Keys For Learning

NALA Specific Learning Difficulties Policy Guidelines

NALA

Foreword

The current NALA Strategic Plan has a commitment to develop policy guidelines and supports for practitioners working with adults experiencing specific learning difficulties, in particular dyslexia. This came about as NALA members have been requesting support and guidance when working with adults in adult literacy services with such difficulties. The type of guidance requested ranged from a clear explanation of specific learning difficulties (SLD) and how they may affect an adult learner to specific training and tips on how best to support such adults. In some cases tutors were looking for reassurance that they were approaching this work correctly and that the ethos and approaches of adult literacy worked well with adults with an SLD.

In order to get this information, NALA employed a dedicated worker for a two-year period to draw up policy guidelines and provide supports. This work began in earnest with a survey being issued to adult literacy providers to ascertain their experiences in the field of specific learning difficulties. From the responses received, it was clear there are many different approaches to working with adults with a specific learning difficulty, mainly dyslexia, but that ultimately specialist resources are very limited and much in need.

This information was then combined with international research in the field of SLD and the expertise of a working group of experienced practitioners, researchers and adult learners, to provide this policy document. It contains definitions of the areas covered by SLD, the results of the survey questionnaire as well as guidelines for practitioners working with people with SLD. It also makes recommendations for further work in this area, which will enhance the quality of the service to people with SLD who are in adult learning. I have no doubt that practitioners and managers will find this document very useful in their work, as will those with the responsibility of ensuring the development of services to adults with literacy difficulties, who also have a SLD.

I would like to thank all those who returned questionnaires providing the SLD project with much needed information. I would also like to thank the members of the working group, in particular its Chair Rosamond Phillips, who all gave of their time and expertise with such generosity. Finally I would like to acknowledge Bridget Gormley, the Policy Worker responsible for the project whose passion and commitment to this area has ensured the high standard and practical nature of these guidelines.

Inez Bailey
Director

NALA Specific Learning Difficulties Guidelines and Recommendations

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Abbreviations

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder
AEGI	Adult Education Guidance Initiative
AEO	Adult Education Officer
ALO	Adult Literacy Organiser
AS	Asperger's Syndrome
CDVEC	City of Dublin Vocational Educational Committee
CTC	Community Training Centre
DAI	Dyslexia Association of Ireland
ILP	Individual Learning Plan
ITB	Institute of Technology Blanchardstown
IVEA	Irish Vocational Education Association
NTDI	National Training and Development Institute
SLD	Specific Learning Difficulties
STTC	Senior Traveller Training Centre
VEC	Vocational Education Committee
WIT	Waterford Institute of Technology
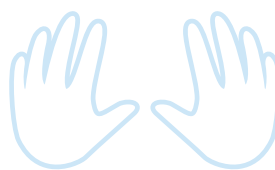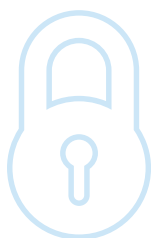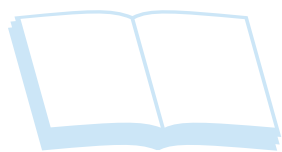
Section 1

Introduction

One of the aims of Step 6 of the Strategic Plan 2002-2006 for the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) is to develop policy guidelines and supports for practitioners working with adults experiencing specific learning difficulties (SLD), including dyslexia, the most generally recognised difficulty. The membership of NALA highlighted the need to investigate how adult literacy learners are affected by SLD and how they can best be supported.

NALA established the SLD policy project and recruited a policy worker with a timeframe of February 2003 to February 2005. The first phase of the project is the development of SLD policy guidelines and support for the adult literacy service. Under this phase, a NALA working group was established to include key stakeholders and experts in the area of specific learning difficulties.

The second phase of the project will include raising awareness about SLD and providing information and training for all groups who assist adult literacy learners experiencing SLD.

Rationale

NALA is developing the SLD policy guidelines because SLD is an issue for some adult literacy learners and adult literacy services want to provide quality provision to all learners.

Dyslexia is generally a difficulty with reading and writing and is more recognised than other SLDs by those working with adults resolving their literacy difficulties. So, it is the term most used by adult literacy services and tutors. NALA acknowledges that the other SLDs can also affect people in resolving their literacy difficulties.

The NALA SLD policy guidelines and supports include dyslexia, dyspraxia, attention hyperactivity deficit disorder and Asperger's Syndrome under the umbrella term SLD.

Background

Learner centred tutoring is the core ethos of the adult literacy service. NALA's mission is to ensure all adults with literacy difficulties have access to a range of high quality learning opportunities. There are 33 VECs with at least one full time Adult Literacy Organiser (3 counties have part-time organisers) and there are 135 services (many are outreach). These VEC services are the main providers of a dedicated adult literacy service in Ireland. Learners typically receive 2 hours literacy tuition per week, equivalent to 2 weeks full time education a year. There are currently 31,579 (as of August 2004) learners attending VEC adult literacy services. The service depends heavily on 4,215 (as of August 2004) trained voluntary tutors, who provide 10,000 hours of literacy tuition per week. This represents a contribution to the State a value of approximately €8.88m a year.

Literacy tuition also takes place in other VEC projects, such as Senior Traveller Training Centres and Youthreach, as well as in community education, community development and centres for people with a disability. Prison education services, SIPTU and trade unions also provide literacy tuition.

Research shows that the issues that affect adults experiencing literacy difficulties are similar to the issues of those experiencing SLD. Literacy difficulties not only affect reading and writing but also affect all areas of an adult's life, including family, community and employment.

Definitions

What is adult literacy?

NALA defines adult literacy as:

"…the integration of listening, speaking, reading, writing and numeracy. It encompasses aspects of personal development – social, economic, emotional – and is concerned with improving self-esteem and building confidence. It goes far beyond the mere technical skills of communication. The underlying aim of good literacy practice is to enable people to understand and reflect critically on their life circumstances with a view to exploring new possibilities and initiating constructive change. All good literacy work starts with the needs of the individual, known as the learner centred approach." (National Adult Literacy Agency Strategic Plan 2002-2006)

What are Specific Learning Difficulties (SLD)?

In Ireland, the **Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Bill (2004)**, (which replaces the draft of the Education for Persons with Disabilities Bill) states that in the Act:

*"**special educational needs** means, in relation to a person, a restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability, or **any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition** and cognate expressions shall be construed accordingly;"*

This Act has implications for dyslexia and all specific learning difficulties, as it includes those who learn differently. This Act, when activated, will have resource and funding implications for all educational services.

The British Dyslexia Association includes the following under Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD):

- dysphasia – speech and language delay or deficit,
- dyspraxia – motor and co-ordination difficulties,
- attention deficit disorder with or without hyperactivity (ADD/ADHD),
- autism, Aspergers Syndrome, Tourette Syndrome, and
- dyslexia.

NALA defines specific learning difficulties as an umbrella term that includes: dyslexia, Asperger's Syndrome, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and dyspraxia (now known more commonly as Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD)). Individuals experiencing SLD have a specific problem with learning or processing information. They learn differently, so normal mainstream teaching methods may not work for them.

Individuals experiencing SLD have different strengths and weaknesses. The ways SLD affect the individual vary from person to person. All individuals experiencing SLD will have different patterns of strengths and weaknesses.

For some people experiencing SLD they can have co-morbidity of difficulties. Co-morbidity is when two specific learning difficulties are presented at the same time. For some people they may experience dyslexia and dyspraxia and have various difficulties because of both difficulties existing together.

The four SLDs that generally affect people in different areas of learning, processing information and communicating are:

- dyslexia - a difficulty with reading and writing,
- Asperger's Syndrome - a difficulty with social interaction,
- attention deficit hyperactivity disorder - a difficulty with attention and concentration, and
- dyspraxia - a difficulty with motor co-ordination and planning.

In the next section, we give the definitions and characteristics of different SLDs, and outline strategies to assist adult literacy learners experiencing SLD.
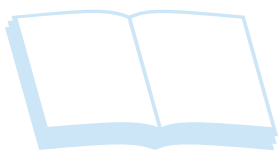
What is Dyslexia?

A) Definition

The Irish Government Task Force on Dyslexia (2002) definition is as follows:

> *Dyslexia is manifested in a continuum of specific learning difficulties related to the acquisition of basic skills in reading, spelling and/or writing, such difficulties being unexplained in relation to an individual's other abilities and educational experiences. Dyslexia can be described at the neurological, cognitive and behavioural levels. It is typically characterised by inefficient information processing, including difficulties in phonological processing, working memory, rapid naming and automaticity of basic skills. Difficulties in organisation, sequencing and motor skills may also be present. (p.31)*

Dyslexia is generally seen as a difficulty with reading and writing but it can also affect time management, organisation, sense of direction and numeracy. The difficulties occur across the lifespan and range from mild to severe. People experience dyslexia in varied ways.

Everyone will have difficulties with different areas in their lives and learning. For example, some people are disorganised but it does not stop them from accomplishing tasks they set out to do. It is the number and pattern of difficulties that defines dyslexia and other SLDs.

