

DYSLEXIA ADULT NETWORK NEWS No 6 - Autumn 2017



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THIS 6th EDITION OF NETWORK NEWS COVERS

Background to the Dyslexia Adult Network

Dyslexia Awareness Week

REPORT HEADLINES Westminster AchieveAbility Commission on Recruitment

Working with Government

Widening Partnerships

Some background on the Dyslexia Adult Network for new readers

The Dyslexia Adult Network (DAN) is a coalition of representatives from the major UK charities dealing with dyslexia, dyspraxia and neurodivergence (ND) in adults, together with nationally recognised specialists. Our efforts are mainly focused on the following areas:

- 1. Employment issues:** we aim to effect change through working with senior civil servants in various branches of the Department for Work and Pensions. (Unfortunately we lost our link with the Minister for Disabled People when the post-holder changed.) **Recruitment** is being highlighted as a major area of concern by the work of the Westminster AchieveAbility Commission on Recruitment and Dyslexia/ND, on which we sit. **** read on for headlines from their report ****
- 2. Presenting a positive image of dyslexia/ND** and of the need to release this potential
- 3. Widening our scope and influence by building alliances** across the disability sector, feeding All Party Parliamentary Groups, responding to consultations and highlighting issues that affect our population.
- 4. Trying to monitor areas where people with dyslexia/ND are liable to be digitally excluded** and pushing for **accessible means of communication** – this includes surveys, which do not always support assistive technology.

Do join our email list and/or social media discussions.

DISCUSSION TOPIC FOR OCTOBER: SUCCESS FACTORS FOR ADULTS



Dyslexia Awareness Week, 2-8 October

To mark Dyslexia Awareness Week, the British Dyslexia Association is promoting a special offer: **they are making their e-learning programme for adults available for FREE.**

Entitled **Success at Work and Home**, this 10 module programme allows you to make the most of the strengths dyslexia can confer. It's also packed with advice for finding your niche in life. It has been developed by Margaret Malpas.

To access this, email: elarning@bdadyslexia.org.uk and quote DAW adult programme.

SEE ALSO <http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/news/item/name/dyslexia-awareness-week-daw-2017-resources-now-online>

<https://www.helenarkell.org.uk/event/dyslexia-awareness-week-2017.php>

Dyspraxia Awareness Week begins on 8th October: website for information on events: <https://dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk>

October 5th is World Dyslexia Awareness Day – and the Dyslexia Awareness day in England & Wales designated for Adults.

Scotland is holding Dyslexia Awareness Week from 6th to 11th November
Details of events will be on www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk



Westminster AchieveAbility Commission (WAC) on Recruitment

Readers of Network News will be aware of WAC - the **Westminster AchieveAbility Commission** set up to investigate barriers to employment, identify recruitment processes that disadvantage neurodivergent people and highlight good practice.

WAC has now gathered evidence from up to 700 respondents, called expert witnesses and heard from government. This data will enable us to produce a comprehensive report with recommendations to be launched in January 2018. Meanwhile a **Media Release** has been prepared for World Dyslexia Awareness Day on October 5th – and is being disseminated along with this edition of Network News.

Key findings have been identified, as follows:

- 1) Lack of awareness at all levels
- 2) Disclosure can lead to discrimination and this in turn leads to a spiral of stress
- 3) Government measures are inadequate
- 4) Reasonable adjustments focus on the individual rather than systemic barriers presented by the organisation
- 5) The Equality Act is not being properly implemented
- 6) Psychometric tests disable neurodivergent applicants
- 7) Recruitment and selection procedures are too language-based, resulting in an overload of working memory during interviews
- 8) Application processes are too literacy-based; on-line forms often fail to include spellchecks and support assistive technology
- 9) Selection and progression depend on showing neurotypical traits
- 10) Inappropriate performance management practices can undermine progression and even lead to employment tribunals.

