education for Children and Young People with Dyslexia in Scotland**. We also welcome the [Scottish Government response](#) published on 27 June 2014, which is supportive of the 5 recommendations in the report.

This paper sets out the following:

1. Our summary response
2. Specific comments about the report
3. Recommendations involving Dyslexia Scotland - suggested next steps

1. Summary response to the report

This independent review of education for children and young people with dyslexia was carried out on behalf of the Scottish Government, following a request in August 2012 by Dyslexia Scotland to the First Minister for the 2008 review to be revisited. Dyslexia Scotland was delighted that the review was commissioned following that request.

We believe that this report provides a significant opportunity for everyone involved in the education of learners with dyslexia in Scotland to build on the good practice that has been outlined in the report and to collectively work towards addressing the areas for development and inconsistencies that are identified.

The report highlights that there have been significant improvements in practice since 2008, a finding which we very much welcome. Key developments in Scottish education and in the dyslexia field are summarised in the report. It is vital that the positive dyslexia friendly practice referred to in the report is shared and disseminated so that others can build on that good practice.

The report also identifies that there is still a pattern of inconsistency and variability in practice from teacher to teacher, school to school and both

within and across local authorities. The report has been very honest about the inconsistencies in the service delivery and it is heartening that this has been recognised. However, this inconsistency is of great concern to Dyslexia Scotland.

The report refers to data showing that 'young people with dyslexia achieve ... qualifications at a level which is less than 60% of the national average' and that they 'attain significantly less well than their peers who do not have additional support needs in those qualifications which would enable them to apply for places on university courses such as Highers'. Therefore, 'only 17% of young people with dyslexia have the opportunity to apply for these places, compared to 44.2% of their peers with no additional support'.

The conclusion clearly points to 'the need for teachers, together with local and national partners to work together to ensure a collective commitment to improving the services and support for children and young people with dyslexia'.

The report contains five important recommendations that aim to address the inequalities and to improve outcomes for children and young people with dyslexia.

Dyslexia Scotland recognises that it is essential to consult with all relevant partners to agree the next steps and formulate a practical action plan with clear timescales. This paper is therefore a starting point for discussion, outlining our initial response. We would welcome the opportunity to be involved in the further development and implementation of the recommendations that have particular relevance for Dyslexia Scotland.

2. Specific comments about the Report and its findings

Inconsistency of provision and outcomes

As outlined above, a theme that runs through the report, its conclusions and recommendations is lack of consistency. The report specifically refers to inconsistencies in all of the following areas:

- understanding of dyslexia and use of the Scottish Government definition of dyslexia
- working knowledge of the Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit
- access to Dyslexia Practice Guidelines
- provision for learners with dyslexia in primary, secondary and special schools

- quality and availability of professional learning opportunities for those responsible for supporting learners with dyslexia
- quality and content of initial teacher education courses and postgraduate awards relating to dyslexia
- responses from schools/authorities to the school/pupil census
- identification of pupils with dyslexia
- reliable information about the number of pupils identified as dyslexic

The alarming statistics outlined on page 38 of the report about qualifications attained and post-school destinations of young people with dyslexia, as well as the experiences cited by parents on page 35 about the effects of low self-esteem, demonstrate that pupils with dyslexia are still being prevented from reaching their potential. If all pupils in Scotland are to have access to early intervention and good quality support, the consistency of knowledge, skills and understanding amongst teachers about how to identify difficulties and then put the right support in place needs to be improved. Furthermore, the impact of the support that has been put in place needs to be monitored more systematically (as identified on page 22).

Young people's views

A fundamental philosophy of the Curriculum for Excellence is the importance of the role of the learner in their own learning. Section 8 provides helpful and important views of parents/carers and the need for schools to develop information for them and involve them in developments related to their children, but there is no specific inclusion of young people's views and suggestions.

The example on page 24 of the benefits of involving young people with dyslexia in influencing strategic planning in a Dyslexia Friendly school is welcomed, as is the recommendation on page 47 that 'Parents, children and young people should be more involved in discussions and strategies related to dyslexia, in line with responsibilities under section 12 of the Additional Support for Learning Act and staff should seek and take account of their views.'

It would be helpful to see examples of the first hand experiences of young people reflected in the implementation of the recommendations.

