

Dyslexia Policy for Leicestershire Children and Young People's Service

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document sets out the policy of Leicestershire Children and Young People's Service on the identification, assessment and interventions in respect of children and young people with dyslexia.

2.0 DEFINITION

- 2.1 Leicestershire Children and Young People's Service adopts the following definition:

Dyslexia is evident when accurate and fluent word reading and/or spelling develops very incompletely or with great difficulty. This focuses on literacy learning at the 'word level' and implies that the problem is severe and persistent despite appropriate learning opportunities. It provides the basis for a staged process of assessment through teaching.

British Psychological Society (BPS), 1999

- 2.2 This definition,

- is supported by persuasive research evidence
- focuses on observed and observable difficulties
- makes no assumptions about causation
- is based on the research evidence that no particular test or test profile is necessary or sufficient for the identification of dyslexia
- is based on research evidence that confirms the view that dyslexia can occur in children and young people of all abilities
- does not rely on identifying a discrepancy between a child's abilities in one area and his/her abilities in another

- 2.3 While dyslexia can occur as a specific learning difficulty, it is not necessarily so. A child may have a range of learning difficulties and also have dyslexia.

3.0 PERSPECTIVES ON LITERACY LEARNING

- 3.1 Reading and spelling are complex skills that do not necessarily develop naturally. They need to be taught and children need to learn and practise the skills involved.
- 3.2 Teachers and carers should notice pupils' individual needs and adjust their responses accordingly. If a child does not make progress with the acquisition of reading and spelling skills, supported by parents/carers

as well as teachers and other school staff, then as a first step educational provision should be reviewed and possibly modified.

- 3.3 Dyslexia can be identified by anyone with suitable experience including teachers and special needs co-ordinators. It is not necessary to have an educational psychologist or other specialist to describe a child or young person's learning difficulties as 'dyslexia'. Many school-based staff prefer to have a discussion with an external agency or colleague before raising a concern with parents/carers because of the understandably high level of anxiety that can be caused.

4.0 WHAT SHOULD BE ASSESSED AND HOW?

- 4.1 The definition of dyslexia requires three aspects to be evaluated through assessment:
- That the child/young person has learned accurate or fluent word reading and/or spelling very incompletely or with great difficulty.
 - That appropriate learning opportunities have been, and are being, provided. Barriers to such learning opportunities may include social, emotional and behavioural factors and/or previously unidentified sensory impairments.
 - That progress has only been made as the result of much additional effort/instruction and that those difficulties have nevertheless persisted.
- 4.2 There is no single test for dyslexia and identification of dyslexia does not require a measure of any discrepancy between intelligence and reading skills. Assessment that makes no reference to the learning context and progress over time provides an incomplete picture of a child's difficulties/needs. This is particularly true when emotional difficulties prevent children/young people from learning. Emotional problems may develop as a consequence of the delay in acquiring literacy skills, which can exacerbate the learning difficulties in a complex way. Developing an understanding of the child's thoughts and emotional experiences is central to a meaningful assessment.
- 4.3 Assessment should be conducted over time through ongoing intervention and review. Examples of schoolwork, reports, IEPs and National Curriculum scores should be considered.
- 4.4 It is also highly relevant to the assessment that any other factors that could be contributing to the learning delay are considered, for example, possible hearing or visual impairment, poor attendance, emotional or physical difficulties.
- 4.5 It is important to gather as much information about the child's needs as possible and this will come from a variety of sources.

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- 4.6 Direct work with the child may include assessment of:
- Word reading, reading comprehension and spelling ability using reputable, up to date tests
 - Phonic knowledge
 - Phonological awareness
 - Visual memory for spellings
- 4.7 The assessor may administer cognitive assessments in order to gain further information about a child or young person's strengths and relative weaknesses but there is no requirement or necessity to undertake a psychometric assessment.
- 4.8 In addition to an examination of the child/young person's current attainments in literacy and/or numeracy, there is also a need to consider emotional and motivational aspects of functioning including:
- The child/young person's confidence as a learner
 - The extent to which s/he feels able to take risks with their learning
 - How s/he responds when 'making a mistake'
 - How s/he responds to praise
- 4.9 The assessor may wish to explore the child/young person's views by asking a range of questions which help to provide information regarding the child/young person's self-esteem, view of their ability, and how s/he thinks they could improve and develop their skills.
- 4.10 Observation of a child/young person in context can provide useful information about listening skills, motivation, independent learning skills, social development and peer relationships.

5.0 DEVELOPING SUPPORTIVE INTERVENTIONS

- 5.1 The purpose of the assessment should be to develop appropriate intervention and support strategies, not to confirm whether or not a child's learning difficulty is dyslexia.
- 5.2 There are many interventions that are proven to be helpful in supporting and improving children's literacy skills. The critical point is to select the intervention that is most likely to have a significant impact for the individual child/young person concerned. This judgement will be made on the basis of assessment information and current research.
- 5.3 Advice to schools can be found in DfES Guidance on the inclusion of all children in the literacy hour and daily mathematics lesson (DfES 0465/2002) and within the Primary National Strategy, 'Learning and teaching for dyslexic children' (DfES 1184/2005).

- 5.4 The Educational Psychology Service (EPS) and Specialist Teaching Service (STS) promote the development of effective practice within 'dyslexia friendly' schools. Advice and training on whole-school approaches to literacy development are available. Educational psychologists and learning support teachers also provide advice to school staff and to parents/carers as well as individual assessment, where appropriate.
- 5.5 EPS and STS offer a range of services related to the identification, assessment and amelioration of dyslexia in schools including:
- Staff training on supporting children with dyslexia and literacy difficulties within the context of 'Effective Dyslexia Friendly Schools' work.
 - Advice on programmes of work and effective interventions
 - Discussing dyslexia with groups of parents and/or school governors.
 - Enhancing the self-esteem and confidence in abilities of pupils with learning difficulties
 - Modelling good practice

6.0 WHEN TO USE THE TERM DYSLEXIA

- 6.1 Literacy difficulties exist on a continuum. There is no clear or absolute cut off point where a child/young person can be said to have dyslexia. The terms 'mild dyslexia' or 'dyslexic tendencies' are generally unhelpful. A child/young person is seen as having dyslexia if their difficulties meet the criteria set out in the BPS definition i.e. accurate and fluent word reading and/or spelling that develops incompletely or with great difficulty and that the problem is severe and persistent despite appropriate learning opportunities.
- 6.2 The point to be stressed is that in describing a child's learning difficulty as dyslexia, many factors need to be taken into account. One score on a reading test should not be viewed in isolation from all other factors. Some cases will be clear, others will not. Whether to describe a child's literacy difficulties as dyslexia will be a matter for professional judgement.
- 6.3 Consideration will also need to be given as to whether the term will be helpful for the individual child/young person concerned. Some find it reassuring to have their difficulties described in this way, for others it can seem to limit achievements and motivation. Professionals as well as parents/carers should be aware of the potential danger of creating low expectations through the use of the term 'dyslexia'.

July 2008