Katherine Hewlett



WIDENING PARTNERSHIPS

AchieveAbility works with partners

Katherine Hewlett

1. The REFUND project: at grassroots level, AchieveAbility is working with Camden Single Homeless Project, St Mungos, the Euston Partnership and Islington Multidisciplinary Floating Service to provide educational opportunities for staff and their clients, (who are recovery). Research has shown that there is a high incidence of self-medication and homelessness for people who are Neurodivergent (Disability Today 2014). So far the REFUND project has reached 35 people through training sessions and short courses to raise awareness of Neurodivergence and the strengths of Neurodivergent people. To provide skills development in: communications, IT, Literacy and entry to the workplace. The REFUND project is now entering Phase Two, bringing the service to the wider Single Homeless Project London community.

2. Job Centre Plus in East London have now requested that AchieveAbility provide awareness sessions on Neurodivergence to JCP staff. Two sessions have taken place in Waltham Forest and Redbridge. Redbridge and AchieveAbility now have a referral system set up for signposting JCP dyslexic clients to relevant opportunities and advice.

3. Next Step Programme (upskilling into work)- AchieveAbility is working with Waltham Forest Dyslexia Association to provide the Next Step Programme. This programme is to be delivered in three stages leading from basic literacy and numeracy to the now established Next Step course for dyslexic adults who wish to upskill or return to the workplace.

All-Party Parliamentary Group for Assistive Technology (APPGAT)

DAN has recently established links with the [APPG for AT](#). This group was launched in March and has already held two events in Parliament and plans more for this year (to receive notice of the group's events, sign-up to its quarterly newsletter [here](#)). The all-party think tank **Policy Connect** acts as the secretariat for the group and has appointed a new group manager, [Robert McLaren](#). Robert is himself dyslexic and an AT user - and has joined the DAN Jiscmail. DAN looks forward to continuing to work with the APPGAT to share information and ideas and promote each group's activities.

Disability @ Work

Prof Victoria Wass, statistician and one of the authors of *Ahead of the Arc* (the response to the *Work, Health & Disability Green Paper*) is keeping us updated regarding her follow-up meetings with DWP, BEIS, the Treasury and the Work & Health Unit.

Victoria defines the two main issues as

- 1) the need to measure and monitor the presence of disability in the workplace - the government should take a lead on this
- 2) the absence of 'disability' in the main government strategy documents dealing with the economy and employment.

Cardiff University, where Victoria is based, hosts DEEPEN – **the Disabled Employment Evidence-based Partnerships** (contact DEEPEN@cardiff.ac.uk). They have developed a quiz as a way of exploring disability discrimination at work and providing useful information. SEE http://cardiff.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3fptsXs7QIxAA4t

The Disability Co-operative Network for Museums – Becki Morris

Visit the website <https://www.musedcn.org.uk/> to see several items relating to dyslexia/neurodiversity.

The next edition of DAN Network News will carry a report of the project **Museum of the Labelled** which is gathering people's thoughts and experiences, positive and negative, in order to raise awareness of neurodiversity in society. Jess, the project leader, (who I am mentoring) aims to do this by delivering a participatory art project and by locating relevant museum objects.

Offer of free sessions from Nancy Doyle: recruits needed!

Nancy informs us that she needs participants to complete her study on coaching workplace strategies. To this end, she is running FREE coaching workshops in London and Brighton in November and February - there are currently 4 spaces left in Brighton (Thursday 5.30-8pm) but about 25 spaces in London (Wed 5.30-8pm or Sat 10-12.30pm). Participants need to come to a 1:1 assessment in October, Dec and Jan, and then attend the 6 workshops in either November or February.

For every complete data set she will donate £15 to the BDA, which will raise £1000 in all. For full details, SEE <http://www.geniuswithin.co.uk/blog/uncategorized/are-you-dyslexic-free-memory-coaching-workshops/>

Employment Tribunals

In case anyone has not heard, it has been found **unlawful to charge fees** either to claim or to proceed to a hearing. This applies both to Employment Tribunals and to Employment Appeal Tribunals. Fees paid should be returned.

DAN welcomes this news. **Please let us know** if you come across anyone who has had their fees returned.

What has happened to the Work, Health & Disability agenda?



Will the seed of the *Improving Lives* Green Paper finally grow into a White Paper and eventually into legislation?

We hear various murmurs that 'something will happen in the autumn'.....

With our cross-disability networks and good contacts in DWP, DAN is well placed to hear about developments.

