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Foreword

In 2016, Dyslexia Scotland created the first post to lead the development of dyslexia-specific career guidance in Scotland. Since then, we have sought to carve out what effective career education means for this community, which accounts for ten percent of our population.

This group of individuals who possess creative and dynamic thinking skills often feel like fish out of water in their learning environments and consequently in their career development. Through engagement with dyslexic people themselves, partnerships with experts in the fields of dyslexia and career guidance, and trying and testing what we've learned in practice, we've learned a lot about approaches and techniques that make a difference.

This resource has been designed with educators who work with dyslexic young people in mind, to give you some practical resources and confidence when it comes to nurturing young dyslexic career potential. Set against the policy context that follows, the activities and exercises in this resource have been curated and adapted to be suitable for practitioners to quickly apply to their learning setting. By 'practitioners' we're referring to the wide range of adult or peer helpers involved in career development with young people, including: career advisers, career coaches, career educators, employability workers, youth workers, community workers, work coaches, job club volunteers, workplace mentors, guidance teachers, lecturers, parents, carers and other skilled helpers.

I hope you find this resource useful from both the policy and practice perspectives. By opening this resource and delving into its contents, you have made a positive step in your own development as coach and educator as well as seeking to make a difference to the one in ten young Scots with dyslexia in your orbit. We applaud you for taking this step.

Dyslexia Scotland welcomes the opportunity for professional engagement on dyslexia and career matters and we'd encourage you to connect with us about your practice success stories and challenges. Help us to continue to evolve and improve this resource, and other career education CPD and materials we develop. We'd value your input and opportunities for future collaborations.

Best wishes
Katie

Outcomes the pack is designed to achieve for practitioners:

- Practitioners increase their knowledge and understanding of dyslexia
- Practitioners increase their understanding of dyslexic strengths and difficulties and ways these can impact on career – lifelong and life-wide
- Practitioners are more confident about supporting dyslexic clients effectively
- Practitioners learn practical ways of supporting dyslexic young people in career development settings

Outcomes the pack is designed to enable young people to achieve are drawn from Scotland's national Youth Work Outcomes:

- Young people are confident, resilient and optimistic for their careers
- Young people create, describe and apply their learning and strengths
- Young people broaden their perspectives through new experiences and thinking

Introduction

Dyslexia and Career Guidance: A policy context

In recent years, dyslexia's profile has heightened and with that there has emerged greater interest and discourse on the associated challenges and assets, particularly in relation to career development.

A number of prolific reports by public and private sector bodies highlight the potentially devastating impact of unidentified and unsupported dyslexia – to the individual and to society - and champion the value of strengths-focussed approaches.

In 2014, Scotland's Making Sense report highlighted the impact of being dyslexic on learners' attainment: "Young people with dyslexia attain significantly less well than their peers who do not have additional support needs"; advocating for dyslexia friendly, person-centred practice.

The 2019 report The Human Cost of Dyslexia highlights that "skills necessary to engage with learning are also necessary for learners to be able to achieve well academically. Those... because of their dyslexia may not achieve academic success. Linked to academic underachievement... is a lack of ability to be able to engage well with professional life after school. Much research has shown a disproportionately higher rate of dyslexia in offender cohorts. As such, it is vital that the needs of dyslexic learners are identified... and appropriate support is implemented" (All Party Parliamentary Group for Dyslexia and other SpLDs, 2019)

This is evident in the adult population. The Opening Doors to Employment report states "avoidable cost of dyslexia on the [UK] economy caused by unnecessary educational underachievement is £1.2 billion a year. As a result there is a significant gap between the percentage of dyslexic and neurodivergent people in employment, and the rest of the population" (Westminster Achievability Commission, 2018). The report also highlights that within the unemployed, dyslexic people are significantly over-represented.

Amidst the social difficulties faced by dyslexic people in academic attainment and employment, there is great economic benefit to supporting young dyslexic people to maximise their innate strengths. According to The Value of Dyslexia report "Dyslexic strengths align closely with business needs and can become part of the solution. A greater awareness of these strengths, neuro-diverse abilities and of the skills needed in the future, can help educators facilitate and employers capture untapped talent" (Ernst and Young, 2018).

