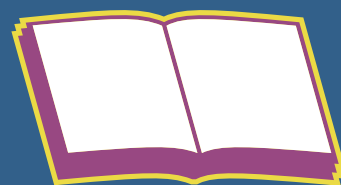
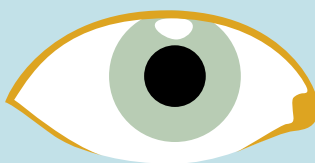


Summary



Keys For Learning

NALA Specific Learning Difficulties Policy Guidelines



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Summary

Adult literacy providers strive to assist all adult literacy learners resolve their literacy difficulties. For some adult literacy learners they may experience specific learning difficulties (SLD). NALA includes: dyslexia, dyspraxia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder/ attention deficit disorder (ADD/ADHD) and Asperger's Syndrome under the umbrella term of SLD.

Adult literacy practice in Ireland provides an excellent foundation for all adult literacy learners including those experiencing SLD. It is confidential, places the learner at the centre and works to the learner's interests and strengths.

NALA established the SLD policy project in February 2003 with a two year timeframe.

Keys For Learning: NALA Specific Learning Difficulties Policy Guidelines were developed from the NALA SLD survey results, discussions with the NALA SLD working group and international and national research.

The guidelines are presented under the following headings:

- Dedicated Dyslexia and SLD Tutor
- Outreach and Promotion
- Assessment
- Tutor Training
- Teaching and Learning
- Supports
- Resources

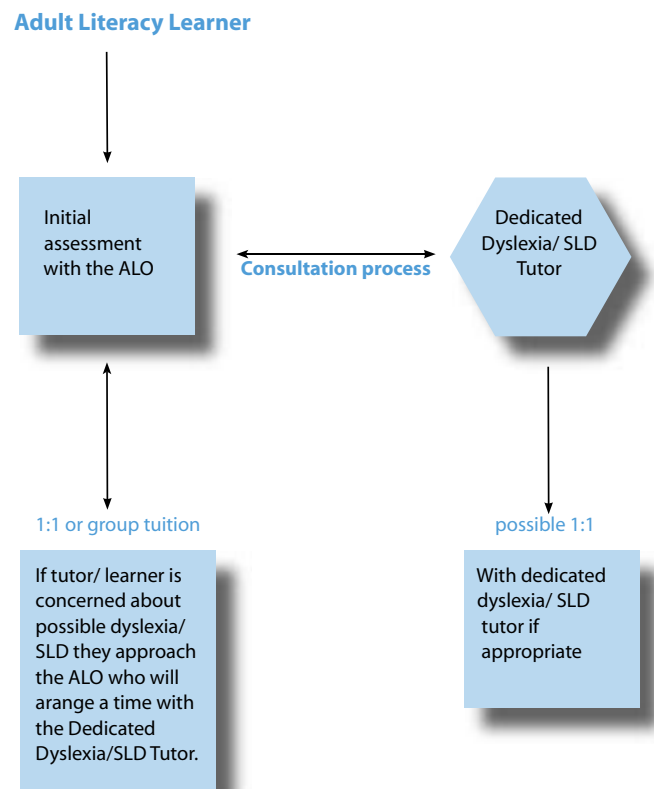
Dedicated Dyslexia and SLD Tutor

Each adult literacy scheme needs the services of a dedicated dyslexia and SLD tutor. Examples of some of their duties should include:

- Assessment/ support/ profiling/ guidance

- Tutor training
- Tutoring adult literacy learners experiencing dyslexia and SLD

Model for Dedicated Dyslexia and SLD Tutor



Outreach and Promotion

Adult literacy services promote their services to the local community and promote awareness of literacy issues and provision. The promotional and awareness raising activities should highlight the issue of SLD including dyslexia.

Assessment

Initial assessment

The initial assessment in the adult literacy service includes a discussion with the learner about their learning history, strengths and Interests. The initial assessment will inform an individual learning plan. During the initial assessment, the adult literacy learner may



bring up the issue of dyslexia and SLD. It is important for the adult literacy organiser (ALO) or centre manager and tutor to listen to the learner and explain that the one-to-one tuition and their individual learning plan may assist them in resolving their literacy difficulties.

Reviewing Progress

After a period of tuition, usually 6 weeks or so, the tutor and learner review the work done in the context of the initial assessment and individual learning plan. These reviews of progress may highlight questions related to possible dyslexia or SLD.

If the tutor or learner feels there is a specific difficulty within the learning process, they should investigate the possibility of dyslexia and SLD. The ALO should bring together the tutor, learner, and dedicated dyslexia and SLD expert tutor. The dedicated dyslexia and SLD expert tutor should conduct an informal dyslexia assessment of the specific learning difficulties the learner is experiencing.

