

Supporting a Child or Young Person with Dyslexia

A guide for parents



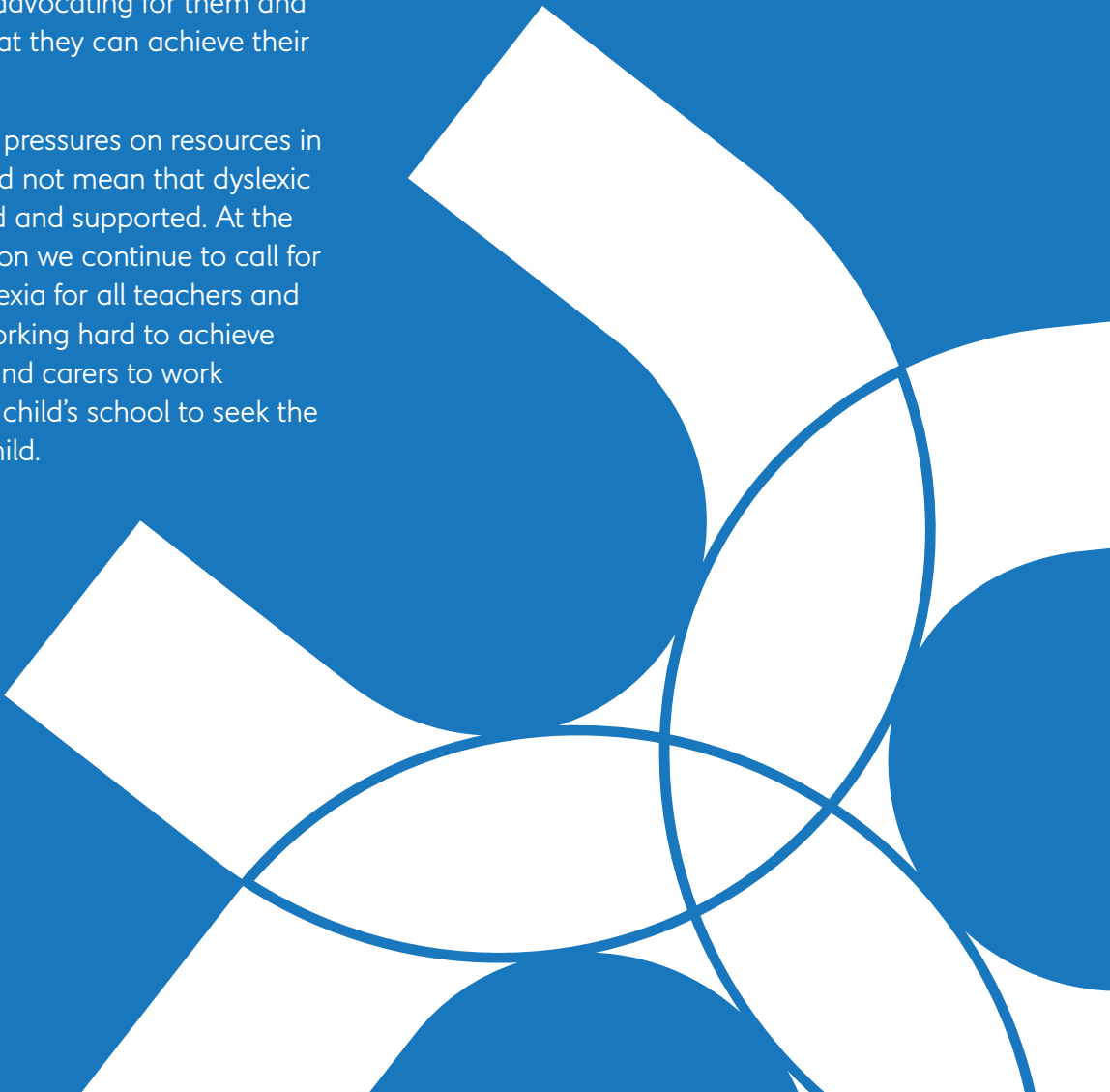
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An introduction to this publication

This short guide has been developed to help parents and carers to support a child or young person who has or is thought to have dyslexia. It aims to explain how to navigate identifying your child's dyslexia, supporting them at home, and how to work together with your child's school.

All dyslexic children will have their own individual challenges and strengths. Some will require more support than others. Parents and carers play a vital role encouraging and enthusing children in their learning as well as advocating for them and championing them so that they can achieve their full potential.

There are currently huge pressures on resources in education, but this should not mean that dyslexic children are not identified and supported. At the British Dyslexia Association we continue to call for more training about dyslexia for all teachers and educators and we are working hard to achieve this. We advise parents and carers to work collaboratively with your child's school to seek the best outcome for your child.



About the British Dyslexia Association

We believe that everyone with dyslexia should be able to reach their full potential in life. We campaign for an inclusive society that acknowledges, accepts and empowers individuals with dyslexia so that we can help create a kinder, fairer and stronger world.

Around 10% of the population has dyslexia. Dyslexia doesn't discriminate, occurring across all ethnicities and in people from all social groups. A vast number of individuals are undiagnosed and do not receive adequate support.

As a result, they face daily barriers: in education, in the workplace and in life. They may be excluded from activities, shamed for their differences or simply disregarded. Too many children and adults with dyslexia find it hard to thrive within a system that often fails to recognise, value or encourage them. And as a society, we are poorer for it.

