DYSLEXIA ADULT NETWORK NEWS
No 4 Winter 2017

Dyslexia Adult Network

dan-uk.co.uk

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THIS EDITION OF NETWORK NEWS COVERS
The Green Paper on Employment and Disability
Updates from DAN
The Westminster AchieveAbility Commission on Recruitment and Dyslexia/ND
Resources on Adult Dyslexia
Identifying Learning Disabilities & Learning Difficulties in prisons
Partnership Working

Message from the Chair

Greetings, all.
What has marked the period since the last edition of Network News (end of September 2016) is the expansion in working with partners. This has arisen due to DAN's engagement with the government Green Paper on employment and disability: *Improving Lives*.
Sharing perspectives and identifying common ground with other organisations and networks makes for interesting interactions – See more details in the Partnership Working section.
Our dialogue with the Minister for Disabled People was interrupted by the change of personnel but, having made initial contact with Penny Mordaunt early on, we shall follow this up shortly with a letter laying out our concerns about the representation of dyslexia/ND within the disability employment agenda.
I shall be stepping down in June, after my two year stint as Chair. DAN is now well-established within disability networks and has made a worthwhile contribution to Disability Confident guidance but has yet to make sufficient impact on the way dyslexia is understood across the delivery of Access to Work (AtW)– despite providing training in 2015. We are monitoring the new AtW contracts to try and ensure that dyslexia/ND is not 'tucked away' within mental health provisions.
Melanie Jameson

The Work, Health and Disability Green Paper: Improving Lives

Link to the Green Paper and the consultation, which closes on Feb 17th:
https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/work-health-and-disability-improving-lives

A casual skim though this document would leave you thinking that this does not cover dyslexia/ND at all. Medical/health terminology is prevalent, the role of the GP is emphasised, none of which is relevant to our population.
Interventions and innovations are in the hands of the Work and Health Unit, which has large funds available for specific innovation projects – such as peer job-seeker support. Dyslexia Scotland, whose CEO sits on the DAN steering group, has been contacted by this Unit.
We are currently considering our response to the few parts of the consultation which are relevant, namely support in Jobcentres; the role of work coaches; support to enable people stay in work and progress. We expect the majority of our input to fit under the final three consultation themes: Supporting employers to recruit with confidence; Reforming existing government support to better support the recruitment & retention of disabled people; and Changing the culture around work and health/disability.

DAN's response will be uploaded onto our website

At a recent event convened by Disability Rights UK and attended by the Secretary of State, Damian Green, DAN submitted the following question:
The Dyslexia Adult Network would like assurances that dyslexia and overlapping conditions will be fully taken into account and that support measures, such as Access to Work, will be fit for purpose. We are speaking about disabilities which do not fall within 'health' and the medical model. This includes dyslexia, which can affect organisation, memory, time management, and dealing with verbal communication written and/or spoken. We must stress the fact that dyslexic people can have considerable strengths in other domains such as problem solving and creativity. Failure to detect and support them in the workplace will mean that much potential is wasted.

A useful critique of the Green Paper has been produced by the Disability@Work team (see Partnership Working section). Hard copies are available from Deepen@cardiff.ac.uk
http://www.disabilityatwork.co.uk/2016/11/06/closing-disability-gaps-at-work-deficits-in-evidence-and-differences-in-experience/

UPDATES from DAN

First of all, we welcome **AchieveAbility** onto the DAN steering committee. The two groups had already been working closely together through regular contacts between DAN Chair, Melanie Jameson, and Katherine Hewlett of AchieveAbility. This co-operation increased when Richard Todd (who represents the Dyspraxia Foundation) and Melanie (for DAN) became part of the Westminster AchieveAbility Commission on Recruitment and Dyslexia/ND.

Much of DAN's energies have been taken up with engaging with the government's long-stated aim of '***Halving the Disability Employment Gap'*** and responding to consultations both from the All Party Parliamentary Group on Disabilities, and from the DWP, on shaping this initiative.