After the informal dyslexia assessment, the dedicated dyslexia and SLD expert tutor should write a report on the learner's strengths and strategies to assist the learner. A follow up meeting should be held to discuss the assessment and how the individual learning plan should be revised based on identified needs and goals.

Progression

If the learner progresses to group tuition or another course, the ALO or dedicated dyslexia and SLD expert tutor should inform the new tutor or course provider about:

- the learner's specific learning difficulty and strategies that have been developed to assist them in the learning process,

- dyslexia and SLD and ways that the new tutor can assist the learner in the new course.

Tutoring Training

The training of tutors is an important aspect of ensuring adult literacy learners experiencing dyslexia and SLD receive quality provision. NALA includes dyslexia and SLD tutor courses in the annual training calendar. The ALO is encouraged to send all interested voluntary and paid tutors on NALA training.

Initial tutor training

The information covered in initial tutor training within adult literacy services will assist adult literacy tutors when they work with learners experiencing dyslexia and SLD. Initial tutor training should include information on dyslexia and SLD.

Training requirement for voluntary tutors

Voluntary tutors working with adult literacy learners experiencing dyslexia should have completed:

- a dyslexia and SLD in-house training day, or
- a NALA dyslexia and SLD training day.

Training requirements for paid tutors

All paid tutors working with adult literacy learners experiencing dyslexia should have completed:

- a dyslexia and SLD in house training day, or
- a NALA dyslexia and SLD training day.



They should also enrol in the NALA/WIT Literacy and Special Needs module, or equivalent.

Outside consultants

Various consultants offer training days on dyslexia. This is a valuable resource for the adult literacy service. It is important to make sure the course is compatible with good adult literacy principles and practice. The provider should have knowledge not only about dyslexia and SLD but also the needs of adult literacy learners.

In house training

In some adult literacy services, ALOs or dedicated dyslexia and SLD expert tutors may organise in-house training for the tutors. This is an extremely important resource for the adult literacy scheme.

Teaching and Learning

The learner's goals, needs and interest are at the centre of all good adult literacy practice. This practice within the adult literacy service assists all adult literacy learners including those experiencing dyslexia and SLD. When working with an individual experiencing SLD, it is important to use a multi-sensory approach to assist learning process. This includes:

- visual – learning channel via the eyes,
- auditory – learning channel via the ears, and
- kinaesthetic – learning channel via the body or movement of the body.

Supports

The adult literacy services need to receive support from other agencies and services who assist adult literacy learners. A Dedicated Dyslexia and SLD tutor is a role which should be developed as a key support for the adult literacy learners and literacy schemes.

The guidance service is also an important support to assist adult literacy learners experiencing dyslexia and SLD with progression routes and the emotional effects of their learning difficulties.

Resources

There are numerous resources available for adult literacy learners experiencing SLD. These resources include assistive technology, books and websites. Adult literacy services should ensure they have access to the above-mentioned resources.

The NALA SLD policy guidelines recommendations are under the following headings:

- Raising Awareness
- Assessment
- Tutor training
- Tutoring and Learning
- Guidance Counselling
- Supports for adult literacy services

Raising Awareness

NALA should do the following:

- Develop dyslexia and SLD resource information for tutors and learners that may include an information pack, DVD, website or a video.
- Lobby policy makers to consider the issues of dyslexia and SLD adults in educational policy.
- Ensure that the Read Write Now TV and radio series includes dyslexia and SLD.



- Lobby RTÉ to have the issue of adults experiencing dyslexia and SLD included in educational TV and radio programmes.
- Include information or awareness of dyslexia and SLD in all NALA work. All NALA policy and project development should include an awareness of dyslexia and SLD.

Other agencies, such as health boards, projects funded by the government departments, volunteer organisations, employers, library services and citizen advise services should do the following:

- Be aware of dyslexia and SLD and how it affects adults.
- Develop policy and procedures that take into account dyslexia and SLD and how an adult experiencing dyslexia and SLD may have difficulties with paperwork or publications.

Primary and secondary schools and teachers should do the following:

- Give parents information about dyslexia and SLD including publications from the Dyslexia Association of Ireland and VEC adult literacy services.
- Be aware of heredity link of dyslexia and SLD so parents who approach them can be advised about the VEC adult literacy services as appropriate.
- Host information meetings and events for parents about dyslexia and SLD.

Teacher training courses should do the following:

- Include a core requirement about dyslexia and SLD and the link with adult literacy.

Universities and Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) Colleges should do the following:

- Include information about dyslexia and adult literacy in courses where the students will be working with the public (i.e. lawyers, social workers, doctors, teachers).