Every person is different, and the same applies to individuals experiencing dyslexia. Some people have little difficulty with reading or writing but have problems with time and planning. For others, it is spelling and not reading that presents a difficulty.

Many adult literacy learners experiencing dyslexia may have had a poor school experience. They may feel anxiety, frustration and anger about their learning history. Others may have been supported by school or family in developing coping strategies.

All adults experiencing dyslexia have individual strengths and skills that enable them to accomplish tasks and goals in their community, family and work or education. It is important when working with adult learners experiencing dyslexia to keep this in mind and work to their strengths. Some individuals have good spatial awareness, such as 3D imaging and global thinking skills.

To assist someone experiencing dyslexia or SLD in resolving their literacy difficulties, the tutor should draw on their knowledge of multisensory approaches, use of over-learning exercises and learning styles in their lesson planning.

B) Characteristics of dyslexia and how it may affect someone's learning

Adults experiencing dyslexia may present with one or several of the following:

- confusion between left and right or other directions,
- difficulty with pronouncing words,
- finding it hard to remember new facts and names,
- confusion with times and dates,
- describing themselves as someone who forgets quickly rather than learns slowly,
- difficulty reading new material,
- difficulty remembering phone numbers, or
- finding it hard to recall the names of words or objects.

Specific difficulties with literacy learning can include:

- confusing letters and words that look somewhat alike (for example b/d, p/q, m/w, n/u, was/saw, cat/act, from/form),
- inability to match speech sounds with letters and vice versa,
- difficulty copying words and numbers from a book or blackboard,
- difficulties with numeracy,
- poor handwriting, and
- problems with spelling.

C) Strategies for adult literacy tutoring

An adult literacy tutor working with an adult literacy learner experiencing dyslexia should use a multisensory approach to assist in resolving literacy difficulties. The information should be introduced into the brain in as many ways as possible. For example, when learning the letters of alphabet, the learner should say the sound out loud (auditory), see the letters on flashcards (visual) and trace them with their finger (kinaesthetic).

The learning plan needs to be relevant to the learner's interests. This will ensure that the learner remains highly motivated and that they achieve their goals.

Below are some suggested strategies that adult literacy tutors could use in assisting an adult literacy learner experiencing dyslexia.

Reading
- Find out the reading interest of the learner.
- Make up a personal storybook.
- Use an element of fun.

Auditory

- Use tapes and books.
- Talk about reading.
- Try poetry like Haiku (for syllables).
- Use a tape recorder for reading and writing.

Visual

- Use paired reading.
- Highlight words.
- Discover word patterns.
- Use colour coding.
- Use flashcards, pictures.
- Use cloze exercise for reading.
- Experiment with font size and style to see what suits the learner best.
- Use coloured paper.

Kinaesthetic

- Try games such as snap, memory, fish, bingo and crosswords.

Spelling

- Use relevant words.
- Focus on their priority words.
- Review rules such as plurals and so on.

Auditory

- Use tapes and CDs for word sounds.
- Develop mnemonics.
- Use rap, rhyme and rhythm.
- Use speak/read/recite/repeat aloud.
- Say the word funny (e.g. Wed-nes-day).
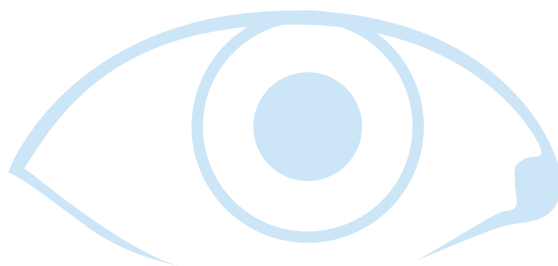
Visual

- Match words to pictures and colours.
- Break up words by using phonics.
- Look for the words within words.
- Develop associations of letters to pictures.
- Use cloze exercises with letters of words.
- Highlight the part of the word learner needs to focus on (for example, acc-**ommo**-dation).

Kinaesthetic

- Use computers.
- Try modelling clay to make letters and objects.
- Beat out the syllables with finger or pencil.
- Use letter tiles.
- Use crosswords.
- Cut out letters from newspapers or magazines.
- Use computer-spelling programmes.
- Write the words through repetition and cursive writing.

Writing

- Keep a diary.
- Try lined copybooks.
- Use a quality-writing implement like a felt pen or pencil.
- Use good quality paper.

Auditory

- Listen to tapes or CDs of books, stories, poems, songs or raps.
- Use storytelling.
- Act as a scribe for the learner.
- Compose poems, raps and lyrics out loud.

Visual

- Break words into images.

Kinaesthetic

- Join the dots (for individual letter writing).
- Use modelling clay.
- Practise with pipe cleaners or straws.
- Use hand signs for b and d.
- Use tracing paper.
- Use physical supports.

Handwriting

- Try coloured overlays.
- Use coloured paper.
- Use highlighting.
- Talk about pen holding.
- Practise pen control movements in zigzags and patterns.
- Use physical supports such as sloping writing surface.
- Try cursive writing that encourages writing in "chunks" rather than letter by letter, to encourage automaticity.

Numeracy

- Use actual money.
- Try role-plays, menus, catalogues and shopping list.
- Use dominos.
- Use card games like patience.
- Try solitaire on the computer.
- Practise with bus timetables.
- Teach the 24-hour clock.
- Play bingo.
- Use cookery that includes measurement, weighing scales and temperatures.
- Try knitting.
- Speak about what the maths symbols look like:

  + is like a Cross
  = is like Train tracks
  – is like a Straight bar
  ÷ is like 2 dots with a bar separating them.
  x is like the letter x

- Develop a colour association with the different operations, for example blue for addition, green for subtraction and so on
- Make a list of the words that describe the different operations such as addition is add or plus or increase.
- Use objects like matches, lolly sticks or cubes.
- Use assistive technology.
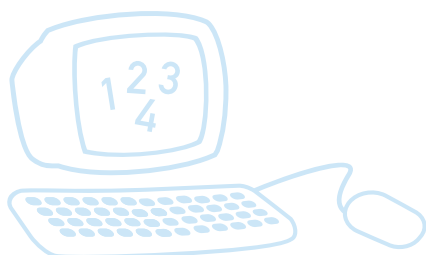
What is Asperger's Syndrome?

A) Definition

Aspire, The Asperger's Syndrome Association of Ireland, defines Asperger's Syndrome (AS):

> "*as a person with normal intelligence and language development but also exhibiting autistic like behaviours and marked deficiencies in social and communication skills. Individuals who are suffering from AS can exhibit a variety of characteristics and the disorder can range from mild to severe.*" (p. 2)

AS is a life-long condition and the vast majority of adults remain undiagnosed. About 4%-7% of the general population experiences AS. It is generally understood that AS is a difficulty with social interaction. AS can be misdiagnosed as schizophrenia, attention deficit disorder (ADD) or dyspraxia. ADD and AS can be a dual diagnosis.

An adult experiencing AS may have great knowledge of one specific topic such as trains or Coronation Street. They will be able to tell you all the facts and figures about the subject. They will have difficulty if you ask them a question about how they feel about the topic, such as who is their favourite character in Coronation Street or what they thought about the scenery seen along the train line. This affects their literacy level, as they may be able to read fluently but have a low level of comprehension of what they are reading.

B) Characteristics of AS and how it may affect someone's learning

Adults experiencing Asperger's Syndrome may present with one or several of the following:

- egocentricity and inability to empathise with people and their problems,
- taking things literally,
- not being able to maintain a conversation,
- only talking about things that are relevant to them,
- naïve and inappropriate social approaches,
- narrow, circumscribed interests,
- using long-winded repetitive speech,
- poor motor co-ordination, or
- problems managing their money.
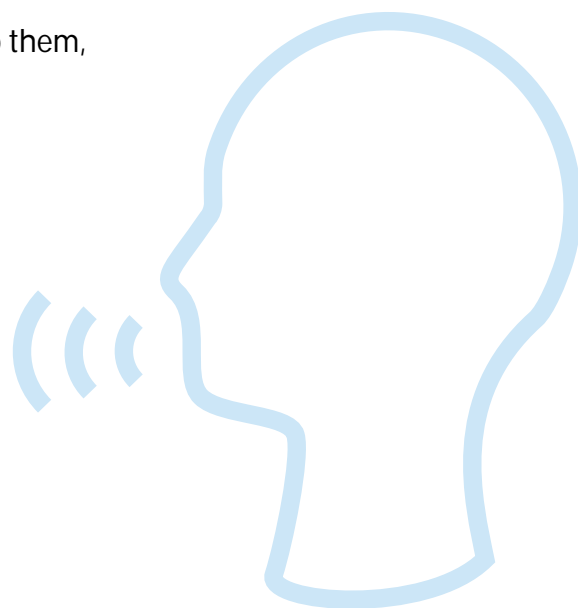
Specific difficulties with literacy learning can include:

- poor handwriting,
- social skills being a greater difficulty than learning,
- language issues such as not knowing when or how to converse and how to express themselves and their needs,
- lack of appropriate social skills,
- being able to read but having a problem with comprehension, and
- problems with plot and details in a story (often unable to see the bigger picture).

