

Dyslexia Scotland press statement Dyslexia – to label or not?

In a new book called "The Dyslexia Debate", Professor Julian Elliott from Durham University says parents are being "woefully misled" about the value of a dyslexia 'diagnosis'. 'Are educational labels like dyslexia helpful or misleading?' was the topic of yesterday's BBC Radio Scotland's 'Morning Call' phone-in programme.

Dyslexia Scotland believes that unless dyslexia, a lifelong Specific learning difficulty, is identified, teachers are not in a position to properly work with the pupil concerned to put the right support in place. Dyslexia is about far more than reading, writing and spelling problems – associated difficulties such as short term and working memory, sequencing, directions and poor organisational skills can have a dramatic impact on dyslexic people's ability to learn and reach their full potential. Dyslexia affects at least 1 in 10 of the population. It is essential that individual pupils' areas of difficulty are identified, as well as their strengths so they can develop to their full potential.

Therefore teachers, employers and others who support people with dyslexia of all ages need a shared understanding of what dyslexia means. All teachers need to be able to spot the initial signs if a child is having difficulties, put support strategies in place and then know where to go for help if the problems persist.

This is why in Scotland a [working definition of dyslexia](#) was adopted by the Scottish Government, Dyslexia Scotland and the Cross-Party Group on Dyslexia. It is also why the free, online 'Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit' www.addressingdyslexia.org was developed, to support all teachers to identify and support pupils aged 3-18 with dyslexia.

This Toolkit adopts the Scottish working definition of dyslexia, has clear links to Curriculum for Excellence and has a traffic light coding – with green sections for all teachers, amber for teachers with some knowledge of dyslexia and red for teachers with significant experience in assessing and supporting dyslexia. It has practical advice, case studies of dyslexia friendly policy and practice in a range of local authorities and Frequently Asked Questions for schools and parents. The questions include the pros and cons of 'labelling', for parents and teachers to consider.

Education Scotland is carrying out a review of support for pupils with dyslexia and a report on the findings is due to be published in the coming months. It will make clear recommendations for any improvements in practice required for schools, education authorities and national partners.

Dyslexia Scotland believes that increased use of the definition and Toolkit so that all teachers are familiar with this comprehensive resource, combined with improved teacher education at all stages in a teacher's career will help to address the inconsistencies that currently exist in the provision of dyslexia support in schools.

Notes to the Editor

Dyslexia is a combination of abilities and difficulties that affect the learning processes in reading, spelling, writing, mathematics, memory or organisation. One in ten people in Scotland are thought to be dyslexic, with up to one in four of these thought to be severely dyslexic.

Dyslexia Scotland is the national voluntary organisation representing the needs and interests of people with dyslexia in Scotland. It provides advice and support for dyslexic children, parents and adults with dyslexia. Dyslexia Scotland is based in Stirling, with a network of 17 volunteer-led branches around Scotland.

Dyslexia Scotland's Helpline: 0844 800 8484

Dyslexia Scotland's website: www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk

Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit: www.addressingdyslexia.org

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