At the British Dyslexia Association, we want to help all children and adults with dyslexia flourish. We believe that our world should welcome different ways of thinking and celebrate neurodiversity. By representing our community as the voice of dyslexia, we aim to ensure that all members of society, and especially those most disadvantaged and least privileged, receive the support they deserve.

We advocate for change in three ways

Firstly, we cultivate and maintain expertise in the field. For over fifty years we have been at the forefront of knowledge and understanding about dyslexia. We set the standard for professional training and work closely with researchers to enable continued learning and development in our sector. We provide expert information and resources about dyslexia.

Secondly, we engage widely with all stakeholders. We run a national helpline for the general public and regularly deliver events and webinars for groups or organisations to raise awareness and disseminate best practice. We liaise regularly with our members and work closely with our fantastic network of Local Dyslexia Associations who provide local knowledge and assistance. We collaborate with other organisations working in our sector to strengthen our approach.

Finally, we empower people living with dyslexia. We support individuals seeking screening or assessment and help them to understand their statutory rights. We work with schools, employers and other organisations to encourage inclusive practice. We work with policymakers both locally and nationally to challenge the current status quo and call for changes that unlock the potential of our community.

We welcome you on this journey with us as, together, we create a dyslexia-friendly society.

Section 1

What is dyslexia?: A combination of strengths and challenges

Dyslexia is a Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD). Some people prefer the term Specific Learning Difference. Dyslexia is likely to present a combination of abilities and challenges.

There are varying definitions of dyslexia. The most widely used and accepted definition comes from The Rose Report (2009). This is the definition that the BDA has adopted.

'Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling.

Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory, and verbal processing speed.

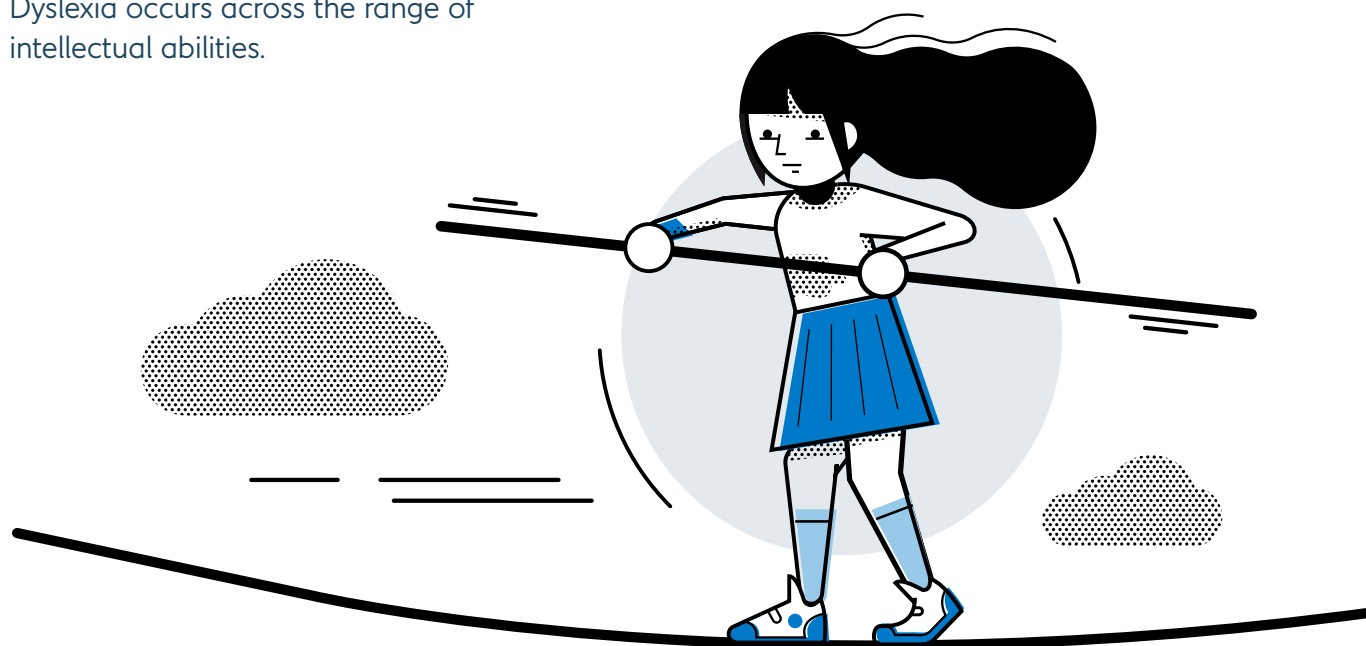
Dyslexia occurs across the range of intellectual abilities.

It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut-off points.

Co-occurring difficulties may be seen in aspects of language, motor co-ordination, mental calculation, concentration, and personal organisation, but these are not, by themselves, markers of dyslexia.

A good indication of the severity and persistence of dyslexic difficulties can be gained by examining how the individual responds or has responded to well-founded intervention.'

(Rose, 2009: p. 9 & 10)



Section 1

What is dyslexia?

The BDA also add the following to The Rose Report definition of Dyslexia:

‘The British Dyslexia Association (BDA) acknowledges the visual and auditory processing difficulties that some individuals with dyslexia can experience and points out that dyslexic readers can show a combination of abilities and difficulties that affect the learning process. Some also have strengths in other areas, such as design, problem solving, creative skills, interactive skills and oral skills.’