C) Strategies for adult literacy tutoring

Below are some suggested strategies that adult literacy tutors could use in assisting an adult literacy learner experiencing Asperger's Syndrome.

- Break language down and explain things in the simplest terms.
- Make sure the learner understands what you are asking.
- Allow more time.
- Be clear and explicit in detail when giving instructions.

What are Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)?

A) Definition

According to the Irish association, HADD (Hyperactivity Attention Deficit Disorder) Family Support Group, ADD/HADD is defined:

> *"as a neurobiological disability. It is characterised by inappropriate degrees of inattention, impulsivity and sometimes hyperactivity."* (p. 2)

ADHD is a difficulty with concentration and impulse control. A person with ADHD has been described as someone who is in constant motion or as if run by a motor. ADD is a difficulty where the person is inattentive and drifts in and out of paying attention. A person with ADD has been described as someone who is a dreamer and stares out the window.

B) Characteristics and how it may affect someone's learning

Adults experiencing ADD or ADHD may present with one or several of the following:

- failure to see details or careless mistakes,
- not listening when spoken to directly and being easily distracted,
- poor short-term memory,
- difficulty with work or personal organisation,
- problems with order and sequencing,
- failure to take in what you're saying when looking at you,
- poor school experience,
- having coughs or tics,
- chewing on their hands, or
- always needing something in their hands.

For an adult experiencing ADD or ADHD, comprehension is generally not a problem and their reading level may be at the same level as their comprehension. Numeracy is a bigger issue than literacy for most adults experiencing ADD or ADHD. In addition, most adults with ADD or ADHD have developed coping skills that they may not be able to explain.

Specific difficulties with literacy learning can include:

- sensitivity to the environment such as lighting, noise and crowds,
- difficulty with dictation and directions,
- difficulty with handwriting,
- poor short-term memory, and
- low self-esteem and self-confidence.

C) Strategies for adult literacy tutoring

Adult literacy services should ensure that an adult literacy learner experiencing ADD or ADHD has one-to-one tutoring with an understanding that it may take more time and may involve a higher degree of planning, variety and creativity to work with ADD or ADHD. The use of the multisensory approach is important as it helps to hold attention.

Below are some suggested strategies that adult literacy tutors can use in assisting an adult learner experiencing ADD or ADHD.

- Use a multisensory approach.
- Use colour coding.
- Help with concentration through:
  - offering small chunks of work,
  - providing a quiet room, and
  - incorporating over-learning into the learning plan.
- Explain the aim/ plan/ lesson/ task very clearly.
- Develop small achievable and short-term goals. Do not give long-term goals as the learner experiencing ADD or ADHD may lose concentration and not see the bigger picture.
- Give a little freedom or "blow out" time after a small chunk of work. Channel energy by using a fun game or suggest a short break after doing a period of work.
- Include technology and the use of keyboards in the individual learning plan.
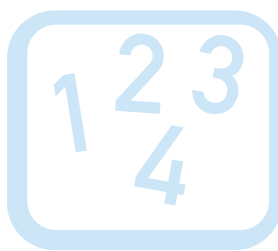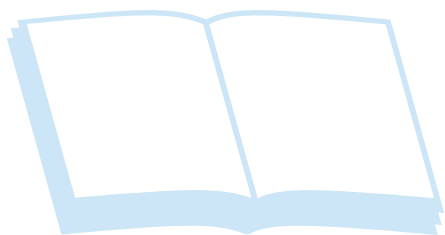
What is Dyspraxia/ Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD)?

A) Definition

The Dyspraxia Association of Ireland defines dyspraxia:

"as a difficulty with thinking out, planning and carrying out sensory/motor tasks. Problems can include: poor fine and gross motor co-ordination; difficulties with vision; motor planning and perceptual difficulties; tactile dysfunction; poor awareness of body position in space; difficulty with reading, writing and speech; poor social skills; and emotional and behavioural problems." (p. 2)

Dyspraxia is generally described as a difficulty with motor co-ordination, but it can affect each person differently. Dyspraxia can be described as a traffic jam of messages to the brain. The development of an individual experiencing dyspraxia can be slow and their processing difficulties will continue to occur throughout their life. Some of the processing difficulties can include thinking, planning and doing.

B) Characteristics of dyspraxia and how they may affect someone's learning

Adults experiencing dyspraxia may present with one or several of the following:

- inability to think laterally,
- issues with pragmatic problems,
- difficulty in interpreting or forming facial expressions,
- talking loudly,
- difficulty with spatial awareness,
- experiencing bad days when areas where they normally have no difficulty become difficult,
- needing guidance counselling,
- difficulty following instructions, especially if there is more than one point in the instructions,
- laughing at a joke too long or getting the joke long after it has been told,
- difficulty with organisation, or
- poor working memory.

In the area of literacy, an adult experiencing dyspraxia may be able to read but have problem with comprehension. Numeracy can be a bigger issue than literacy. Specific difficulties that adult literacy learners experiencing dyspraxia have with learning include:

- getting easily upset or frustrated,
- forgetting instructions,
- writing illegibly,
- having a poor sense of direction,
- reacting to all stimuli the same way,
- always being in a hurry, and
- using the same words to get a point across.

C) Strategies for adult literacy tutoring

Below are some suggested strategies that adult literacy tutors could use to assist an adult learner experiencing dyspraxia.

- Use multisensory approaches, especially visual and kinaesthetic.
- Incorporate over-learning and drills (such as repeating the days of the week or months of the year at the beginning of all tutoring sessions).
- Only give one or two instructions at a time.
- Encourage physical co-ordination through exercise, such as badminton or swimming.
- Assist the adult learner with sequencing. An example would be using name cards with everyday things on them.
- Use mind mapping exercises
- Help with timetables. For example, be sure to give very clear, early and repeated notice of changes in time or location of a tutoring session.
- Use timed reading exercises
- Develop time management.
- Use colour coding.
- Assist handwriting development by:
  - improving posture while writing,
  - using a sloping surface, which is essential, and
  - trying different pens, with specially designed grips.
- Use keyboard skills and computer work, which can help with literacy, numeracy and handwriting.

Summary

The definitions, characteristics and strategies outlined in this section can assist literacy tutors in developing their individual learning plans for adult learners. The next section willl examine the results of the NALA SLD Survey.

Section 2

NALA's SLD Survey of Adult Literacy Providers June 2003: Summary of Results

In June 2003, NALA conducted a national SLD survey of all adult literacy providers. The purpose was to see what services, training and needs were observed by those administering the literacy services.

The survey gave an overview of the current position of dyslexia and SLD provision, services and training. Respondents also gave suggestions and comments to assist ALOs, co-ordinators, tutors and learners and also gave suggestions on what NALA could do for these in relation to SLD.

1) Questionnaire Overview

Four hundred and thirteen questionnaires were sent out to adult literacy services, prison education centres, FÁS Community Training Centres (CTC), Senior Traveller Training Centres (STTC), Youthreach and Adult Education Officer (AEO). One hundred and fifteen were returned (28%).

The return rates for each of the adult literacy providers were:

- STTC   36%
- CTC   35%
- Literacy services   33%
- Youthreach   23%
- AEO   14%
- Prison education   12%
- Other   2%

Of the 115 returned questionnaires:[1]

- 25% were from South
- 21% were from Dublin
- 18% were from South East
- 12% were from North East
- 11% were from North West
- 11% were from West
- 2% did not specify.

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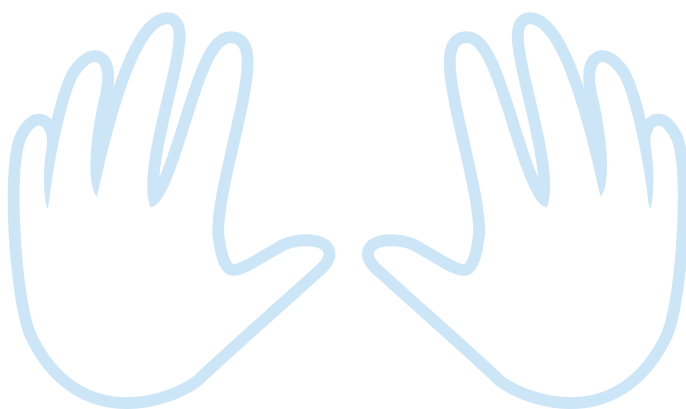
[1]South: Kerry, Cork County and City
Dublin: City, County and Dun Laoghaire
South East: Carlow, Waterford City and County, Wexford, Kilkenny, Laois, Kildare, Wicklow, Tipperary South
North East: Louth, Meath, Westmeath, Longford, Cavan, Monaghan
North West: Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon, Mayo
West: Galway City and County, Clare, Offaly, Limerick City and County, Tipperary North

The areas covered in the questionnaire included:

- understanding of SLD, including dyslexia,
- identification and assessment of SLD,
- learners' needs,
- training and responding to tutors' needs for supports,
- links with other agencies, and
- suggestions for future changes, improvements or supports for adult literacy services in dyslexia and SLD.