The non-literacy impacts of dyslexia

Some sections in the report highlight the importance of the wider emotional aspects of dyslexia which go beyond the difficulties associated with literacy. The example cited on page 24 and the presentation from Kyle School at the

launch clearly highlighted that whilst reading and writing were important, the emotional impact was huge. The examples on page 19 on enhanced transition support for pupils with dyslexia are also helpful. The impact on health and well-being and of the impact on behaviours are important aspects for inclusion in teacher education and should be considered in the development and implementation of recommendations such as Education Scotland's national guidance and the development of a comprehensive dyslexia professional learning package.

Identification of learners with dyslexia

There are references throughout the report to the inconsistent approaches to identifying dyslexia, which in some cases relate to local authorities not having a shared consensus or understanding of the definition of dyslexia. This lack of consistency also applies to the collection of data about the number of pupils who have been identified, as outlined on page 11. We believe that it is crucial to ensure that local authorities identify learners with dyslexia, in order to put support in place.

It is very encouraging and significant to note on page 22 that 'The secondary schools with **higher percentages** of incidence (greater than 10%) are operating as 'Dyslexia friendly' schools'. We hope that the approaches to identification in Dyslexia Friendly schools will be highlighted for other schools to learn from, in taking forward the report's recommendations.

We welcome the recommendation on page 47 that: 'Schools and local authorities should improve their practices in identifying.....the needs of children and young people with dyslexia with a high priority given to early intervention'.

We welcome the fundamental review of data collection to be carried out by the Scottish Government Advisory Group for ASL and are pleased to note the related actions that have been confirmed in the Scottish Government response - namely for the review itself to be carried out and also for a refreshed guidance to be produced by December 2014 to authorities and schools with a view to improving consistency of data.

Dyslexia Scotland is represented on the SQA Equality and Inclusion Key Partners' Group, whose remit includes exploring strategies and solutions designed to tackle barriers to inclusion and equality and monitoring the impact of the Equality Act 2010 on SQA qualifications and assessments.

Availability of professional learning opportunities to assess and support learners with dyslexia

As outlined in the report, professional learning opportunities related to provision for those with dyslexia are variable and should be increased. This applies not only to support for learning staff but also to class teachers and staff at all levels, in order to achieve a whole school approach. As identified on page 18, 'In some cases, however, the needs of the child with dyslexia are being met by the support for learning teacher rather than the class teacher and there are issues relating to their capacity to meet a range of additional support needs'. On page 20, 'only 3% of primary schools indicate that any of their staff have undertaken award-bearing courses....over the past two years' and '30% of primary schools have not had any training at school, authority or national level over the past two years'. A secondary school teacher expresses concerns on page 25 that 'there could be a skills gap in the future'. In the report's conclusions, the quality and availability of professional learning opportunities relating to making appropriate provision for children and young people with dyslexia 'is too variable at school, authority and national level'.

Professional learning opportunities are therefore required in Scotland so that teachers are supported to fulfil their responsibilities to meet learners' needs as outlined in the revised GTCS Standards. The recommendation for a comprehensive dyslexia professional training package is crucially important. Such a package will need to include opportunities at different levels: basic awareness; assessment for dyslexia; overcoming barriers to learning, curriculum accessibility and supporting pupils with dyslexia; higher level Masters training for teachers to train others.

It is important to give consideration to having accredited courses available in Scotland. Courses adapted to the Scottish education system could benefit all educators/assessors and have Scottish credibility with GTCS recognition as a minimum.

Another complex issue for consideration and clarification which is referred to on page 34 in the Parents' section of the report is the inconsistency in approaches by the local authorities and schools to the acceptance of independent assessments. The Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit has clear Frequently Asked Questions on this issue, which could be referred to within the training package, in order to ensure that, as required by the ASL Act, schools take proper account of independent assessments.

3. Recommendations involving Dyslexia Scotland - suggested next steps

The Table below outlines key points for consideration in relation to those recommendations involving Dyslexia Scotland. Some of the issues raised within the table have also been highlighted in Section 2.