BDA (2010)

Dyslexia is called a specific learning difficulty because it only impacts on certain areas of an individual’s learning, rather than being a general learning difficulty/disability that has an impact on all areas of someone’s performance and is usually linked to intellectual/cognitive capability.

Dyslexia occurs independent of ability and socio-economic background.

There is no connection between dyslexia and intelligence. Dyslexia occurs across all sectors of society and is a life-long condition.

A different way of processing information

Dyslexia primarily affects reading and writing skills, but it also impacts information processing. It can affect the amount of information that somebody can remember and also the speed with which they can access and recall information.

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Dyslexia occurs independent of ability and socio-economic background.

Every individual is likely to be different

As human beings we are all different. Whilst there may be some common traits associated with dyslexia each individual’s experience will be unique to them. People are shaped not just by their dyslexia but by personality, experiences, parents, environment and numerous other factors. Therefore, it is not possible to provide a template of what dyslexia is, or say what support an individual may need. Each dyslexic person should be treated as an individual, with their own unique profile of strengths and challenges

Included within the Equality Act 2010

Dyslexia is included within the Equality Act 2010. Where a condition has a long- term impact on someone’s day-to-day living it can be classed as a disability. In many cases dyslexia fits this criterion. This means dyslexic individuals are therefore afforded protection under the law if they are discriminated against. Schools and colleges should make reasonable adjustments to ensure that dyslexic individuals can access the curriculum.

Section 1

What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia quite often co-occurs with other SpLDs

It is not unusual for dyslexia to co-occur with other specific learning difficulties (SpLDs) such as dyscalculia (difficulty with maths), developmental coordination disorder (commonly known as dyspraxia) or attention deficit disorder (ADD/ADHD). Dyslexia can also occur with other conditions such as autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), or with speech, language and communication difficulties.

Incidence rate and heritability

It is estimated that ten percent of the population are dyslexic. Statistically, this makes dyslexia the highest incidence SpLD or disability. There is likely to be at least one dyslexic child in every classroom. Dyslexia is genetic in origin and usually inherited.

Strengths and challenges

All individuals will have their own strengths and challenges. Here are some of those typically found in dyslexic individuals.

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It is estimated that ten percent of the population are dyslexic

Strengths

- Often good verbal communicators
- Creative - not just in terms of artistic creativity but creativity of thought
- Curious and able to explore new ideas and adapt to new environments
- Atypical problem solvers, coming up with innovative ways of working
- Good interpersonal skills
- Resilient and determined

Challenges

- Phonological processing – this is the ability to process and discriminate sounds in language in the right order. This can have a significant impact on learning to read, write and spell.
- Issues with short-term and working memory – this may make someone a “frequent forgetter” or be unable to retrieve information quickly on demand. It might also cause problems with being organised; knowing what to do when and in what order.
- Speed of processing information may be slower, not because the brain is working more slowly but because information is taking novel and different routes. This can lead to fatigue and overload.

All of these challenges if not properly recognised, understood, and supported can lead to reduced self-esteem, loss of confidence and in severe cases mental health issues.

Not all individuals will experience all of these things and each individual should be treated as an individual.

Section 2

Identifying dyslexia: Indicators and diagnosing

We've put together a few things to help you identify that an individual may be dyslexic and explain how dyslexia is diagnosed.

Signs a young person may be dyslexic include:

- Family history of similar difficulties
- A lack of enjoyment of reading
- Difficulties with reading accuracy or fluency
- Persistent difficulties with spelling
- Difficulties remembering sequential information
- Exhausted at the end of a school day
- Word finding difficulties
- Poor structure and organisation of written work
- Difficulty producing clear, legible handwriting
- Lack of confidence or low self-esteem
- Work avoidance tactics
- Behavioural difficulties
- Appearing forgetful
- Poor concept of time

Checklists

There are numerous paper-based and online questionnaires which may be a useful starting point. Find out more about checklists [here](#).



Section 2

Identifying dyslexia

Dyslexia screener

A screening tool is something that a non-specialist can administer. A lot of schools use screening tools. They can provide indicators that someone may be dyslexic but are not as accurate as an assessment. They are, however, a useful starting point. You may want to talk to the school to find out if they can carry out a screening test. Find out more about screeners [here](#).

Diagnostic assessment

Before deciding to have an assessment, you are advised to talk to the school or college. Children and young people should not need a diagnostic assessment to receive support. Some schools may not provide any additional support for those who have been diagnosed. Most schools carry out their own testing as evidence for exam access arrangements.

A diagnostic assessment should be carried out by a specialist teacher who:

- holds a Level 7 dyslexia specialist teacher qualification. Assessors who have completed a BDA accredited course can use the letters AMBDA after their name.

- has a valid Assessment Practising Certificate (APC).
- is a professional member of a body such as the BDA.

It is also important to check that they hold professional indemnity insurance, and have been DBS checked.

Diagnostic assessments can also be carried out by an educational psychologist that is HCPC registered. This may be suitable where a child has complex needs. It is important to check that they are insured and have been DBS checked.

An assessment will produce a detailed report of the profile of strengths and challenges being experienced by the individual. If it is possible, the assessor will make a diagnosis (sometimes this may not be possible). They will provide recommendations for support.