2) Understanding of SLD, including dyslexia

There was a wide range of answers about what the term 'Specific Learning Difficulties' including dyslexia meant to the respondent.

- For 26% of the respondents it meant the adult learner struggles with the written word, for example, reading, spelling and writing.
- For 10% of the respondents it meant that normal teaching methods do not work.
- For 6% of the respondents it meant the adult is slower at learning.
- For 5% of the respondents it meant an information processing disorder.

The answers generally fell into two areas of responses, disorder or disability responses and learning process difficulties responses.

Examples of the disorder or disability responses are:

- "Mild special needs"
- "Mental disorder"
- "Lower than average intellectual ability"
- "Intellectual disability"

Examples of learning process difficulties responses are:

- "Do not label people"
- "Dyslexia, ADHD, dyspraxia"
- "Range of learning difficulties which create problems for some adults returning to education"
- "Difficulties relating to others, concentration, verbal/ nonverbal communications, time concept, directional difficulties"

3) Identification and assessment of SLD including dyslexia

The respondents estimated that 21% of their learners experienced dyslexia or SLD. The estimation of learners experiencing dyslexia or SLD from the various providers were:

- STTC   35%
- CTC   31%
- Youthreach   26%
- Literacy services 24%
- Prison education 21%
- AEO   7%

Respondents filling out the survey had different understanding, training and experience with SLD.

Most of the respondents said that they had more than one way to observe dyslexia and SLD.

- 67% said tutors observed dyslexia and SLD.
- 44% said adult literacy learner told ALO or tutor.
- 33% used educational psychological assessment.
- 32% were assessed by ALO or tutor using various systems/ tools.
- 9% did not specify how they observed dyslexia or SLD.

23% of respondents had a standardised way to assess for dyslexia and SLD. Some of these included:

- Listening to student, as they can often assess their own difficulties accurately
- Discussion and observing reading ability and oral comprehension
- Individual work with tutor
- One tutor in scheme trained in assessing dyslexia SLD checklist
- Preliminary questionnaire

Most responses on assessment of dyslexia and SLD were in two categories: testing and services. Some examples of the dyslexia and SLD assessment testing were:

- Analysis of spelling errors from dictation
- Reading and IQ tests
- Nelson Group Reading Test (9-14)
- Graded Math Test – Vernon
- Phonic Skills

Some examples of the services used to assess dyslexia and SLD were:

- Part time psychologist/ counsellor
- Resource worker
- One tutor is trained in assessing dyslexia

18% of respondents had funding to pay for educational psychological assessment. Examples, from the responses to the survey, of funding for educational psychological assessment were:

- "Youthreach Guidance and Counselling Budget"
- "No specific funding but keep some Adult Literacy Budget kept for assessments"
- "Adult Literacy Budget"
- "FÁS fund (now unavailable)"
- "Negotiation with VEC to supply funding for a limited number of educational psychological assessment"
- "Partnership companies"

75% of respondents were not satisfied with the current system for identifying and assessing dyslexia and SLD.

The respondents who were satisfied with their dyslexia and SLD assessment system said:

- "It helps students relax because you understand and reassure them that help is available."
- "They can work at their own pace."
- "We use a whole centre approach."
- "It gives a good indication of a starting point for literacy/ numeracy instructions."
- "The scheme has extremely experienced tutors."

Examples of responses from those who were not satisfied with current system are:

- "There are very few resources for dyslexia assessment."
- "You have to follow your instincts to say if the learner has dyslexia and SLD."
- "It's ad hoc."
- "Development workers need more training in identifying and dealing with dyslexia."
- "The assessment procedure is vague therefore it is difficult to be precise about the problem."
- "The services have no personnel experienced or trained in SLD."

4) Learners' needs

The estimation of success in supporting learners experiencing dyslexia and SLD to improve their literacy skills were:

- Very successful 7%
- Quite successful 51%
- Slightly successful 29%
- Not at all successful 3%
- Did not answer 10%

The respondents made various comments about success levels. They were grouped into the following categories and given percentages.

- 7%   Our ethos is to build on the learner's strengths to overcome their weaknesses therefore building up the learner's confidence
- 7%   Trainees make good progress
- 7%   We use one to one tuition
- 4%   Tutors lack skills and confidence to deal with problems
- 3%   Unqualified personnel can only do so much
- 3%   It takes more time to help learners who are experiencing dyslexia and SLD

When a learner is identified as having dyslexia and SLD, their literacy tuition is organised in various ways:

- 47% match them with another tutor
- 31% match them with tutor who has dyslexia and SLD training
- 16% did not answer
- 6% keep them with their assigned tutor and assisted in planning an ILP for the learner

65% of the respondents said they develop individual learning plans (ILPs) with their learners.

57% of the respondents said when working with learners experiencing dyslexia and SLD there were differences or special arrangements in their ILP. Some examples are:

- smaller goals,
- more repetition,
- appropriate accommodation,
- more variety,
- adapted material to suit learner,
- one-to-one provision,
- mentoring,

- team teaching,
- more emphasis on learning styles,
- student-directed learning,
- linking to external agencies,
- catering for all learning channels,
- providing supportive learning aids such as:
    - roller ball mouse
    - coloured paper or transparencies, and
- more oral work.

The respondents were asked to tick all specific difficulties with learning that adult literacy learners experiencing dyslexia and SLD had demonstrated. The categories and number of respondents were:

- Organisation/ sequencing   96
- Memory   88
- Comprehension   82
- Phonological awareness   80
- Handwriting   78
- Sight words   76
- Maths   64
- Timekeeping   46
- Other   24

Examples of the "other" were:

- "Directional difficulties"
- "Poor vocabulary"
- "Pronunciation difficulties"
- "Computer skills"
- "Low self esteem"
- "Negative emotions connected with reading and writing"

Examples of the methods or approaches the respondents found most successful when working with adult learners experiencing SLD were:

- no surprises,
- games/ jigsaws,
- using student's interests,
- holistic approach,
- shared reading,
- basic handwriting/ spelling and comprehension,
- sight words,

- visual techniques to aid memory,
- mnemonics for learning spellings,
- pictures,
- word cards,
- Read Write Now (radio and television programmes and workbooks),
- tape/ video work,
- Ultimate phonics (computer programme),
- colour transparencies,
- portfolio building and continuous assessment like FETAC,
- helping learner realise there is nothing "wrong" with them,
- learn spelling rules,
- Alpha to Omega book, (see references), and
- give learner an understanding of dyslexia.

Examples of factors that caused respondents most difficulty in working with adult learners experiencing dyslexia and SLD, and of tutoring methods tried by respondents with least success, were:

- "Anything that reminds them of school"
- "Working with people in a large group"
- "Groups of mixed ability students"
- "Withdrawal from class for individual tuition"
- "Look/cover/write/ check is very frustrating"
- "Flashcards are too childish"
- "Phonetics"
- "List of spelling words"
- "Mismatch of student tutor"
- "Insufficient individual attention within a group or class setting"
- "Classes that are too long"
- "Inappropriate materials"
- "Some computer software"
- "Change of familiar surroundings/ routines"
- "Ignoring the situation"

5) Training and responding to tutors' needs for support

56% of the respondents had training in dyslexia. The kinds of dyslexia training were:

- DAI Module 7   20%
- DAI teaching certificate   16%
- NALA   11%
- Other   8%
- VEC   7%

Examples of training facilitators were:

- UCD course
- Anne Bohan
- NUI Maynooth Certificate Course in Integrating Literacy
- Midland Health Board
- Monica Macnamara
- Alan Sayles
- Wordsworth Programme

40% of adult literacy tutors had dyslexia and SLD training. The respondents identified the training as being provided by:

- NALA   26%
- Dyslexia Association of Ireland   14%
- In-service training   12%
- NALA/WIT   6%
- Postgraduate degree   4%
- Degree   3%

38% had other supports for tutors working with dyslexia and SLD. Examples of the other supports are:

- Internet
- Links with outside agencies
- Seminars
- Internal tutor discussion/support
- Staff support and supervision
- Team meetings to discuss/ support

6) Links with other agencies and professionals

58% of respondents have links with other agencies or professionals in the areas of dyslexia and SLD. Some examples of the links are:

- NALA
- NTDI
- Other ALO with considerable experience
- Health Board
- Rehab Care
- Adult Literacy Service
- NALA/WIT
- Youthreach, FÁS, CTCs and STTCs

7) Suggestions for future changes, improvements or supports for adult literacy services in dyslexia and SLD

There were various suggestions of supports that should be developed for adult literacy organisers or co-ordinators. They included:

- Assessment
- Framework
- Guidelines
- Funding
- Materials
- Resources
- Access to educational psychological assessment
- Template for ILP
- Trained tutor to support SLD tutors and learners
- Dyslexia and SLD training
- More information on teaching methods
- New advances in the area of dyslexia and SLD
- Shared information
- Shared interagency work with agencies such as health boards
- More information and knowledge about dyslexia and SLD
- Classroom assistants in group settings
- Funding for tutors
- Awareness raising about dyslexia and SLD
- Access to school records
- Awareness and information days

Suggestions to support adult literacy tutors in the area of dyslexia and SLD were:

- Specific training on teaching methods
- Payment for tutors
- Access to trained dyslexia and SLD professionals
- Dyslexia and SLD assessment tools
- Newsletter on developments in the area of dyslexia and SLD
- Resources and methodologies
- Network for tutors who are working with adult literacy learners experiencing dyslexia and SLD
- More tutoring hours
- Website of information about dyslexia and SLD
- Accredited dyslexia and SLD training

Suggestions of supports for adult literacy learners experiencing dyslexia and SLD were:

- Special materials
- Trained tutors in dyslexia and SLD
- Rights and responsibilities as a learner
- Access to educational psychological services
- Resources
- Support group for adult literacy learners experiencing dyslexia and SLD
- One to one tuition
- Specialist methodologies
- Awareness raising about dyslexia and SLD
- Assessments
- Continuous assessment
- ILP
- More contact hours

The respondents were asked what NALA should do for all three groups in relation to dyslexia and SLD. The suggestions were:

- Discussion
- Recognition
- Research
- Tutor-centred training
- Resources identification
- Support groups
- Relevant database
- Professional support and advice
- Assessment procedures, materials and guides
- Lobby the government
- In-service for all tutors not just literacy
- Awareness training
- Information sessions for parents with dyslexic children
- Support materials
- Funding

Summary

This was the first survey of its kind and has proved very useful in giving NALA an overview of the issues. The following guidelines for good practice and recommendations were developed based on the survey results, discussions with the NALA SLD working group and the research for the SLD policy project.

Section 3

Guidelines for Adult Literacy Services

The principles and practice of adult literacy work are effective for all adult literacy learners including those experiencing dyslexia and SLD.

Adult literacy practice is learner-centred, works to the strengths and interests of the learner and uses multisensory approaches to literacy and numeracy.

The VEC Adult Literacy Service provides free tuition that is confidential and non-threatening. This ensures that all adults, including those experiencing dyslexia and SLD have an opportunity to resolve their literacy difficulties.

This section provides guidelines on how adult literacy services can build on these strengths and further develop systems and procedures to address the needs of learners experiencing SLD including dyslexia.

The guidelines are presented under the following headings:

- Dedicated Dyslexia and SLD Tutor

- Outreach and Promotion

- Assessment

- Tutor Training

- Teaching and Learning

- Supports

- Resources
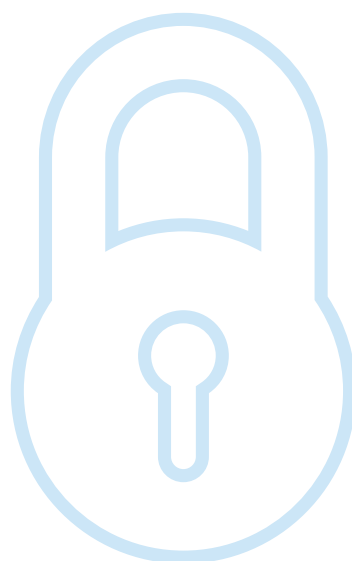
Dedicated Dyslexia and SLD Tutor

Each adult literacy scheme needs the services of a dedicated dyslexia and SLD tutor. This tutor's duties should include:

- Assessment/ support/ profiling/ guidance
- Communication with tutors
- Tutor training
- Assisting ALOs
- Attending outreach courses (family literacy, employers)
- Raising awareness with employers

- Tutoring adult learners experiencing dyslexia and SLD
- Attending training for themselves
- Keeping informed by reading
- Attending conferences
- Recommending books and resources to ALOs

The dedicated dyslexia and SLD tutor should have two years' adult literacy experience and have completed NALA dyslexia and SLD courses or equivalent. They should be enrolled or have completed the NALA/WIT Literacy and Special Needs course, or equivalent.

Model for Role of Dedicated Dyslexia and SLD tutor

Adult Literacy Learner

Initial assessment with the ALO

Consultation process

Dedicated Dyslexia/ SLD Tutor

1:1 or group tuition

If tutor/ learner is concerned about possible dyslexia/ SLD they approach the ALO who will arange a time with the Dedicated Dyslexia/SLD Tutor.

possible 1:1

With dedicated dyslexia/ SLD tutor if appropriate
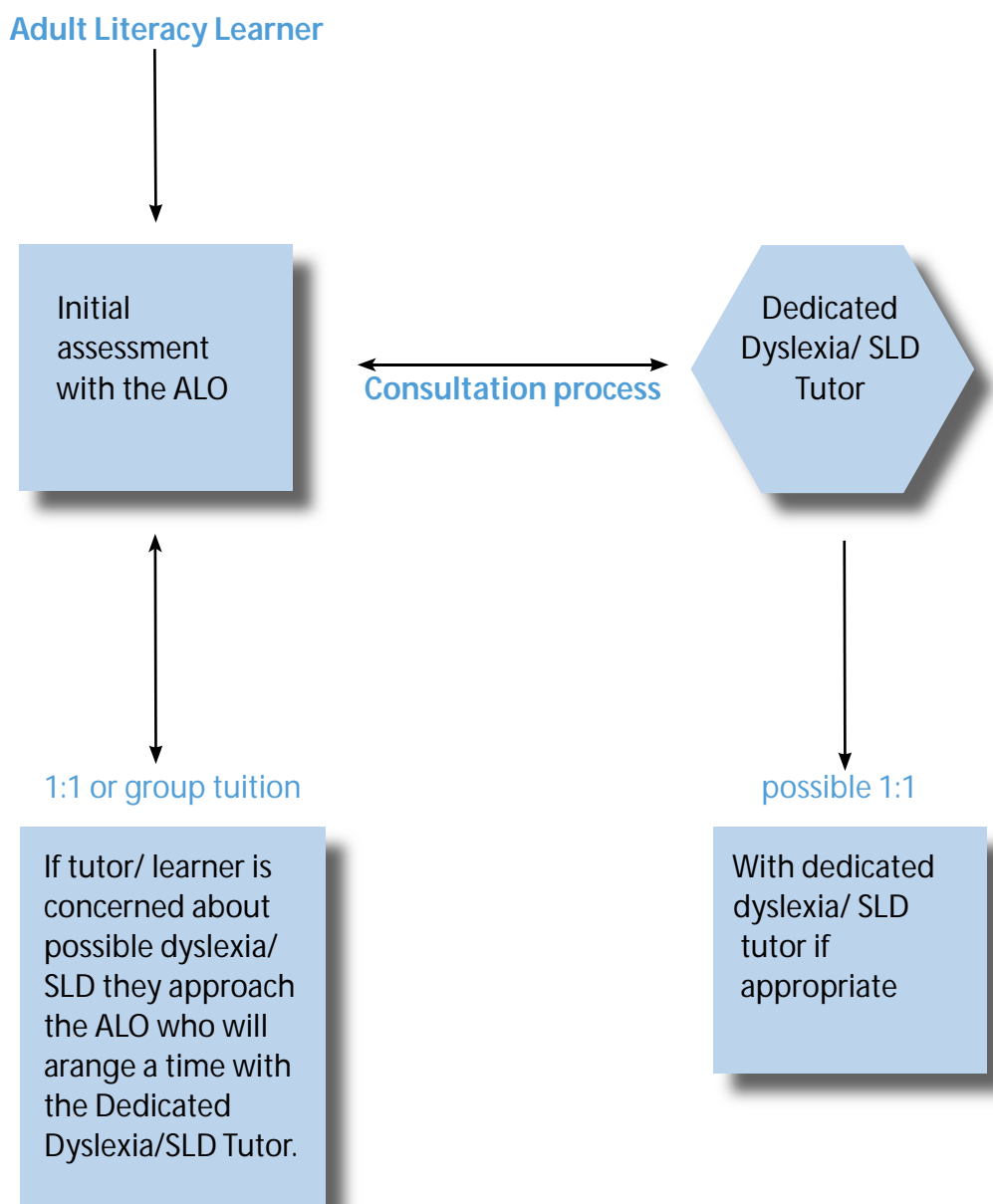
Outreach and Promotion

Adult literacy services promote their services to the local community and promote awareness of literacy issues and provision.

All promotional and awareness activities carried out by the service providers should:

- include the issue of SLD including dyslexia,
- highlight the ways in which SLD including dyslexia affect adults, and
- explain the services the centre can provide to assist an adult literacy learner experiencing SLD including dyslexia, such as the fact that there are tutors with dyslexia training available for one-to-one tuition.