We will pass any news on via our website, email/jiscmail and social media outlets.

WORKING WITH GOVERNMENT

Melanie Jameson

I have been doggedly following up various new senior DWP contacts, available to us after the Westminster Commission session in which the strategic lead of Access to Work was invited to respond to concerns that had arisen.

These concerns echo the problems that you have brought to the attention of DAN.

Access to Work (AtW)

Yet again we have raised the issue of being asked to produce 'medical evidence' of dyslexia - or to go to HR to organise a diagnostic assessment (!)

We are also asking WHY workplace-needs reports have become anonymous and if this is now official policy.

We believe that difficulties in the delivery of the AtW service come down to three main areas:

- i) An unrealistically **tight turn-around time** between first contact and the finished report which has a number of implications - from personalised, appropriate well-sourced recommendations to the difficulty of fixing appointments for assessor, employee and line manager at very short notice.
- ii) **Poor awareness** of dyslexia/ND amongst AtW Advisers and the Call Centre which initiates the process.
- iii) **Inadequate quality controls**, particularly the absence of any routine measurement of adequacy and effectiveness of the assessment, and recommendations for the employee and employer.

DAN is returning to the job of raising awareness. We plan to make an e-learning programme available for AtW Advisers and the new Disability Employment Advisers, while offering face-to-face training for the Hidden Impairments Team in Halifax, with the back-up of Yorkshire MP, Barry Sheerman.

Disability Confident

I am chasing up old and new DWP contacts to take forward issues relating to Disability Confident: How can take-up be promoted? How is it monitored to ensure that the three levels of DC status are evidenced in the organisation? We have also been able to feed in findings from the Westminster AchieveAbility Commission surveys.

The last edition of Network News reported on the APPG on Disabilities at which Professor Hoque questioned the success of this initiative.

The Work & Health Innovation Fund

Finally, we are trying to get answers to questions regarding the Work & Health Innovation Fund. I have been in correspondence with the appropriate DWP staff member to enquire about uses of this £40 million Fund and the application process.

Surprisingly, neither question can be answered, despite a presentation from the Work & Health Unit to the Hidden Impairments National Group as long ago as March 2016, entitled '*Improving health & achieving work*'.

All we have to go on is the following information, from the email correspondence:

'The main aim of the (Work & Health Innovation) Fund is to build the evidence around what works to support people with disabilities and long term health conditions to return to, and remain in, work. To identify projects, we are looking for a fit with our strategic approach – i.e. helping to deliver on the manifesto commitment to get 1 million more disabled people into employment in line with our strategy - , value for money, deliverability, and whether a project will help to build the evidence, so importantly ensuring there is a robust evaluation approach in place.'

We have unfortunately not fully mapped out a clear process of how people can apply.'

So, more evidence of disarray and delay in government – but if anyone has a proposal, contact me (mj@dyslexia-malvern.co.uk) and I can supply the emails of the policy team for an initial consideration.

All Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs)

DAN is connected to three APPGs – on Disabilities, Dyslexia and Assistive Technology. We shall continue to use these forums to raise concerns, make alliances and strengthen the voice of the sector. This is particularly important, given the emphasis of the government disability employment agenda on people with health conditions.



HM Prison &

Probation Service **'Learning Difficulties' in the prison population**

Better news regarding (Specific) Learning Difficulties and Learning Disabilities (LDD) in prisons: Prison Governors are now 'empowered' to commission extra services, within agreed funding streams, which include assessment of LDD.

It is stated that 29% of prisoners fall into these categories, which I would divide as follows: 19% with one or more Specific Learning Difficulties (according to solid research in 2005 by Dyslexia Action) and 10% with a learning disability.

However, what is most encouraging is an assurance by the Ministry of Justice regarding 12 mandatory requirements for governors; these include three of particular interest:

- *screening of prisoners' LDD on first reception*
- *education providers to be appropriately trained and qualified to meet additional support needs of prisoners with LDD*
- *all prison information, forms and digital systems to be available and/or designed with suitable adaptation to support those with dyslexia.*

So, more follow-up to do, to ensure that good practice is put in place.....



This edition of Network News was edited by Melanie Jameson