These reports highlight the risks to dyslexic individuals when they are not supported to realise – and reach – their potential, making it clear that dyslexia must be supported and nurtured in order to enable dyslexic

individuals to make the significant contribution they are capable of to our society and economy, not to mention having a fulfilling and satisfying working life.

This resource pack responds to the needs and recommendations highlighted in these reports and to the Career Management Skills Framework for Scotland which places emphasis on “providing face to face and intensive support for those who need it most including...those who need additional support for their learning” (Skills Development Scotland, 2012).

Changing World of Work

Young dyslexic people can be anxious about what they’ll be able to do when they ‘grow up’, especially if school has been a struggle. Coupled with this, their career prospects are being shaped every day by global issues beyond anyone’s control. The covid-19 pandemic is a relatable example of this: new jobs emerge, some fade away; the value of roles such as nursing and delivery jobs are appreciated more than they were in 2019. Young people’s career planning and preparation needs to focus inwards, rather than on choosing an occupation, as roles will keep on changing.

Indeed, the next generation are unlikely to have the same job for life, as their parents and grandparents expected; so adaptation to change, full understanding of themselves and awareness of the changing job market are key to putting their talents to best use.

Activities in this pack don’t emphasise what to *do* for work so much as how to *be*, in terms of maximising strengths. Occupational case study videos are included to provide some practical real-world examples of how dyslexic strengths can be applied in a variety of roles and sectors, to encourage hope and optimism for a fulfilling career.

According to Ernst & Young’s report *The Value of Dyslexia*, the jobs of the future will need dyslexic thinking skills. These include: reasoning; connecting; exploring; communicating; imagining and connecting. These strengths align closely with the capabilities, or ‘meta-skills’, of self-management, social intelligence and innovation required to succeed in the changing world of work (Skills Development Scotland, 2018). As such, young dyslexic people of today represent the talent solution of the future, providing these abilities are well nurtured.

This resource sets out to provide some basic tools for educators to do exactly that.



Knowing Self and Strengths

Drawing on theory and practice from coaching, mentoring, informal education and dyslexia contexts, the activities in this resource have particular focus on developing sense of self-awareness and strengths, two of the four competencies identified in Skills Development Scotland's Career Management Skills Framework. Practitioner support notes also highlight the meta-skills each activity develops.