Find out more about diagnostic assessments [here](#).



Section 3

Schools: How best to collaborate

If you think that your child might be dyslexic, it is important to try to work closely with your child's school for the best outcome for your child. We hope that you will be able to develop a positive working relationship with your child's school.

Schools are, however, under enormous resource and performance pressures. Teachers often have very little training on dyslexia and other SpLDs. Therefore, it is important to:

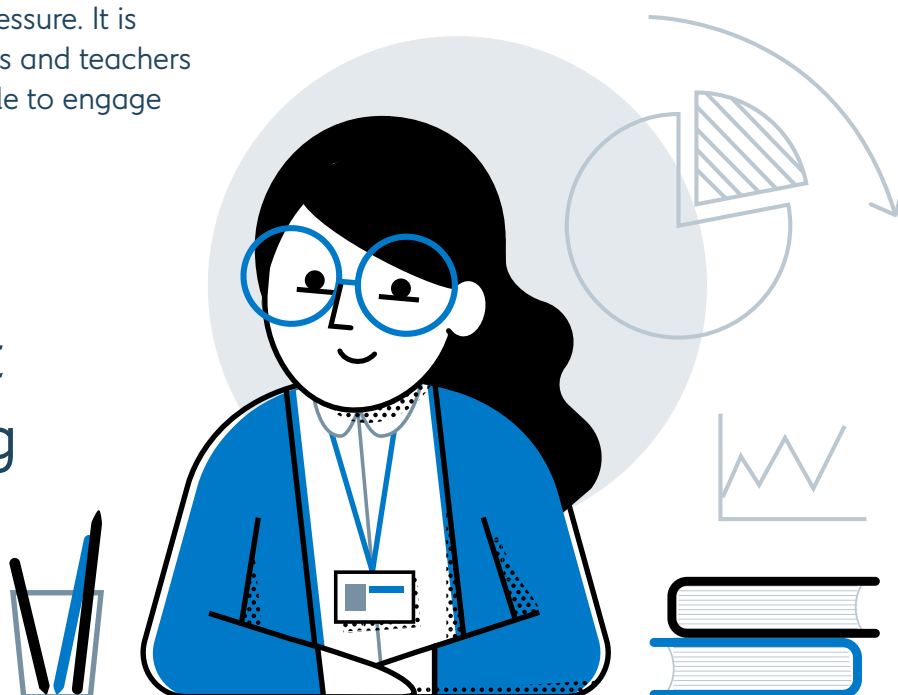
Recognise that both parties have a shared goal

Most teachers are passionate and committed to what they do. They have a genuine desire to see the children in their class succeed, but they are likely to be under enormous pressure. It is important to recognise that parents and teachers share the goal of a happy child able to engage and progress with their education.

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Try to be honest
and open during
interactions

Reduce barriers and deal with power imbalances

Some parents may feel intimidated by school and teachers due to their own experiences; some may equally feel angered by the same experiences. Likewise, teachers may feel under attack or lack confidence in their knowledge leading to defensive behaviours. Try to be honest and open during interactions and acknowledge these emotions and try to understand each other's point of view. Be confident in your knowledge and understanding of your child.



How to build a positive working relationship with school

The aim is to build rapport, trust and good communications with your child's school and teachers.

Just like any other relationships in life, it will depend on having two things:

- The same objective
- The resources to meet each other's needs

The objective is that, both you and the teachers want the best for your child and for him/her to develop to their full potential. However, sometimes this goes wrong in the detail. You will want your child to reach his/her maximum potential. The teachers may not hold the same view as you as to what this is. They may also hold other views on what the child needs to learn to become a broadly developed individual. It is clear from this that very clear communication is required to navigate these waters.

Teachers may be hampered by lack of resources in terms of their budget or time. This means that a lot of our schools are having to juggle competing priorities and make compromises. It is crucial that you consider things from the teacher's point of view. They have perhaps thirty individual children in their class all with individual needs of some kind to satisfy. Often, expressing your understanding of this, goes a long way to creating the rapport and trust with your child's teacher.

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Avoid the desire to “have a quick word”

The key to managing all this is to ensure that all your interactions with the school are clear and based on joint problem solving.

It can be helpful to:

- State what you understand the situation to be, how you feel and what you would like to happen next
- Ask the other party to state what they understand the situation to be, how they feel and what they would like to happen next
- Agree jointly on a way forward

Where you have concerns about your child it is important to discuss and address these with the school. Avoid the desire to “have a quick word” with a teacher before or after school.

This is unlikely to be effective as the teacher may be pre-occupied getting things ready before classes start or rushing to another meeting or ready to go home after school. If you would like to discuss your child, their needs, and your concerns, approach this interaction in a calm, considered and assertive (not aggressive) manner.

1. Make an appointment. This may be with the class teacher and the SENCo in the first instance. If you need to escalate your concerns you may meet with a member of the Senior Leadership Team, the Headteacher and/or the school governor responsible for SEND.

2. Allow enough time within this appointment to discuss matters properly.

3. Create an agenda. Share the agenda with everyone involved before the meeting so they have chance to investigate your concerns thoroughly before you meet.

4. Go prepared with evidence. Make some notes for yourself that contain the key points that you want to get across and why. It is always good to be able to identify specific examples relating to your concerns.