The content of all adult literacy service literature about dyslexia and SLD should:

- demystify dyslexia and SLD, highlighting that it is about learning differently,
- acknowledge the positive qualities, skills and strengths of an adult experiencing dyslexia and SLD, along with their contribution to community, family and employment, and
- give information on how dyslexia affects reading and writing and all areas of one's life.

In the centre, the Adult Literacy Scheme should display:

- information leaflets from the Dyslexia Association of Ireland and other agencies that support and promote dyslexia and SLD.

Assessment

Initial assessment

The initial assessment in the Adult Literacy Service includes a discussion with the learner about their learning history, strengths and interest. This is a good foundation for all adult literacy learners, including those experiencing dyslexia and SLD. It offers a starting point for the tutor and learner in developing an individual learning plan. The learner directs the assessment process.

During the initial assessment, the adult learner may bring up the issue of dyslexia and SLD. Some adult learners may:

- have an educational psychological assessment that concluded they have dyslexia/SLD,
- share that they received extra tuition or attended a special school,
- say that their child or other family member has dyslexia/SLD and they have the same difficulties with learning as that person, or
- self-report experiencing dyslexia/SLD.

When adult literacy learners self-report dyslexia/SLD, keep in mind at this stage that other issues can be involved. The learner may be experiencing dyslexia/SLD, or there may be other issues around learning. These could include:

- actually having a general learning disability;
- returning to learning after a long period and needing extra time; or
- having an emotional barrier to learning because of a bad previous experience.

It is important for the ALO and tutor to listen to the learner and explain that the one-to-one tuition and the individual learning plan they have developed will assist them in resolving their literacy difficulties.

Reviewing Progress

Ongoing assessment of progress is built into all good adult literacy teaching and learning practice. 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. They might refer to a dyslexia checklist to look for a pattern of difficulties (see Appendix 3 for list of dyslexia checklists).

The tutor or learner may feel there is lack of progress, despite regular tuition and practice. Every learner progresses at a different rate and there can be various reasons for slow progress. 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 (see supports). The review meeting will examine how the previous period of tuition went for the tutor and learner. The discussion will include what the difficulties were and what methods and materials were useful.

- The dedicated dyslexia and SLD expert tutor should conduct an informal dyslexia assessment of the specific learning difficulties the learner is experiencing. The informal dyslexia assessment should include elements of:

  - a structured interview,
  - reading analysis,
  - writing analysis,
  - spelling analysis,
  - handwriting analysis, and
  - nonsense word reading.

  - Based on the results of the review meeting and the informal assessment, the dedicated dyslexia and SLD expert tutor should write **a report of strengths and strategies** to assist the adult learner.

  - The ALO, learner and dedicated dyslexia and SLD expert tutor should have a follow-up meeting where the report and dyslexia or SLD are discussed. The learner's literacy tutor should be involved in this meeting, which will agree the next steps. The learner can either go back to the tutor or stay with the dedicated dyslexia and SLD expert tutor for tuition. The learner directs what tutor arrangements they feel is best for them.

  - The tutor and learner should revise the individual learning plan based on identified needs and goals. Subsequent tuition focuses on developing the learner's self-confidence and specific learning strategies.

After informal dyslexia assessment there should be ongoing assessment to see how things are going. By taking into account the specific learning strategies, the learner can make excellent progress.

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.

Examples of how the learner can be assisted in a new course include:
- giving handouts before the next week's lecture,
- developing a dictionary of the course's specific vocabulary, and
- providing access to assistive technology.

For further examples, please see the "NALA Guidelines on Integrating Literacy."

Tutor Training

The training of tutors is an important aspect of ensuring adult literacy learners experiencing dyslexia and SLD receive quality provision.

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. The minimum information at this stage includes:

- definitions and characteristics of dyslexia and SLD, and
- awareness that the multisensory approach to tutoring is effective for all learners, including those experiencing dyslexia and SLD.

Training requirement for voluntary tutors

The adult literacy services rely on voluntary tutors to provide one-to-one tuition. 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.

NALA and Dyslexia Association of Ireland (DAI) Dyslexia and SLD training

NALA and DAI offer courses on adult literacy learners and dyslexia and SLD. The DAI offers "Module 7: Adults with SLD/ Dyslexia" for trained and experienced adult literacy tutors. This module is included in the NALA training calendar.

The DAI also offers four core modules of teacher in-service training. The modules are offered only to qualified primary and secondary level teachers, including learning support and resource teachers.

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.

Outside consultants

Various consultants offer training days on dyslexia. This is a valuable resource for the adult literacy service. Some of the providers focus on children and how to assist them within mainstream education. Therefore, 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.

The course outline and objectives should be inspected for principles that agree with the ethos of good literacy work. The course must offer practical strategies, suggestions and methods that incorporate multisensory approaches.

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 important training resource for the adult literacy service.

The ALO or dedicated dyslexia and SLD expert tutor may develop the in-service training course. It could draw on the experience of tutors and learners in the scheme itself and could usefully involve them in sharing their experience and the lessons they have learnt.

The training should:

- identify and recognise learning styles and multiple intelligences,
- share current knowledge of dyslexia, including:
    - causes, effects and secondary effects, and
    - positive qualities and dyslexic learning styles,
- outline the principles of good practice, such as:
    - the adult status of the learner,
    - planning,
    - teaching to strengths,
    - suggestions for useful strategies, approaches, methods and ongoing review, relating to:
        - reading,
        - writing,
        - spelling,
        - handwriting, and
        - numeracy.

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.

Multisensory approach to teaching

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.

The multisensory approach to teaching ensures all the learning channels are engaged. It fits into the adult education ideal that focus should be on how the learner learns and we should teach accordingly.

The tutor should try to ensure that learning plans and materials include elements of seeing, saying, hearing and moving . By using these different elements in their tutoring, they assist the learner in accessing the information, processing the information and retrieving previous information.

Further building on this, and developing their quality provision for learners with dyslexia and SLD, services and centres can encourage all tutors to:

- use multisensory methods when tutoring, investigate their own learning style,
- use the strategies discussed in Section 1 of this document,
- use and incorporate assistive technology (see resources),
- empower the learner through discussion of dyslexia and SLD and how it specifically affects them, and
- based on this discussion, facilitate the learner in developing coping strategies to assist with non-literacy difficulties such as time management, sequencing and sense of direction.

Supports

Dedicated Dyslexia and SLD tutor

A key support for learners experiencing dyslexia and SLD, and for the scheme or centre as a whole, is the dedicated tutor, whose role is outlined at the beginning of this section.

Guidance and Counselling

Guidance counsellors are an important part of helping an adult learner experiencing dyslexia and SLD deal with the emotional effects of their difficulties. They provide a vital service to assist learners in getting over the emotional effects of a possible bad school experience or other parts of their history.

The guidance service is also an important support to assist adult learners experiencing dyslexia and SLD with progression routes. The adult learner may want to investigate further education options with the guidance counsellor.

Resources

In providing a high quality service to adult literacy learners experiencing dyslexia and SLD, adult literacy services should ensure that they have access to assistive technology and other relevant resources.

Assistive technology

'Assistive technology' refers to devices or computers that can be used by people with a specific learning difficulty to assist them in their learning. There has been a great deal of progress in assistive technology over the past number of years and it is expanding all the time. Some assistive technology is expensive but many devices and aids are extremely affordable.

In Appendix 4 there are examples of different devices and aids from low cost to expensive. Some of the low cost aids and technology are: change of font style and size, coloured papers, coloured overlays, coloured highlighters, typed notes and tape recorders. Useful computer software and electronic devices include electronic dictionaries, reading pens, electronic organisers, voice recgonisation software, scanners and screen readers.

Books

There are numerous books on the subject of dyslexia. Most books focus on how dyslexia affects children. The books are written for primary and secondary schools, but there other books are available that discuss adults and dyslexia. See Appendix 5 for list of reading list.

Websites

As technology and the Internet expand, websites about dyslexia have developed. Adults experiencing dyslexia and SLD have written some websites. They discuss the way they are affected and the strategies they have developed to cope with their difficulties in their learning, employment and families. See Appendix 6 for a list of suggested websites.

Section 4

Recommendations

The NALA SLD guidelines recommendations are under the following headings:

1) Raising Awareness
2) Assessment
3) Tutor training
4) Tutoring and Learning
5) Guidance Counselling
6) Supports for adult literacy services

1) 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 of adult literacy learners talking about dyslexia and SLD and how it affects them and their learning and lives. The purpose of the resources should be:

  - to raise awareness about dyslexia and SLD among adults,
  - to show how it affects adults who are trying to resolve their literacy difficulties, and
  - to share strategies that literacy tutors could use.

- 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 such as PG plus (TV programme for parents with school age children).

- 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 DAI 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.
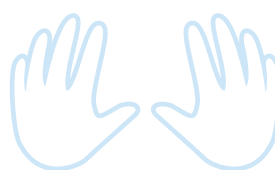
2) Assessment

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.

