

DYSLEXIA ADULT NETWORK NEWS

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THIS 5th EDITION OF NETWORK NEWS COVERS

Introduction from the Chair

The Westminster AchieveAbility Commission on Recruitment and Dyslexia/ND

Access to Work

What's going on in government?

Updates from DAN and member organisations

Partnership Working

'Learning Difficulties' in the prison population

An appreciation of Sylvia Moody

Introduction from the Chair

Margaret Malpas

Hello and welcome to this edition of Network News. As I take over as Chair for the next two years, I cannot help but reflect that we are living in very interesting times. Some areas are immensely challenging, such as trying to get change through meetings with Government Ministers when we seem to have reshuffles faster than we can schedule meetings!

However, I am hopeful about some areas for adults with dyslexia because I think we are on the threshold of a significant change. Like many in society, I am sensing a mood of frustration amongst adults which has reached a turning point. Dyslexic employees are setting up networks within their organisations. Through the power of collaboration, they are achieving rapid change in awareness and the promotion of their rights.

Various initiatives are coming together at this time: the Westminster AchieveAbility Commission on Dyslexia/ND and Recruitment will be publishing their findings this Autumn (AchieveAbility is a steering committee member of DAN). The CIPD (HR) is researching and about to publish a Guide for Employers on neuro diversity in which I am involved. This will create greater awareness through informing HR managers about these conditions.

I started DAN five years ago so that we could achieve more through the impact of much greater numbers via collaboration. Our challenge to do this continues but DAN is now recognised and we are achieving things both individually and together, so I am optimistic about Dyslexic People Power!

Westminster AchieveAbility Commission (WAC) on Recruitment

Of all the areas affecting adults with dyslexia/ND, Access to Work (AtW) is frequently mentioned in complaints and difficulties that are fed back to our DAN organisations. It was therefore most appropriate to meet with the DWP staff member responsible for AtW strategy at our final evidence session in Portcullis House on June 26th.

We learned that Disability Employment Advisers are back - 500 of them - and that there is a Hidden Impairments specialist team attached to AtW. We have been given new contact names, which will enable us to follow up matters brought to our attention.

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

Another area identified is lack of data - on people with dyslexia/ND on Jobseekers Allowance, and on the benefits to employer and employee of using AtW.

We shall also be taking forward issues relating to Disability Confident (DC): How can take-up be promoted? How is it monitored to ensure that the three levels of DC status are evidenced in the organisation?

All this will feed into the final report of the Commission which we are now beginning to pull together in time for a launch during Adult Dyslexia Awareness Week this October. Three DAN members are serving on this Commission.

Access to Work (AtW)

DAN has learned that the new contract for delivering workplace needs reports under AtW has been awarded to RBLI and People Plus. However RBLI is also operating as a sub-contractor to deliver the assessments in People Plus areas. So, effectively RBLI is now delivering all AtW assessments.

Problems arise due to the nature of the timeline: the contract requires an eight day turnaround (and this really means 'days' NOT work days). This will inevitably be very difficult to achieve at a good standard and could also cause difficulties for the person being assessed.

People with dyslexia/ND are still being asked for a diagnostic report – despite assurances to DAN that this is not a pre-requisite. This is something that the Westminster Commission raised and will follow up.

Another development: workplace needs reports have become anonymous, signed simply 'RBLI Specialist, Employment Solutions'. This, together with not being able to get back to a named AtW Adviser, makes it much harder to follow up shortcomings in

reports. Please advise everyone to note the name of the assessor when s/he arrives to carry out the assessment.

What's going on in government ?

No employment legislation was outlined in the Queen's Speech, to follow through the **Improving Lives Green Paper** and the widespread consultation it generated. However earlier initiatives are continuing, such as the Work & Health Innovation Fund.

The (former) relative measure of '**Halving the Disability Gap**' has been replaced by a new aim of getting a million more disabled people into work over ten years i.e. increasing the current 3.6 million disabled people in work up to 4.6 million.

500 new **Disability Employment Advisers** will be working within JobCentrePlus (what goes around comes around!)