Employers and trade unions should do the following:

- Target awareness raising programme for employers (involving social partners such as employer organisations) and trade unions.

Assessment

There was a strong response in the NALA SLD survey to the development or adaptation of a dyslexia assessment tool. The tool would focus on discovering the strengths of the learner, informing the individual learning plan (ILP) and developing coping strategies in all areas of life and learning. The dyslexia assessment tool goes beyond assessment or labelling to the strengths of the learner and how they learn best.

NALA should do the following:

- Facilitate an expert group to investigate the development of a dyslexia and SLD assessment tool.
- Ensure this tool complements the NALA Mapping the Learning Journey Assessment Framework.



VEC adult literacy services should do the following:

- Provide access to and funding for an educational psychologist who can give a full assessment who can give a full assessment if required.

The Department of Education and Science should do the following:

- Fund the work of the expert group in developing the dyslexia assessment tool.

Tutor Training

The training of adult literacy tutors in the area of dyslexia and SLD is an important aspect to ensure adult literacy learners experiencing dyslexia and SLD receives quality literacy provision. The ways of working with an adult literacy learner experiencing dyslexia and SLD are complementary to the ways of working with a non-dyslexic/SLD learner.

NALA should do the following:

- Continue providing dyslexia and SLD tutor training events.
- Host SLD including dyslexia and adult literacy seminars to facilitate the sharing of expertise, research and practice.
- Develop further dyslexia and SLD courses based on the needs of learners, tutors and ALOs/ co-ordinators.

VEC adult literacy services should do the following:

- Facilitate follow up for the tutors with dyslexia and SLD training. The follow up should include: supports, resources, networking and further training.

The NALA/ WIT Specific Learning Difficulties and literacy module should include:¹

- definitions of SLD, dyslexia, Asperger's Syndrome, ADHD and dyspraxia,
- underlying principles of the tutoring needs of adults experiencing dyslexia and SLD,
- development of materials for tutoring adults experiencing SLD,
- identification and assessment of dyslexia and SLD, and
- strategies for adult literacy tutors working with dyslexia and SLD.

Tutoring and Learning

Adult literacy learners experiencing dyslexia and SLD should do the following:

- Access supports and resources such as assistive technology to assist in resolving their literacy difficulties.
- Access information about what dyslexia and SLD is and assistance in how it affects them in their learning and life.

¹There is currently a NALA WIT Literacy and Special Needs module. This module includes disabilities and specific learning difficulties. As the areas of disabilities and specific learning difficulties are vast, the two topics should be separated with the development of a NALA/ WIT Specific Learning Difficulties and Literacy module.



Adult literacy tutors should do the following:

- Understand that dyslexia is about how information is processed differently. The learner learns in a different way.
- Access supports in developing tutoring methods, ways, strategies and approaches that will assist tutoring.
- Use multisensory approach in their tutoring as it includes the strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches.
- Investigate the development of coping strategies for non-literacy effects of dyslexia and SLD.

Guidance/ Counselling

VEC adult literacy centres should do the following:

- Extend access to an Adult Education Guidance Counselling service to all VEC areas.

Guidance counsellors should do the following:

- Give an input at the initial tutor training or future training event .
- Know about and understand SLD including dyslexia and literacy.

Supports for Adult Literacy Service

NALA should do the following:

- Develop a SLD including dyslexia web page for tutors.

- Develop a network of tutors working with adult learners experiencing dyslexia and SLD.
- Facilitate a support group for adult literacy learners experiencing dyslexia and SLD.
- Foster links with other NALA projects about dyslexia and SLD.
- Lobby the government for funding to employ dedicated dyslexia and SLD tutor in all VEC adult literacy services.
- Employ a specific person within NALA who is responsible for dyslexia and SLD development work.

VEC ALOs or co-ordinators should do the following:

- Provide access and funding to tap into a multidisciplinary team who would include: guidance counsellors, educational psychologists and speech therapists.
- provide access to funding for assistive technology that adult learners may need to assist them in resolving their literacy difficulties.

The Department of Education and Science should do the following:

- Fund the development of a Dedicated Dyslexia and SLD tutor. The Dedicated Dyslexia and SLD tutor is critical to providing a quality service to adult literacy learners experiencing SLD including dyslexia.

What is Nala?

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) is a non-profit membership organisation, concerned with national co-ordination, training and policy development in adult literacy work in Ireland.

The Agency was established in 1980 and has campaigned since then for recognition of, and response to, the adult literacy issue in Ireland.

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The National Adult Literacy Agency
An Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearachta do Aosaigh