The NALA Mapping the Learning Journey Assessment Framework will include tools and resources to map the learning journey of all adult literacy learners. Some adult literacy learners may experience specific difficulties with processing information so an additional dyslexia assessment tool would be helpful for them.

Recommendations

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 in cases where the adult learner has very specific issues that need further investigation.

The Department of Education and Science should do the following:

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

3) Tutor Training

Principles

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. Information about dyslexia needs to be integrated into all training. The ways of working with an adult literacy learner experiencing dyslexia and SLD are complementary to the ways of working with a learner who does not experience dyslexia/SLD.

Recommendations

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: [2]

- 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.

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[2]There 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.

4) Tutoring and Learning

Recommendations

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.

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. Multisensory approach means incorporating all learning channels such as the ears, eyes and movement of the body so the learning is processed into the brain through more than one learning channel.

- Investigate the development of coping strategies for adult literacy learners to deal with the non-literacy effects of dyslexia and SLD. Other areas can include: time management, sequencing or sense of direction.

5) Guidance/ Counselling

Recommendations

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 about what guidance counselling is and the service that is available to learners.

- Know about and understand SLD including dyslexia and literacy. It is suggested they take part in the initial tutoring training to gain insight into the issues of adult literacy.

6) Supports for Adult Literacy Service

Recommendations

NALA should do the following:

- Develop a SLD including dyslexia web page for tutors to give suggestions about how to develop their tutoring as well as get up to date research and information about dyslexia and SLD. This web page could be attached to the NALA website.

- Develop a network of tutors working with adult learners experiencing dyslexia and SLD. This tutor network could assist in helping tutors gain insight and knowledge from others around the country.

- Facilitate a support group for adult literacy learners experiencing dyslexia and SLD in order to give them a voice about their learning and experiences.

- Foster links with other NALA projects about dyslexia and SLD and how it affects an adult literacy learner. These projects should be included in all programme development undertaken by adult literacy services. The projects include:

  - workplace education,
  - family literacy,
  - integrating literacy, and
  - distance education.

- 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. The team would include various professional such as 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.

The Dedicated Dyslexia and SLD tutor, who should not be the ALO or guidance counsellor, should:

- report directly to the ALO,

- have expertise in dyslexia and SLD,

- have completed the initial tutor training and be an experienced adult literacy tutor,

- complete the NALA WIT SLD and literacy module, when developed, or other training recognised by the DES, and

- be available to support and assist other VEC projects that provide literacy provision such as Senior Travelling Training Centres, Back to Education Initiative, Youthreach and FÁS funded Community Training Centres where the VEC employs literacy tutors.
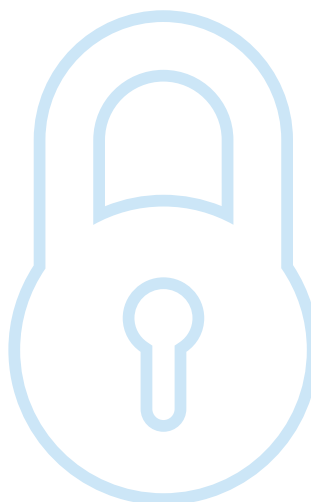
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London Language & Literacy Unit, (2003), **Certificate in Adult Dyslexia Support Level 3 Course Reader Part 2 (Weeks 6-10),** South Bank University Division of Education, London

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University College Dublin Disability Support Service, (2002), **A Place to Study for People with Disability**, Audio Visual Centre UCD, Dublin

Appendix 1

Organisations Providing Information on Other SLDs

Aspire - The Asperger's Syndrome Association of Ireland
Carmichael House, 4 North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7.
Tel: (01) 8780027
Fax: (01) 8735737
Email: asperger@email.com
Website: www.aspire-irl.com

HADD Family Support Group
Carmichael House, 4 North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7.
Tel: (01) 8748349
Fax: (01) 8748349
Email: hadd@eircom.net

Dyspraxia Association
c/o 389 Ryevale Lawns, Leixlip, Co. Kildare.
Tel: 01-2957125
Email: dyspraxiaireland@eircom.net
Website: www.dyspraxiaireland.com

Dyslexia Organisations

Dyslexia Association of Ireland
Suffolk Chambers, 1 Suffolk Street, Dublin 2
Tel: (01) 6790275/6
Fax: (01) 6790273
Email: info@dyslexia.ie
Website: www.dyslexia.ie

British Dyslexia Association, 98 London Road, Reading,
Berks RG1 5AU, England
Tel: 00 44-118-9662677
Website: www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk

Northern Ireland Dyslexia Association
Tel: (028) 9065 9212
Website: www.nida.org.uk

European Dyslexia Association
Adult Dyslexia Organisation, 336 Brighton Road, London SW9 7AA.
Tel: 00 44207 9249559
Website: edasecretary@axelero.hu

Appendix 2

Adults with Specific Learning Difficulties (SLD) Questionnaire

Over the next 12 months, NALA is developing policy guidelines and supports for literacy practitioners working with adults experiencing specific learning difficulties (SLD) including dyslexia. The information you give us in this questionnaire will help us establish these policy guidelines and supports.

Section 1- Introduction

1) What does the term Specific Learning Difficulties (SLD), including dyslexia, mean to you?

_____
_____
_____

2) Have you had specific training in Specific Learning Difficulties (SLD)?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

If yes, please name the training and training provider:

_____
_____

Section 2 – Identification and Assessment of Specific Learning Difficulties

3)   How many learners are in your scheme? _____

How many learners would you estimate experience SLD? _____

What percentage of your learners are female? _____

What percentage of learners experiencing SLD are female? _____

4)   How have these learners been identified as experiencing SLD within the scheme?

☐ Told ALO or tutor

☐ Assessed by ALO or tutor

☐ Tutor observed SLD

☐ Educational psychological assessment

☐ Other _____

Do you have a standardised way of assessing for SLD?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No
If yes, please describe

_____
_____
_____

6) Have you received funding to pay for educational psychological assessments?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, where did the funding come from?

_____

_____

7) Is the educational psychological assessment useful in helping to develop the learner's individual learning plan?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Please explain:

_____

_____

_____

8) Are you satisfied with the current system in your scheme for identifying and assessing SLD among your learners?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please explain what you feel is good.

_____

_____

If no, please explain where are problems with the system.

_____

_____

9) Do you link with outside agencies/ professionals with specific expertise in SLD?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, with whom do you link?

_____

_____

10) Estimate your success in supporting learners with SLD to resolve or improve their literacy skills

       ☐ very successful

       ☐ quite successful

       ☐ slightly successful

       ☐ not all successful

Please explain your answer:

_____

_____

Section 3 – Learners' needs and management of learning process

11) When a learner is identified as experiencing SLD, how is their tuition organised?

Do you:

       ☐ Match them with a trained SLD tutor

       ☐ Match them with other tutor

       ☐ Other please explain _____

       _____

12) Do all your tutors develop individual learning plans (ILP) with their learners?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

13) When working with a learner experiencing SLD, are there differences in the ILP or any special arrangements when developing the ILP?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

If yes, please explain:

_____

_____

14) What specific difficulties do you see learners experiencing SLD having with the learning experience? Please tick all that apply

       ▢ memory

       ▢ organisation/ sequencing

       ▢ phonological awareness

       ▢ comprehension

       ▢ timekeeping

       ▢ handwriting

       ▢ sight words

       ▢ maths

       ▢ other (please specify)_____

       _____

15) Please outline methods/ approaches you feel have been most successful in working with adult learners experiencing SLD.

_____

_____

_____

_____

16) Have you tried methods/ approaches that you found did not work?

▢ Yes   ▢ No

If yes, please explain:

_____

_____

_____

Section 4 – Tutors' Needs

17) How many tutors are there in your scheme? _____

18) How many tutors work with learners experiencing SLD in your scheme?_____

19) Do your SLD tutors receive specific training in SLD?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

If yes, who is providing this training and is it accredited?

_____
_____

20) Are there other supports for tutors working learners experiencing SLD?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

If yes, please give details:

_____
_____
_____

Section 5- Your suggestions

21) Please make suggestions for future changes or improvements you would like to see made to the specific learning difficulties supports available to:

Organisers: _____

_____

_____

Tutors:

_____

_____

Learners experiencing SLD:

_____

_____

All of the above groups from NALA:

_____

_____

22) Are there any other comments you would like to make?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for giving your time and support to filling in this questionnaire. For further information or queries, please contact Bridget Gormley, Specific Learning Difficulties Policy Worker, on (01) 8099198.

Please remember to send the survey back by Monday, June 30th.