The new **Universal Credit** (UC) will come in across the whole of the UK by 2020. There will be mandatory profiling on health and welfare, with doctors asked to give evidence. We are concerned about how recipients will manage their finances as UC will only be paid once a month.

UPDATES FROM DAN

DAN continues to build alliances and make connections – this was Melanie's priority during her time as Chair. It has helped to keep us well informed of the wider disability picture. At our last meeting we heard from Sean Gilroy of the BBC project Creating a Positive Environment (**CAPE**) <http://welkermedia.com/daily/neurodiversity-workplace>

Having learned of the 500 new **Disability Employment Advisers** and the Access to Work **Hidden Impairments Team**, DAN is planning to offer training, following up on our initiative in December 2015. The offer will be finalised at our next meeting.

We are pleased to see that our modifications to gov.uk's web pages on **Employing Disabled People** are still in place in the March 2017 update. See section 5.5 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/employing-disabled-people-and-people-with-health-conditions/employing-disabled-people-and-people-with-health-conditions>

DAN and the BDA are hoping that a meeting with the Minister for Disabled People, which was being organised before the election, can be re-arranged.

Our Communications Officer, Becki Morris, is busy on social media and leads the Disability Co-operative network for Museums – as well as the day job. For news of all these initiatives see www.musedcn.org.uk/

Her written evidence to the Westminster Commission on Recruitment highlighted the work she has done on accessibility working with Warwickshire City Council and in conjunction to the Adult Group at Dig-It (Dyslexia Information Group in Tamworth).

Further news from some of our member organisations follows



Our **Employment Service** has entered its second year with hopes to draw on the successes of year one. In its first year, 32 individuals were supported on a one to one basis by the Employment Adviser and Volunteer Career Mentors to find work or further their careers. Overall, clients reported a marked increase in their job search confidence and career optimism. One grateful recipient of the service said *The way you helped me to put my CV together made sense to me. You listened to what I wanted and helped me make a CV that truly reflects who I am. It was a relaxed process and worked for me.*

In addition to careers and employability support for individuals, the service continues to work with employability agencies and services in Scotland, providing information and support on dyslexia awareness and best practice for supporting the dyslexic job seeker. We look forward to further developing this work with partners at a national and local level to improve the employment prospects for people with dyslexia in Scotland.

Six adults with dyslexia successfully gained the **Adult Achievement Award**, a new non-subject-specific national qualification unique to Scotland. The Awards are overseen by Newbattle Abbey College and delivered in partnership with learning providers across Scotland, including Dyslexia Scotland.

Dyslexia Scotland's response to the Work and Health Unit on the Improving Lives Green Paper consultation was submitted to the DWP in February: response <https://www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk/sites/default/files/library/WHU%20consultation%20-%20Collated%20Responses%20-%202016.2.pdf>

Forthcoming events: Contact 01786 446650 for details

20 July: Dyslexia Scotland is teaming up with Dress for Success Scotland to deliver a workshop in Interview Confidence for Women with Dyslexia.

24 and 28 August: Basic Dyslexia Awareness sessions for anyone who supports someone with dyslexia in their life, learning or work.

2, 4, 9 September: Adult Network meetings in Stirling, Glasgow and Edinburgh.

27 September: free drop-in Roadshows in West Lothian for information, advice and talks about dyslexia.

AchieveAbility raises awareness at Job Centre Plus

Building on four years of work in Redbridge, providing short courses for the Neurodivergent who are unemployed, AchieveAbility has been invited to provide awareness sessions to Job Centre Plus (JCP) staff in North East London.

The first session took place on 28 June to 50 staff at Redbridge JCP. The session included the overlapping conditions of Neurodivergence - the strengths - strategies for success - data on UK literacy and NEETS. The outcome is greater understanding for JCP staff in working with clients who are not Neurotypical.

The next session will take place at Romford JCP.

News from the Dyspraxia Foundation



Our Adult Employment Survey, carried out last October, brings out some important points

Jobcentres are seen as unhelpful

91% think Jobcentre staff do not understand Dyspraxia and the same number think that they do not provide appropriate support.