5. Take a friend or relative that knows you well who can take notes and provide emotional support. Talking about our children or listening to other people talking about them can raise difficult emotions. It is important to have emotional support in these meetings from someone who knows you well enough that they can step in and take over for a minute if your emotions start to get the better of you.

6. Take notes. This is really important. This ensures you have a written record of what was discussed to refer back to. Again, take someone with you, if possible, to do this so that you can concentrate on the conversation.

7. Agree action points and set a time frame for these. You want this meeting to lead to some positive actions for your child. Make sure these are noted, including who is responsible for them and the time frame by which they are going to be completed.

8. Agree a date for another meeting to review progress of action points. It is important to continue to have this dialogue with your child's school and check in with what progress has been made and what else might need to be done. So before ending the meeting agree another date for a future meeting. Make sure the date of the meeting is confirmed with everyone, and is in their diaries.

9. Share notes and action points after meeting with everyone. The notes should simply represent a record of what was said, by whom, what actions were agreed to be taken, the target date for completing these actions and the date of the next review meeting. Make sure that you share these with all concerned to act as a reminder.

Hopefully, by following this approach you will find that your concerns are taken seriously, and support strategies are implemented effectively for the benefit of not just your child, but all concerned.

It is also important to talk to the school if you are concerned that dyslexia may be causing or contributing to any of the following:

- Anxiety/low mood
- Stress/panic attacks
- Anger/aggression
- Phobias
- Eating/self-harming behaviours

Schools are increasingly experienced in supporting children and young people through mental health difficulties and they will have strategies to suggest for supporting your child.

Section 4

Support at home: How parents can help

There are lots of resources available to support a young person with dyslexia at home, and different ideas and approaches, so we won't be able to cover everything here. You can find more information about supporting at home on our website, www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

One of the most important things you can do is build your child's self-esteem. This is vital for their mental health and wellbeing so we would encourage you to do this as part of any approach to parenting a young dyslexic person.

Individuals build up confidence through trying out new things, being successful and enjoying feelings of achievement. This encourages them to go on and try more new experiences and if these succeed, then more confidence is built.

The reverse of this is that if an individual tries something and does not succeed, there is no afterglow of satisfaction. Instead, they may feel they have failed; that puts them off trying new things in the future. This is a vicious circle which is extremely destructive to learning as we all learn through experiencing new things and reflecting on these new experiences, throughout our lives.

If you apply this thinking to your dyslexic child, you can see how trying new things at school, particularly in the area of literacy, may not be a positive experience for them. We often build our own self esteem by measuring ourselves against others, so if a child is not reading as well as their peers they can develop a negative view of themselves and their capabilities and not want to keep trying, or find it stressful to do so.

Unfortunately, reading, writing and spelling are areas that need regular practise. Therefore it is important to balance this with opportunities for your child to undertake other activities too which they enjoy and consider themselves successful at so that they feel good about themselves.

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1. Look for lots of different things your child can try out so that you and they can find out what they like doing.
 2. When they have found something they enjoy and might be good at, try to provide time for this activity, find other people who can help with this activity, and encourage it. It is critically important that a dyslexic child has something they enjoy and feel they are really good at.

Section 4

Support at home

3. Create lots of opportunities for your child to be active, like running and climbing. In part this is to get the “feel good” chemicals released and also to burn off any frustration.

4. Recognise that there are things your child is going to have to accomplish which may be challenging and involve sustained effort to learn to read and write legibly.

5. Talk about learning from mistakes, encourage your child to replace ‘I can’t do it’ with ‘I can’t do it YET.’ Comment positively on their determination and focus and let them know that you believe in them.

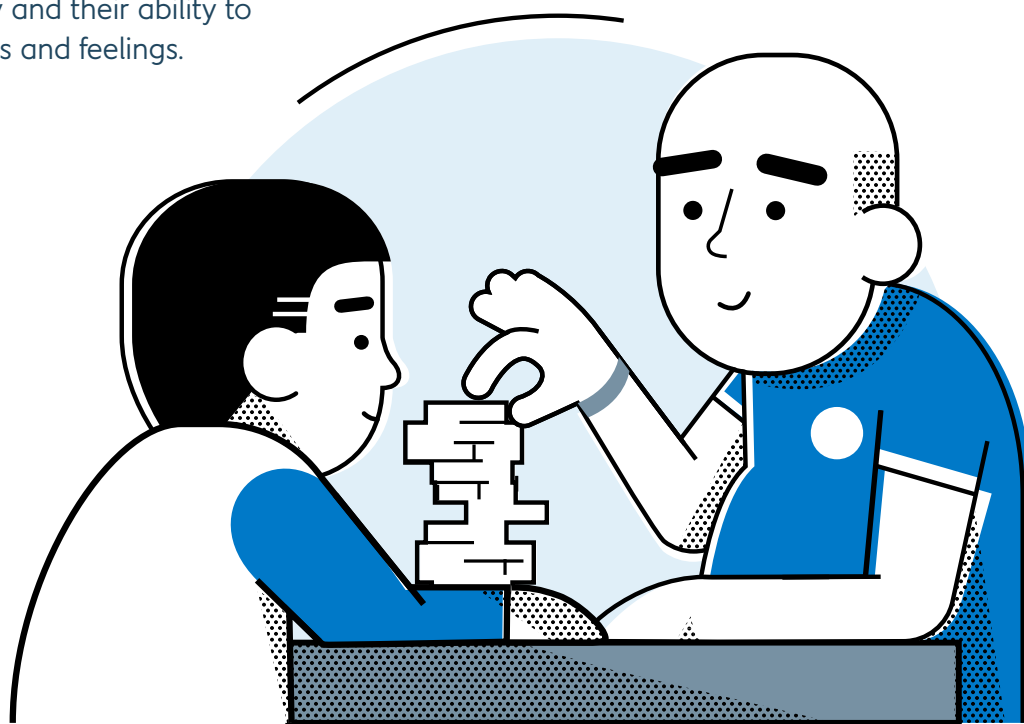
6. Read to them, talk about what you’re reading. Make sure there are lots of pictorial stimuli around the home. Use the library, museums, art galleries, TV, gaming, YouTube, music shows, theatre, films, etc. Anything that stimulates interest and discussion. Use downloadable audiobooks and discuss them. All these things are enjoyable and will build your child’s vocabulary and their ability to articulate their thoughts and feelings.