Becki Morris, our Communications Officer, reports on an SpLD conference on adults at Sheffield University on February 9th (@SpLDSheffield) hosted by The Codpast (@thecodpast) and the SpLD Society with Dr Julian Elliott, Lord David Blunkett and Professor Rod Nicolson, among others. The ensuing debate can be followed on #SpLDdebate17.

The **twitter discussion** focused on Elliott's usual theme of whether the word 'dyslexia' is useful. It was emphatically agreed that questioning the existence of dyslexia, and therefore not offering support to students and school pupils, was wholly inappropriate. More than this, the focus should be to concentrate on removing stigma and misunderstanding, before we start challenging the actual word 'dyslexia'. It was agreed that dyslexia was not just linked to reading problems, but encompassed other areas such as working memory and organisation.

The Guardian newspaper is asking for people to speak about their experiences in the workplace with a hidden disability. I've asked the journalist what is the context of the piece but they have not been forward with this. I've also been told via email that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. The journalist is frances.ryan.freelance@guardian.co.uk

News from Dyslexia Scotland www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk

Dyslexia Scotland has been contacted by the Work and Health Unit and has carried out interviews with a focus group on the *Improving Lives* Green Paper consultation. Participants all felt strongly about creating positive change, with a particular focus on new approaches to recruitment, and on developing inclusive, interdependent workplaces where dyslexia is celebrated. A collated response will be submitted to the DWP by the deadline of 17 February.

Our **Employment Service** continues to gather momentum, with four Volunteer Career Mentors now working one to one with clients. In addition, we are involved in the second pilot of Adult Achievement Awards, a new subject non-specific national qualification unique to Scotland, with a view to supporting adults to gain a qualification. Six adults with dyslexia are involved.
Adult Achievement Awards are overseen by Newbattle Abbey College and are delivered in partnership with learning providers across Scotland.

Dyslexia Scotland now has three Adult Networks that meet regularly in Stirling, Edinburgh and Glasgow. Meetings are free and details can be found at the following link: http://www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk/our-adult-networks

Follow-up on disability discrimination case against Starbucks

In our last edition we reported on Meseret Kumulchew, who won a disability discrimination case against Starbucks after being accused of falsifying documents. Our Chair had a chance to meet with Meseret and her lawyers at the launch of the Disability Working video. Despite this win, the ramifications of related cases drag on, with an inevitable cost to the individual of taking such a stand. We wish Meseret all the best in her battle to stand up for the rights of dyslexia employees.

Westminster AchieveAbility Commission on Recruitment and Dyslexia/ND

http://www.achieveability.org.uk/main/policy/new-commission

The aim of this initiative is to find out how recruitment and probation processes might be improved for people with dyslexia/ND, and to highlight good practice in these areas. Our work is progressing as planned through the process of calling expert witnesses and sending out a survey for people with Dyslexia/ND and another one to employers.

More witness sessions will be arranged for early 2017 to elicit 'Policy and Practice' and to further capture the 'Neurodivergent Voice'. Written submissions will also be requested from key individuals and organisations. The evidence gathered will inform our final report, contributing to the government's agenda on 'Halving the Disability Employment Gap' by 2020.

Please help us by responding to the appropriate survey
For people with dyslexia/ND https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/AchieveAbility01.
Link for employees https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/AchieveAbilityEMPLOYEE01
Social Media Link https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/AchieveAbilityEMPLOYEESM
Employer contact https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/AchieveAbilityEMPLOYERPR
Word document versions of both surveys available from westcommission@achieveability.org.uk

Resources on Adult Dyslexia

Self Fulfilment with Dyslexia: a Blueprint for Success *Margaret Malpas*

My research has led me to identify ten key traits which people with dyslexia have harnessed in order to reach success and self-fulfilment. From increasing self-esteem to imaginative problem solving, each of the ten 'secrets to success' is explained and brought to life through interviews with accomplished dyslexic people, describing how they have profited from a single star characteristic in realizing their goals.