Ignorance about dyspraxia means that employees' competence is sometimes unfairly judged as laziness or lack of interest

- Employees with dyspraxia fear that their behaviour (e.g. untidy workspace, missing deadlines/appointments, difficulty multi-tasking) is misinterpreted as laziness, carelessness or unwillingness.
- According to our survey, 68% of people chose not to disclose because they were worried about discrimination.
- In some cases, individuals who had disclosed were subjected to workplace bullying and performance management, even though they had the skills necessary for their role.

Dyspraxia could be an asset in the workplace

- Dyspraxia could be regarded as an asset in some work roles e.g. as a social worker or teaching assistant having more empathy with those who are disadvantaged
- Employees with dyspraxia bring a range of strengths/talents to the workplace including:
 - Determination, strong work ethic, loyalty, enthusiasm, trustworthiness, resourcefulness
 - Ability to 'think outside the box', approaching problems from a different perspective & coming up with creative solutions
 - Following procedures as set, rather than taking short cuts
 - Quirkiness and a sense of humour

FUNDRAISER The Dyspraxia Foundation announces a charity screening of the new **Star Wars** film on Day 2 of its general release! We have a private screening with only 151 seats available, so book now if you want to join us on **Saturday, 16th December**

Book your seat for '**Star Wars - The Last Jedi**' (3D) at 6pm at the Odeon, Covent Garden on 16th December for this very special fundraiser and support the Dyspraxia Foundation. **£35** ticket includes 3D glasses, sweets and popcorn.

<http://dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/shopping/product/other-items/star-wars-the-last-jedi-3d-dyspraxia-foundation-screening/>

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Disabilities

Dyslexia was well-represented at the first meeting of the re-formed APPG on Disabilities, with representatives from DAN and the British Dyslexia Association.

The Secretariat is still Disability Rights UK (DR-UK) and Dr Lisa Cameron remains Chair. Other parliamentarians present were Lord Addington and Baroness Uddin (who has an autistic son).

Presentations included Prof Kim Hoque of Warwick Business School on ***Ahead of the Ark***, the APPG response to the *Improving Lives* Green Paper (available on the DR-UK website). He made a number of points, beginning by flagging up the role of Innovate UK and the Business Bank to better support disabled people into work.

Public sector procurement should have criteria regarding disabled employees and barriers. *Disability Confident* is no more successful than its predecessor, the *Two Ticks* scheme. So far uptake has been exclusively from government departments and voluntary sector organisations. Two public sector organisations have signed up to Disability Confident status but only one large employer: KPMG.

Kim made these recommendations:

- 1 promote the work of Trade Unions regarding disability
- 2 make use of the obligations of the Public Sector Equality Duty
- 3 make a business case for employing people with disabilities (see DR-UK website).

The second talk was by Alex Williams from Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). He spoke of the Green Paper *Building our Industry Strategy* which outlines ten pillars of success including cultivating world-leading sectors and investing in research & development. As DR-UK pointed out, disability is not mentioned.

Lord Addington made a good comment regarding law and strategy being in place but implementation being sadly lacking.

Margaret Malpas asked that procurement criteria be re-prioritised to ensure that significant improvements be made for disabled people, rather than focusing on easy to measure things like turnaround times. Melanie Jameson asked why there was no employment legislation in the Queen's Speech, as expected as the next stage of the *Improving Lives* Green Paper. This was answered by a DWP civil servant, Deborah Jamieson, who said that the Government had listened carefully to the outcomes of the consultation. She also offered to follow up on Margaret's point at a senior level.

The Hidden Impairments National Group (HING)

DAN continues to find that HING is very focused on autism; this is inevitable since most of the people round the table have this specialism. However the Chair has voiced his wish that dyslexia and other Specific Learning Differences be better served and, to this end, has invited DAN to take the role of Vice Chair. This should be put in place at the next meeting.

Due to work by Amanda Kirby, a **Hidden Impairments website for employers** is now available, along with an **Uncovering Hidden Impairments Toolkit** for staff and managers in Job Centres. DAN has contributed to both these resources. You may have heard of the **Disability Passport**, produced by HING, but DAN maintains that this is appropriate for people with autism, rather than for all with dyslexia/ND.