7. Play games to support literacy. These may include:

- Making up stories in sequenced steps using pictures or toys
- ‘Simon says’ or ‘I went to the market and bought...’ taking it in turns
- Counting or tapping out syllables
- Rhyming silly poems, singing rhyming songs
- ‘I spy’
- Any type of writing: notes, lists, letter, recipes

You can find more ideas on the BDA website.

8. Be careful to ensure that your requests are achievable. Beware of demanding too much: “just do five more minutes”, “just read another page”. Learn to recognise when your child has had enough and move them on to another activity.



There are also some things which you should try not to do:

1. Don't chastise your child because they cannot do something. This may be due to the way they think and process information. For example, if they can't remember where their books are, it may be because they have problems with organising and sequencing.
2. Don't discuss your worries and concerns with family, friends or teachers when your child is listening. You will need support and to talk to others, just find times to do it when the child is not around. Choose people to support you that will be sympathetic and helpful and are good listeners. Positive thinking strategies are important for you too. BDA's Local Dyslexia Associations are excellent for providing support.
3. Watch out for learned helplessness. It is important as a parent that you give your children the chance to learn independence. It is important that the child learns to do some things for themselves even if they find it difficult.
4. Don't become pushy and over-anxious! This is easy to say but if you are trying to help your child and that involves taking on responsibility for some things that are normally the preserve of the classroom, it is easy to get over involved. Remember your child still needs a home life and to relax. Little and often is a very good maxim for working with your child on literacy or numeracy practice. Home should be a safe place.



Supporting emotional wellbeing

Talking about problems and feelings is a good way to notice how certain situations can make your child react, and to create an opportunity to consider what the next options may be. This can help them overcome feelings of powerlessness, and enable them to build coping skills, problem solving skills and resilience.

You can talk about what it feels like to be anxious – is it a tummy ache? Do you freeze? Does your mind go blank? And think about what to do in those situations. Recognising those feelings, what triggers them, and learning strategies for coping, such as taking some deep breaths and telling yourself “This is just a feeling or an anxious thought. I can handle this”, can support and empower your child.

Remember also that in order to support your child’s emotional wellbeing, you will need to recognise your own emotions, particularly if you have unresolved issues around your own dyslexia or school experiences. Be kind to yourself. Recognise that you don’t need to ‘fix’ things. Focus on building a positive and emotionally healthy relationship with your child that will last a lifetime.

For further advice and support

There are a number of charities and organisations that provide additional information about supporting learners with emotional or mental health needs or with anxiety, including:

- [Anna Freud Centre](#)
- [Young Minds](#)
- [Mind](#)
- [Anxiety UK](#)

Section 5

Education Health & Care Plans

What if your child needs more than the school can provide?

Most dyslexic children can be supported in school through SEN Support.

For children who require additional support over and above this, there is a process in place to apply for an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Applying for an EHCP should be a straightforward process which parents or the school can instigate.

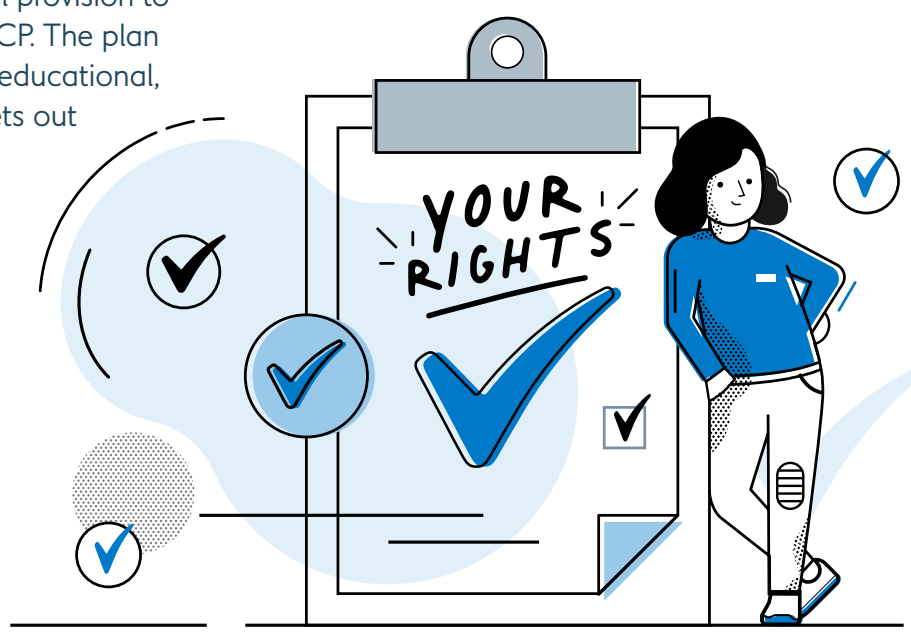
What is an EHCP?