The results are distilled into a step by step guide to unlocking potential, together with a complementary e-learning programme: *Success at Work and Home.*
The eleven module course costs £12:99 but is available free of charge upon evidence that the individual is unwaged. Full details from the BDA website: www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

NeuroDiversity in the Workplace – ACAS report

ACAS, the employment conciliation service, has commissioned a report from the national Institute of Economic and Social Research to flag up issues and good practice in the workplace regarding ADHD, autism, dyslexia and dyspraxia. Information is drawn from two contrasting case studies – an FE College, and a large private sector employer, together with expert input.
Sections cover disclosure, recruitment, workplace support, minimising disciplinary actions, performance management, benefits of neurodiversity, external support for employers and effective practice. Well worth reading. www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/1/h/Neurodiversity_at_work_0916.pdf

Identifying Learning Disabilities and Learning Difficulties (LDD) in prison

In the last edition, I wrote about a much-delayed prison reform which has now resulted in the White Paper: Prison Safety and Reform. Nothing positive can be achieved if prisons continue in their current unstable state, but the government have brought this on themselves through the foolhardy and ultimately disastrous reduction in prison officer numbers in recent years – something the current Secretary of State, Liz Truss, is now having to reverse.

But there is some good news: there is now funding in place to be drawn down for the identification /assessment of Learning Disabilities & Specific Learning Difficulties (known as LDD). This is very exciting and leads me on to the next step: if prisoners will finally be identified as having these conditions, those who work with them – prison officers (especially 'dedicated personal officers'), management, and education & training providers – must be 'up to speed'.

To this end I have gone right to the top with a letter to the Prisons Minister, Sam Gyimah. A recent report from the DWP, which appeared almost unnoticed last December, flags up the support needs of ex-offenders; as we know this population will include many with dyslexia/ND. ***Melanie Jameson***

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Disability Rights UK

Over the last six months we have linked more closely with Disability Rights UK (DR-UK), as they take the lead on investigating the implications of Halving the Disability Employment Gap. They have the Secretariat of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Disabilities, and, as such, have led a consultation to which DAN responded, and a call for evidence to which the DAN Chair was invited to speak. The APPG report on Disability and Employment, which finally appeared in December 2016, is well worth studying; it is entitled: *Ahead of the Arc*
www.disabilityrightsuk.org/sites/default/files/pdf/AheadoftheArc9Dec2016.pdf

The 'Disability@Work' team

Disability@Work is the initiative of four academic researchers who have a common and long-standing interest in disability and work. Their aim is to engage with policymakers, practitioners and interest groups who are interested in this agenda.
Professors Melanie Jones and Victoria Wass from Cardiff University Business School have expertise in statistics, so have been able to provide useful evidence to the consultations and inquiries arising out of the Green Paper. They have also produced an accessible and informative video on disability in the workplace: http://www.disabilityatwork.co.uk/video/
Their website www.disabilityatwork.co.uk will get you up to speed with their initiatives, or you can follow their blogs at http://blogs.cardiff.ac.uk/disability-and-employment/

Through contact with this group, DAN has been linked to the Disabled Employment Evidence Based Partnerships (DEEPEN), which has been set up to develop partnerships and networks between organisations with an interest in improving the lives of disabled employees. This has recently evolved into a Disabled Employment Network using Google Groups. If you would like to be kept informed on the progress of the DEEPEN project and of future activities or join the Disabled Employment Network, contact them by emailing: Deepen@cardiff.ac.uk

Exceptional Individuals http://www.exceptionalindividuals.com/

DAN has made contact with Matt Boyd, the founder of *Exceptional Individuals,* an organisation in London which aims to get people with dyslexia into work. They are building up good links with employers, in order to 'sell' the idea of the dyslexic skillset. Matt will be sharing his expertise when he gives evidence to the Recruitment Commission.

EVENT on 28th April: *From Individual to Infrastructure, how we can enable dyslexic adults*.

BRE in Watford is the venue for a day conference for adults with dyslexia/ND. www.bre.co.uk/
Cost £25 + booking fee. Details from www.bdadyslexia.org.uk