SENEL <https://www.jamk.fi/en/Research-and-Development/RDI-Projects/senel/home/>

Two DAN members attended the recent dissemination event of the Special Education Needs Employment Links (SENEL) project, which aims to help young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) move successfully from vocational training and further education into employment. It is EU-funded, with the participation of a number of international educational institutions, with the focus of producing and evaluating tools to support these students in their transition.

Resources disseminated comprised (1) videos of best practices in partner countries, (2) a 'Mini-guide for Employers' providing information to support employers hiring young people with SEND and (3) a 'Passport to Employment' for students in order to highlight their strengths to employers.

DAN member and principal of the Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre, Bernadette McLean, noted the following:

This population often lacks 'soft skills', defined as those transferable skills that allow the workforce to move around careers and employment, help foster identity, encourage a sense of identity, and provide social contexts away from the home. SENEL helps to address this.

Recommendations included better links between Education and Employment and getting the Passport to Employment into schools. Careers staff would also value this resource.

The UK lead on this project, Sheena Bell, intends to bid for more Erasmus money and is planning a focus group in September to which DAN has been invited.



HM Prison &
Probation Service

'Learning Difficulties' in the prison population

In the last edition of Network News I wrote of a White Paper on prison reform; this became a Bill. But those of us following prison reform were shocked to find that the Prisons & Courts Bill (which had made good progress, with cross-party support) had been dropped in the Queens Speech. What emerged was simply a Courts Bill.

How could this be when the situation in our prisons has never been more acute? And how can there be any continuity when there have been four Secretaries of State at the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) in as many years?

All of this is in the context of my work to promote a sound methodology for identifying and supporting prisoners with Dyslexia/ND - to match provisions for those with Learning Disabilities. I now sit on the Learning Practice Development Group for Learning Difficulties & Disabilities chaired by the MoJ. A massive internal reorganisation is further impeding this work together with uncertainty about how Prison Governors will undertake their new role of commissioning services in addition to operational responsibilities.

There are some dedicated civil servants working on this, together with the organisations contracted to provide educational services. But nothing will happen soon. Meanwhile dangerous levels of dissatisfaction, violence, drug availability and continued overcrowding are like a tinder box, awaiting a match.

Melanie

Sylvia Moody 1941-2017 An appreciation by Melanie Jameson



With the death of Sylvia Moody, the adult dyslexic world has lost an outstanding advocate. From her information sheets to her books and guides, she presented the issues and promoted a more comprehensive understanding of support needs.

Other publications of hers were written with a dyslexic audience in mind, to help them tackle their difficulties and use their abilities – the title *Surviving and Succeeding at College* says it all!

Sylvia also moved into new areas, exploring how to write a helpful and authoritative legal report, and describing the emotional impact of finding out you are dyslexic. Looking to share insights with colleagues she formed the Workplace Training Group, to which three DAN members belonged. We met up three times a year to present and discuss issues that arose – such as the perception of dyslexic employees falling foul of health and safety requirements and what Employment Tribunal judges sought in dyslexia documentation.

Sylvia's writing skills flourished in other areas – she was a poet, a story writer and had a lasting love of Greek. She had lived in Greece and could translate from ancient Greek. For as long as I knew her (from the early 1990s) Sylvia lived with the limitations imposed by ME which affected her ability to get out and about.

The service she has rendered to the adult dyslexia community will not be forgotten. The Association of Specialists in HE (ADSHE) has marked it by inaugurating the **ADSHE Award in Memory of Sylvia Moody**; this was awarded for the first time at their recent Annual Conference, to Jamie Crabb. This award recognises an individual or group of people who have made a significant and valued contribution to the sharing of resources and materials for the benefit of the profession.

Jamie has been working to ensure that Sylvia's website can continue to be available. Sylvia was always generous about sharing her ideas and resources, and it is fitting that this should continue, via her website, currently available via the link <http://www.sylviamoody.com/dyslexia.html>

Thanks also to Pauline Sumner of ADSHE for her contribution

Our next edition is due to appear in Dyslexia Awareness Week, 2-8 October 2017. Thursday 5th, designated as 'Adult' day, is also World Dyslexia Awareness day.