An Educational Health & Care Plan (EHCP) is for a child or young person between 0 and 25 years who has or may have special educational needs (such as dyslexia) and for whom it may be necessary for special educational provision to be made in accordance with an EHCP. The plan coordinates a child/young person's educational, health and social care needs and sets out any additional support required. It is a legally binding document.

Relevant legislation

There are a number of specific pieces of legislation that are relied upon by Local Education Authorities and others to inform their activity with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) activities. It is worth being aware of these if you are pursuing an EHCP.

- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Children & Families Act 2014](#)
- [SEND Code of Practice 2014](#)
- [Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014](#)



Who can apply for an EHCP?

Any parent, young person or school can request an EHC Needs Assessment under section 36(1) of the Children and Families Act 2014.

It does not have to be the school who requests this. Often parents are unaware of this and rely on the school to make an application. The school may be reluctant or unable to do so.

Every school must fund the first £6,000 of any support that is detailed on an EHCP. This comes from school's general budget and is not ring fenced for SEN support. Schools may not have or be able to spend this money. This funding formula may go some way to explain some schools' reluctance to identify or refer a child for an EHCP needs assessment. If the assessment confirms that the child needs an EHCP, the school will have to find the funds for the first £6,000 of any support that is recommended, from a budget that they may not have available.

What the law says

Under S36(8) of the Children & Families Act 2014: The Local Authority (LA) must secure an EHC Needs assessment if the Authority is of the opinion that:

- a) The child or young person has, or may have special educational needs
- b) It may be necessary for special educational provision to be made for the child or young person.

Parents are often told that additional support, beyond that which is ordinarily provided in school is not necessary, or that they won't get anything more than they are already getting. This is generally a cost-based decision and may not be based on looking at the specific needs of an individual child.



What is necessary will depend on the individual needs of the child.

The word 'necessary' is key here. What is necessary will depend on the individual needs of the child and this cannot be identified without assessing what those needs are. Hence the needs assessment is a vital part of this process to identify what is in fact necessary. What is necessary for one child, may not be necessary for another.

If you wish to request an EHC Needs Assessment you will need to write to the education department at your local authority. For example; you can go onto your LA's website and type in 'request an EHC Needs Assessment' and it will generally give you the postal or email address to send your request to. You do not need, at this stage to provide any evidence.

Myths about EHCPs

Parents are sadly sometimes given incorrect information when applying for an EHC Needs Assessment. Here are some of the more common examples:

“We don’t recognise independent assessment reports”

This is false. A SEND Tribunal will afford them the same weight as Local Authority (LA) Assessments. If a school or local authority will not accept them, they may be opening themselves up to a claim of disability discrimination. In any event if you go to Appeal, the SEND Tribunal will listen to them.

“We don’t recognise dyslexia”

This is false. Special Educational Provision has been redefined. The Children & Families Act 2014 says:

1. A child or young person has special educational needs if he or she has a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her.
2. A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she
 - a) Has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or
 - b) Has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions

“Your child has to be X number of years behind their peers or only at Y level of progress”

This is false. Para 6.23 Code of Practice says:

1. “It should not be assumed that attainment in line with chronological age means that there is no learning difficulty or disability. Some learning difficulties occur across a range of cognitive ability and left unaddressed may lead to frustration, which may manifest itself as disaffection, emotional or behavioural difficulties”. *Hertfordshire County Council v (1) MC & (2) KC SEN 2016 UKUT 385 (AAC)* on this issue

The EHCP process as it should work.

Once you or the school have requested an EHC Needs Assessment the process should work as follows.

Six Weeks – The Local Authority (LA) have six weeks to decide whether to carry out an EHC needs assessment. If the answer is no, a Parental Appeal to the SEND Tribunal can be made.

The guidance in the document only relates to policy in England, devolution in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales means policy relating to education can differ.

- For more information for Scotland, visit, www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk.
- For Wales and Northern Ireland, please contact the British Dyslexia Association Helpline.

The EHC Needs Assessment

If the LA decide to carry out an EHC needs assessment, the purpose will be to gather a holistic view of the child and their needs. Assessments and evidence are required from a selection of sources which will likely include some or all of the following:

- **Parent/carers** – Under the Children & Families Act 2014 parent's views and opinions are enshrined in law and have to be considered. The view of the parent/carers is an important part of this process.
- **Head/SENCO** – The school will be required to submit evidence. This may include any assessments they have carried out, test results data/attainment levels, progress rates, behavioural issues and information of any intervention successful/unsuccessful that they have implemented
- **Medical** – This is often a pediatrician rather than a GP. This provides an opportunity to explore other co-occurring conditions such as ADD, ASD, dyspraxia, etc. It is also important to include any mental health concerns here.
- **Educational psychological/specialist dyslexia teacher assessment** – This will provide evidence of dyslexia and the severity of the dyslexia. It should also provide some recommendations for support strategies
- **Social care** – Sometimes this assessment may not be necessary but can be helpful where for example behaviour or mental health issues are having an impact.

