

Hidden disabilities

Dyslexia

Reasonable Adjustments



4% of the population is severely dyslexic and a further 6% have mild to moderate dyslexia.

This means up to 2.9 million workers may be affected.



There is no universally accepted definition of dyslexia, although it is a widely recognised condition, which is included in the World Health Organisation's International Classification of Diseases.

Essentially, it is a neurological condition which affects the way the brain processes information and causes specific difficulty in writing, reading and spelling.

Numeracy, verbal and listening skills, organisational and other non-verbal skills may be affected.

The person or worker may have difficulties with:

- sustained concentration;
- organising activities;
- expressing ideas clearly;
- presenting thoughts succinctly;
- keeping track of appointments;
- reading maps;
- remembering phone numbers;
- completing forms;
- finding their way around a strange place;
- remembering where things have been put;
- reading timetables;
- reading recipes;
- writing letters or cheques; and,
- remembering messages.



It is possible that the person will have been diagnosed as dyslexic while at school and may have been statemented at that time, i.e. received a statement of Special Educational Needs.

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The British Dyslexia Association provides an “**adult dyslexia checklist**” as a first self-diagnosing step. For a formal diagnosis of dyslexia, there are screening tests and full assessments which can be undertaken by specialists.

Main day-to-day effects may be:

- difficulty understanding or following simple verbal instructions;
- persistent and significant difficulty in reading or understanding written material;
- difficulty concentrating;
- take longer than average to read a document;
- find it hard to remember what they have just read;
- find forms confusing;
- have difficulty writing a cheque;
- find it hard to take telephone messages and pass them on correctly;
- find it hard to do mental arithmetic, e.g. adding up change in a shop;
- mix up numbers when they dial or note down a telephone number;
- mix up bus numbers, e.g. reversing 28 and 82;
- mix up dates and miss appointments;
- find it hard to follow a series of verbal instructions or a long explanation;
- need longer than average to pick up new procedures;
- find it hard to take written notes of a meeting; and
- have difficulties banking, shopping or using a cashpoint.

Those with dyslexia are often able to carry out these tasks but at a slower than average pace, or with great effort causing tiredness, or if they are not under stress.



If they can carry out many of these activities but only with mechanical aids such as computers, dictionaries, specialist software and Dictaphones, the effect of the dyslexia without such adjustments should be assessed.

Although people may reduce the effect of their dyslexia over many years by training and self-learning, it is highly unlikely that the effect would last less than 12 months.

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Work Place Reasonable Adjustments: what you and your colleagues can do at your workplace



Discuss options with the worker.

Depending on the nature and severity of their dyslexia, there are numerous adjustments which could be made including:

1. Providing assistance.

2. Using clear typefaces and pastel or matt paper for documents and application forms.

3. Sending application forms on e-mail or disc.



4. Notifying interview questions in advance in the waiting room.



5. Allowing time to read and complete tasks.



6. Providing dictionaries and electronic spell-checks, or colleagues to proofread documents.



7. Giving verbal or written instructions according to which is easiest.

8. Using voicemail rather than written memos.

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Work Place Reasonable Adjustments: what you and your colleagues can Do And at your workplace



9. Communicating verbal instructions slowly and in a quiet location.



10. Recording important instructions on tape.



11. Offering help with prioritisation of tasks.



12. Providing a quiet work environment without distractions.



13. Providing appropriate technology, e.g. computer with pastel background to screen.

14. Support software including voice-activated software, hand-held tape recorder, digital camera, portable writing aids, scanning pen; talking calculator.

15. Allowing the worker to be accompanied to meetings and/or providing notes of content in advance and minutes afterwards.



Some adjustments relevant to Visual Impairment may be helpful.