Appendix 3

Suggested Dyslexia Checklists, Screening Tools and Information on Educational Psychological Assessment

Dyslexia Adult Screening Test (DAST)
Nicholson and Fawcett (1988), London, The Psychological Corporation

LADS- Lucid Adult Dyslexia Screening
Computerised test designed to screen for dyslexia in adults
http://www.lucid-research.com/Acrobat/LADS%20general%20description%20June%202002.pdf

Am I Dyslexic? Resource Sheet 3
Krupska and Klien, (1995), **Demystifying Dyslexia: Raising Awareness and Developing Support for Dyslexic Young People and Adults,** London Language and Literacy Unit

Dyslexia Association of Ireland Checklist of Questions
http://www.dyslexia.ie/adult.htm

Dyslexia Test for Adults by Direct Learning Ltd.
http://www.dyslexia-test.com/adults.html

Educational Psychological Assessment from the website of The Dyslexia Association of Ireland (www.dyslexia.ie)
"As an adult you have to arrange for your own assessment. There is no state provision, even for people who are unemployed or who have a medical card.

The Dyslexia Association of Ireland arranges psycho-educational assessments at its Dublin Office. A fee of €300 is usually charged for this service. Please contact us for further information, or if you would like to place someone on our assessment waiting list. If the cost of an assessment with the DAI is a problem for you, please talk to us about it. We try to help wherever possible, although our resources are limited.

The assessment takes between two and three hours and it is done by a psychologist. It includes intelligence testing and tests of reading and spelling levels. A feedback session is given immediately and a written report is supplied later. Advice on the type of tuition is given and referral can be made for individual tuition.

There are also many independent private educational psychologists, throughout the country. A list of registered psychologists can be obtained from the Psychological Society of Ireland's website at www.psihq.ie, by mailing the Society at info@psihq.ie or by writing to the Society at CX House, 2A Corn Exchange Place, Poolbeg St., Dublin 2."

Appendix 4

Below is a list of suggested assistive technology from **www.dyslexia.ie**.

Franklin Spellmaster - Hand Held Electronic Dictionary

It is simpler to use than a conventional dictionary because if a phonetic version of a word is typed in, it will give the correct spelling. Available from Argos, Eason's and Mr. Calculator, Duke Street, Dublin 2. Cost approx. €40.

Quicktionary Reading Pen

A hand held pen containing PCR software that enables it to scan and read single words and phrases. It has a dictionary of 200,000 words. Available from iAnsyst Ltd., The White House, 72 Fen Road, Cambridge, CB4 1UN, England. Tel: 0044-1223-420101. Cost approx. £200 Sterling.

Hand Held Tape Recorder

A simple micro-cassette recorder could be invaluable for recording phone messages, names, addresses, orders, instructions and any other information that would usually be written down. Available from any good electronic equipment shop. Cost up to €150 depending on model.

Hand Held Electronic Organiser

These come in a variety of models and prices but can provide the same benefits as a tape recorder. They are also now very socially acceptable. Available from any good electronic equipment shop.

Computer, Printer and Word Processor Packages

These are standard office equipment. For those about to invest in a home computer, you should expect to pay from €1,000 upwards.

Scanners

A scanner allows any printed material to be input to a computer. This means a person with Dyslexia can scan in any document and have it read back by a screen reading programme. Scanners can cost as little as €120, but as with most things, the better, faster scanners will be more expensive.

Screen Reading Programmes

Screen reading programmes will read aloud text on a computer. This can include material which has been scanned into the computer, word processed documents or even the internet. Some screen readers can even read some European languages. Examples of screen readers are Kurzweil (€1,000), one of the best and most expensive, as well as more reasonably priced options, e.g. Texthelp (under €200).

Voice Operated Software

Voice operated software allows the user to dictate material onto a computer without worrying about spelling. One of the better voice operated programmes is Dragon Dictate (approx. €150).

Suppliers

Andrews Award Systems, 38 Pine Valley Park, Rathfarnham, Dublin 16.
Tel: (01) –493 0011
Email: awardsys@iol.ie
Website: www.awardsys.com

Computerspeak, Guinness Enterprise Centre, Taylor's Lane, Dublin 8.
Tel: (01) 677 7620
Email: info@computerspeak.ie
Website: www.computerspeak.ie

Diskovery, Unit 10, The Stables Office Park, Portmarnock, Co. Dublin.
Tel: (01)-803 8822
Email: sales@diskovery.ie
Website: www.diskovery.ie

Edtech Software Ltd., Murrisk, Westport, Co. Mayo.
Tel: (098)-64886
Fax: (098) 64842
Email: info@edtech.ie
Website: www.edtech.ie

iAnsyst Ltd., The White House, 72 Fen Road, Cambridge CB4 1UN, England.
Tel: 00 44 –1223 420101

Jackson Technology Ltd., 23 Kiltipper Avenue, Tallaght, Dublin 24.

Tel: (01) –451 8508 and (01) –462 4793

Email: djackson@iol.ie

Website: www.jacksontechnology.com

Sole agents in Ireland for reading pens

Lorien Systems, Enkalon Industrial Estate, 25 Randalstown Road,

Antrim BT41 4LJ, Northern Ireland.

Tel: (048) 8494 2810

TJSC Ltd., 162 Cambridge Street, London SW1V 4QE, England.

(Suppliers of reading pens, e.g. the Quictionary Pen)

Tel: 00 44 20 2336805

Website: www.scanningpens.co.uk/reading.html

Appendix 5

List of suggested dyslexia and SLD books

Bartlett, D. and Moody, S. (2002), **Dyslexia in the Workplace,** Whurr Publishers, London and Philadelphia

Heaton, P. and Mitchell, G. (2001), **Dyslexia, Students in Need**, Whurr Publishers, London and Philadelphia

Klein, C. (1997), **Diagnosing Dyslexia: A Guide to the Assessment of Adults with Specific Learning Difficulties**, The Basic Skills Agency, London

Krupska, M. and Klein, C., (1995), **Demystifying Dyslexia: Raising Awareness and Developing Support for Dyslexic Young People and Adults**, London Language and Literacy Unit, London

McLoughlin et al, (1993), **Adult Dyslexia: Assessment, Counselling and Training**, Whurr Publishers, London and Philadelphia

Michelson, C., **Adult Dyslexia: A Guide for Basic Skills Tutors,** Adult Dyslexia Organisation, 336 Brixton Rd., London SW9 7AA

Miles, T.R. and Gilroy, D. (1986), **Dyslexia at College**, Methuen

Ott, P., (1997), **How to Detect and Manage Dyslexia**, Heinemann Educational Publishers, Oxford

Reid, G. and Kirk, J. (2001), **Dyslexia in Adults: Education And Employment,** Wiley

Reid, G. and Wearmouth, J., (2002), **Dyslexia and Literacy: Theory and Practice**, John Wiley & Sons Ltd., West Sussex

Appendix 6

List of suggested dyslexia and SLD websites

http://www.worldofdyslexia.com

http://www.dyslexia-parent.com

http://www.dyslexia-teacher.com

http://www.dyslexia-adults.com

http://www.dyslexia-college.com

http://www.dyslexia-test.com

http://www.dyslexia-magazine.com

http://www.dyslexia-journal.com

http://www.classroom-assistant.net

http://www.statvoks.no/forward

http://www.dyslexia.ie

http://www. schwablearning.org

http://www.spencerlearning.com

Appendix 7

International definitions of SLD

United States

In the United States specific learning disability is the term used to describe specific learning difficulties. A definition for SLD is " when he or she is tested and found to have severely depressed achievement compared to expected potential as measured on intelligence tests." (Tennessee Literacy Centre, 1994) In an effort to change attitudes, there is a movement to use the term **learning different** to describe specific learning disability.

Australia

The Specific Learning Difficulties Association of New South Wales (SPELD NSW) uses the following characteristics to define learning disabilities. They:

- are considered to be intrinsic to the individual,
- can cause a person to learn differently,
- are not linked to intellectual impairment (except incidentally),
- may coincidently exist with problems in self-regulatory behaviours, attention, social perception and social interaction,
- are life-long, and
- result in difficulty accessing the curriculum (unless identified early and appropriate individual educational adjustments provided to prevent failure).

Research quoted by the SPELD NSW found that 7% of all people are affected by SLD. (http://www.users.bigpond.com/speldnsw)

Canada

In Canada, the Education Ministry's Policy Manual (2000) defines a Learning Disability "as a neurologically based, hereditary condition that affects a person's ability to learn in 'typical' ways. There is a marked difference between what a person with a Learning Disability should be able to achieve and what he or she actually achieves."

In the Education Ministry's Policy Manual, the term 'Learning disability' includes conditions described as dyslexia, dyscalculia or dysgraphia, and may include students with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD).

The research from Canada has shown that 10% of the population have some form of SLD. (http://www.knowyourrights.ca/guardians_facts_ld.html)

England and Wales

The terms dyslexia and specific learning difficulties are interchangeable in England and Wales. According the Department of Education and Skills (2001), there are many aspects of the dyslexic syndrome such as: 'dysgraphia' (handwriting difficulties), 'dyspraxia' (poor motor co-ordination or 'clumsiness') and 'dyscalculia' (difficulties with calculation/maths). Research from England and Wales estimates that 10% of the population have some degree of SLD, of which 4% are severe. (http://www.dfes.gov.uk/curriculum_literacy/access/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.

NDP
NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The National Adult Literacy Agency
An Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearachta do Aosaigh