- **Hearing and visual impairment where relevant** – It is important to have hearing and vision assessed to identify any physical challenges.
- **Speech and language therapist/occupational therapist** – If there are issues associated with speech, language and communication or dyspraxia it can be helpful to have these assessments as well

It is the LA's role to facilitate these assessments, but where a parent/carers wishes to pay for a private assessment, or they already have this evidence, that is current, they may do so and such evidence will be acceptable.

At 16 weeks from the date the application is received, the LA must decide whether to issue an EHC Plan or not. The decision should be based on the evidence that has been collected as part of the EHC needs assessment process. If the LA decide not to issue an EHC plan, a Parental Appeal to the SEND Tribunal can be made.



The purpose is to gather a holistic view of the child and their needs

The content of the EHCP

At 18 weeks - If the LA have decided to issue a plan, they must issue a draft plan. You will then have 15 days to comment on the plan and request any amendments or changes. The EHC Plan is a complex twelve section document (as section H is in 2 parts).

- Section A – Parent's/child's views
- Section B – Child or young person's Special Educational Needs
- Section C – Health needs related to their SEN
- Section D – Social Care needs related to their SEN
- Section E – SEN outcomes
- Section F – Special Educational Provision
- Section G – Health provision
- Section H1 – Social Care provisions resulting from Section 2 of the Chronically sick & Disabled Persons Act 1970
- Section H2 – Social Care Provision reasonably required
- Section I – Educational Placement
- Section J – Personal Budget
- Section K – Appendices and Advice/Information

The Educational sections of an EHC Plan are Sections B, F & I.

Within 20 weeks - The final EHC plan must be issued within 20 weeks from the EHC Needs Assessment request.

If you are unhappy with the content of the final plan, a Parental Appeal to the SEND Tribunal can be made. B, F and I are the only sections which have legally enforceable Right of Appeal to the SEND Tribunal .

SEND Tribunal

You have a right of appeal to the SEND Tribunal at various stages within the EHCP process:

- Refusal to carry out an EHC needs assessment
- Refusal to issue an EHC plan
- Unhappy with the content of the final plan that is issued.

Sections B,F and I are the only sections which have legally enforceable Right of Appeal. Section B sets out the child's special educational needs; Section F outlines the provision to support these needs and Section I sets out the placement (school) that has been named.

Appeals to the SEND Tribunal

Many parents choose a solicitor or the services of an advocate to help them negotiate the process of an appeal, and to pull together the evidence to support their case. This can be an expensive option. You do not have to have legal support and can choose to apply yourself, or with support from a charity or SEN advice service.



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have legal support
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Section 5

Education Health & Care Plans

Local dyslexia associations and the BDA helpline may be able to signpost to someone locally who can help. Further information is available on the website [here](#).

The following may provide useful help and guidance including template letters that you can use:

<https://www.ipsea.org.uk/>

<https://sossen.org.uk/>

Your local Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Services (SENDIASS) offer information, advice and support for parents and carers of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). More information can be found [here](#).

Using an expert witness

The LA will have their own therapists and psychologists at the tribunal to support their position. Some may also appoint a barrister to represent them. Some parents choose to pay for independent expert reports and use expert witnesses to challenge the LA at tribunal. This can be an expensive process as each expert cannot credibly exceed their area of expertise, so you are likely to need more than one expert.

If you are considering using an expert witness you should ensure that the expert is:

- Willing to quantify
- Willing to attend the SEND Tribunal
- Familiar with the Practice Direction of Judge John Aitken February 2010

The expert's reports need to state:

- What expert help is needed?
- How much?
- How often?

You do not need to have legal representation to appoint expert witnesses, but you will need to discuss this with the expert witness before appointing their services. If you are intending to pay for independent expert reports to challenge the LA at tribunal it is worth determining from the outset whether these experts are also happy to attend the tribunal, and that they have experience in doing so.

Legal representation

It is important to understand that the role of the expert witness is not to make legal points, ask questions, or give a closing submission. You will potentially need a solicitor/barrister for that purpose. It is also important to know that you can speak at the Tribunal and make legal arguments yourself or with the help of a charity or advocate.

This is a complex legal process and many parents do seek good legal representation to support them with navigating this process and seeking a successful outcome. Many others successfully achieve this without legal support.

Final thoughts

As a parent or carer, you play a critical role in supporting your child and their education. You know your child. You know what they are struggling with and the impact this is having on them.

In this guide we have outlined how you can identify if your child might be dyslexic and we have suggested activities you can do at home to support them. We strongly advise you to discuss your concerns with your child's school and work closely together with them to ensure strategies are in place to support your child's learning.

Remember your child is unique and special just as they are. There are many paths through life and success does not look the same for everybody. Build a strong relationship with your child, spend time with them, do activities together and celebrate their strengths and achievements.

Finally: know that you are not alone. The British Dyslexia Association was founded over 50 years ago by parents who shared your concerns. We run a national helpline as well as events, information webinars, conferences and training. We are here to help.

The BDA believes that every child should be able to access appropriate educational support to reach their full potential. We will continue to campaign for better training about dyslexia for all teachers and for all schools to have access to specialist dyslexia teachers.



If you would like to read more, you can purchase the BDA's book: 'Parenting a Dyslexic Child' [via this link.](#)

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