



Dyslexia Assessment and Consultancy

Email: info@workingwithdyslexia.com Telephone: 020 7582 6117

DYSLEXIA ASSESSMENT: AN EMPLOYER'S GUIDE

Dr Sylvia Moody

Assessment of dyslexia or similar specific learning difficulties is a two-stage process:

- **Diagnostic assessment**
This identifies the employee's strengths and weaknesses in areas such as literacy, memory, phonology, verbal fluency, organisational skills.
- **Workplace needs assessment**
This identifies the specific help and support needed by the employee in his/her particular job.

Diagnostic assessment

A diagnostic assessment should be arranged through one of the main dyslexia organisations or with a private practitioner who is an adult dyslexia specialist. A referral to an NHS psychology department is **not** recommended.

A diagnostic assessment should include the following components:

- (a) review of educational and occupational history;
- (b) comprehensive assessment of cognitive abilities, e.g., verbal skills, memory;
- (c) assessment and detailed analysis of literacy and phonological skills, including *timed* tests of reading comprehension and of writing;
- (d) consideration of emotional problems related to the dyslexic difficulties;
- (e) screening for associated difficulties, such as dyspraxia and visual stress;
- (f) general recommendations for further assessment, help and support.

Workplace needs assessment

There are two ways of arranging a workplace needs assessment, each of which has advantages and disadvantages.

The first way is to arrange the assessment through the government's *Access to Work* scheme. The advantage of this route is that Access to Work will pay for the assessment. Disadvantages are that the assessment may not be carried out by a dyslexia specialist, a skills training programme may not be specified, and you may not receive advice about reasonable adjustments. In other words the assessment may be essentially an IT assessment only.

The second route is to go through a *private dyslexia organisation* which specialises in carrying out workplace needs assessments and in writing reports in a form acceptable to Access to Work. If you do approach a private organisation (or practitioner) to get a needs assessment, it is essential to check that they are qualified to offer this service. The British Dyslexia Association helpline should be able to help you find a suitable assessor.

The disadvantage of the private route is that you, or your employee, will have to fund the assessment. Advantages are that the assessment will be carried out by a dyslexia/dyspraxia expert, who will be able to specify a detailed skills training programme (a crucial element in the support package) and advise you on reasonable adjustments and legal obligations.

Whichever route you go on for the *assessment*, your employee can still apply to Access to Work for the *funding for the training or equipment* he/she requires.

Workplace needs assessment report

The assessment report should include recommendations for *all* of the following:

- A detailed workplace skills training programme which covers all aspects of literacy which are directly related to the employee's work - for instance, research skills, writing reports, reading technical manuals. General work skills should also be covered, e.g., dealing with job interviews or work reviews, contributing to meetings, understanding instructions, time management, organisational skills. An initial training programme should ideally be around 30 hours spread over a period of at least three months. The name of a recommended trainer should be given.
- IT recommendations including advice on how the IT training should be carried out.

It is not useful for training to be delivered in just one day, or one half-day; rather it should be spread out over several short sessions. The trainer should be knowledgeable about dyslexia and deliver the training in a manner and at a pace suitable for a dyslexic learner. The name of a recommended trainer should be given.

- Detailed recommendations about reasonable adjustments, i.e. what actions you, as the employer, can take to support the programme -- for example, giving time off for training, providing a quiet workspace, allowing extra time for tasks to be completed.

If the report you receive does not include *all* of the above sections, you should take up the matter with the assessor, or with the organisation that has provided the assessor, and request relevant additions to the recommendations, and even a further assessment, if necessary.

It is important to stress this point, because it frequently happens that dyslexic employees, after going through the long process of diagnostic and needs assessments, do not receive a comprehensive training package. Adequate training can make all the difference between keeping and losing a job.

USEFUL BOOKS

For employers and dyslexia professionals:

Dyslexia and Employment: a Guide for Assessors, Trainers and Managers.
Edited by Sylvia Moody. Wiley-Blackwell.

Edited by award-winning author, Sylvia Moody, this jargon-free guide to good practice in dyslexia workplace consultancy, and related legal issues, provides comprehensive coverage in four clearly-distinguished areas:

- **Professional dilemma** chapters discuss tricky issues which have arisen during consultancy work.
- **General perspective** chapters present the viewpoint of workplace professionals such as HR managers and trades union representatives.
- **How to do it right** chapters offer advice on how to carry out diagnostic,

workplace needs and legal assessments, and how to devise training programmes.

- **Information Point** chapters provide brief information on general topics such as dyslexic difficulties in the workplace, disclosure of difficulties, and the application of the Disability Discrimination Act.

With contributions from leading experts on workplace consultancy, this definitive guide will be of interest to dyslexia professionals, managers, legal professionals, trades unions, work coaches, mentors and careers advisors.

Endorsement from Jenny Lee, National Adult Dyslexia Coordinator, Dyslexia Action:

This is a comprehensive, invaluable and extremely readable book giving in-depth information and guidance on a wide range of issues affecting professionals who work with dyslexic employees. For me, it is a rare find; the authors do not shy away from the most controversial issues, indeed they confront them head-on, revealing their (and our) dilemmas. They share their internal debates and in doing so both reassure us and give practical advice born out of real experience. This excellent book is a must for workplace consultants and indeed anyone working with dyslexic people. I strongly recommend it.

For a general introduction:

Dyslexia in the Workplace: an Introductory Guide. Diana Bartlett and Sylvia Moody. Wiley-Blackwell.

For employees:

Dyslexia: How to Survive and Succeed at Work. Sylvia Moody. Random House (Vermilion).

Dyslexia: Surviving and Succeeding at College. Sylvia Moody. Routledge.

Living with Dyspraxia. Mary Colley. Jessica Kingsley.

Help organisations:

The British Dyslexia Association 0845 251 9002 www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

DANDA (dyspraxia/ADD support) 020 7435 7891 www.danda.org.uk

Comprehensive information sheets on dyslexia in the workplace

www.workingwithdyslexia.com

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