Recommendation	Issues/comments	Resource implications	Other supporting information
1. Access to up-to-date practical advice and guidance on dyslexia	<p>Agree with all the bullet points.</p> <p>Bullet 1 – the information itself must be accessible and Dyslexia-friendly and must reflect actual practice</p> <p>Bullet 4 – Dyslexia Scotland would liaise initially with Education Scotland to target this work. Would also explore the use of dyslexia definition and dyslexia policies during LA visits</p> <p>Bullet 5 – how will this be done? What will it cover?</p>	<p>Bullet 4 – SG funding has already been allocated in 2014/15 to DS to work with all 32 LAs and to disseminate the Toolkit</p>	<p>Bullet 4 – DS and Toolkit Working Group would welcome the opportunity to discuss with Education Scotland good and poor practice identified in the review process, to inform the visits</p> <p>Bullet 5 – DS would welcome involvement in the early development of this Guidance.</p> <p>Will Accessibility strategies be highlighted within the Guidance?</p>
2. Access to wide range of high quality career-long professional opportunities at school, local and national level	<p>Agree with all the bullet points.</p> <p>Bullet 3 – we very much welcome this recommendation. NB It should be closely linked to the proposed work on Dyslexia-Friendly Schools (See below - Recommendation 4, bullet 4)</p> <p>Bullet 4 – Specific Learning Difficulties Trust Competencies Framework – this useful Framework</p>	<p>Bullet 3 – Build on good practice(e.g. p.25) in LAs for professional learning opportunities & Dyslexia Scotland conferences; build on and adapt Toolkit and modules within it as well as DS resources such as Dyslexia at Transition and primary and secondary booklets for teachers; consider adapting other resources e.g.</p>	<p>Bullet 3 – DS, Toolkit working group and partner members such as Call Scotland to be involved; GTCS; SPLD Trust competencies Framework and dyslexia training outside Scotland (England/Wales & Northern Ireland) should be explored for adaptation in the development of the package.</p>

<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>Issues/comments</u>	<u>Resource implications</u>	<u>Other supporting information</u>
	<p>could be adapted by local authorities, in liaison with GTCs and alongside the Dyslexia Learning Trail in Appendix 3 of the ES report</p>	<p>England & Wales Specific Learning Difficulties Trust Competencies Framework; Northern Ireland D of E funded whole school training programme ;</p> <p>NB Funding for development time/meetings would be required</p>	<p>The lack of available accredited and award bearing courses in Scotland needs to be addressed under this recommendation. (e.g. pages 25, 42) Courses are required in Scotland on basic awareness; identification and assessment for dyslexia; overcoming barriers to learning, curriculum accessibility and supporting pupils with dyslexia</p>
<p>3. ITE and postgraduate awards should give high priority to developing knowledge and skills in relation to dyslexia</p>	<p>Agree with both bullet points.</p> <p>The development of award bearing higher level training or professional development for literacy and dyslexia is required to ensure the provision of suitably qualified "trainers" for the future.</p>		<p>DS and STEC Deans met on 9th June and the recommendations are being considered further.</p>
<p>4. Action to improve the quality of educational outcomes for children and young people with dyslexia</p>	<p>Agree with all the bullet points.</p> <p>Bullet 3 – could an annual monitoring report be published?</p> <p>Bullet 4 – NB This should be closely linked to and</p>	<p>Estimated costs were outlined at the same time as the scoping exercise on Dyslexia Friendly schools to the Scottish Government in February 2014. This needs further discussion in the light</p>	<p>A report on the scoping exercise on Dyslexia Friendly schools (and its Appendices) was submitted to the Scottish Government in February 2014.</p>

<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>Issues/comments</u>	<u>Resource implications</u>	<u>Other supporting information</u>
	incorporated into the work on the dyslexia training package in Recommendation 2.	of the ES review. (NB The scoping exercise report refers to many existing resources that could be adapted for the proposed Framework and other resources could be adapted for Scotland such as the BDA 'Dyslexia Friendly Schools Good Practice Guide')	This report recommends the development of a National Self Evaluation Framework alongside a comprehensive national dyslexia training package for Scotland (accredited by GTCS), and implemented in conjunction with the recommendations within the 2014 Education Scotland review.
5. Availability and use of reliable information on children and young people's needs, development and achievement should be improved	Agree with both bullet points. It is crucial that there is more robust and reliable data and that it is used to improve and inform the early intervention and support of pupils with dyslexia.	See points outlined in Section 2 of this paper.	See points outlined elsewhere in Section 2 of this paper.

Conclusion

Dyslexia Scotland would welcome the opportunity for early involvement in discussions with the Scottish Government, Education Scotland, GTCS, CoSLA and STEC, as the partners mentioned in the report's recommendations, to discuss the next steps and to agree a strategy related to the implementation of the Scottish Government response to this important report.

Dyslexia Scotland
21 July 2014