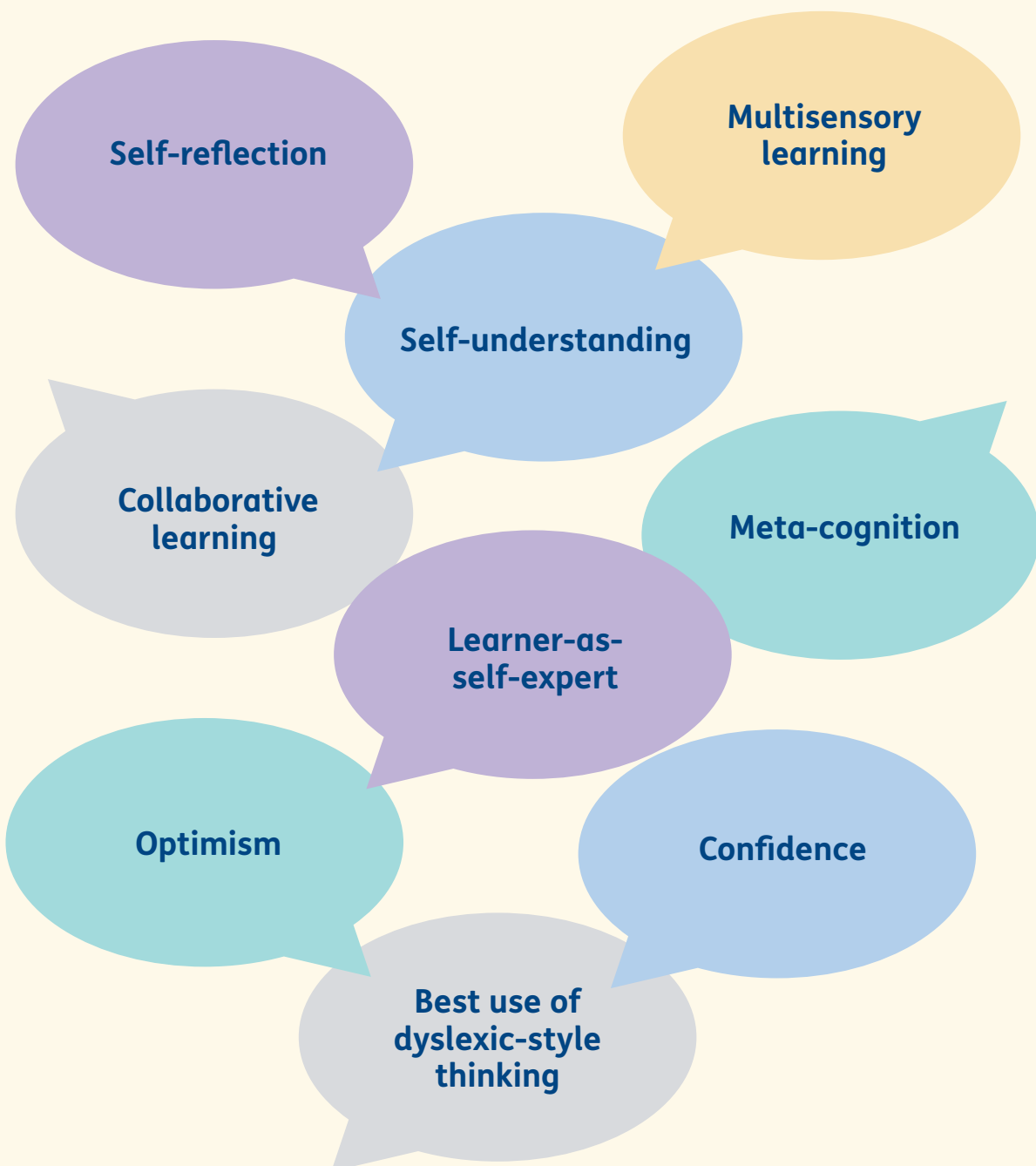
Dyslexic learners who have had negative experiences of learning tend to focus on their difficulties (McLoughlin and Leather, 2013) and risk losing hope for their futures (Eide and Eide, 2011). Maximising 'untapped talent' (Ernst and Young, 2018) and the predisposed strengths common to dyslexic individuals can be accomplished in learning settings where difficulties associated with sense of self and strengths are recognised, understood and supported.

As such, for people with dyslexia, learning that supports self-understanding, self-reflection and metacognition can be particularly beneficial in developing strategies for self-management (Doyle and MacDowall, 2015) and self-belief, leading to improved self-confidence and career optimism (McLoughlin and Leather, 2013; Eide and Eide, 2011). Dyslexic learners who thrive are the ones with a realistic self-awareness of their strengths and areas of difficulty (Eide and Eide, 2011). The activities in this book can launch dyslexic learners on such a voyage of introspective self-discovery, supporting them to navigate their future career decisions.

How dyslexic learners think and learn

The Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit (Dyslexia Scotland) recommends that dyslexic learners learn best when the learning is multisensory and interactive.

Dyslexic thinkers typically excel in reasoning, connecting, exploring, communicating, imagining and visualising (Ernst and Young, 2018). The activities in this book are supportive of the nature of dyslexic thinking and promoting of dyslexic strengths. The support notes for educators provide ideas for enhancing each activity, bringing the learning life beyond the page. In addition to key meta-skill development (Skills Development Scotland, 2018), the activities promote:



Scotland's National Outcomes

Adult Learning Statement of Ambition

- We have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone
- We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society
- We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination
- We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally
- We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe

Career Management Skills Framework for Scotland

Curriculum for Excellence

career educators

"We must ensure that those disabled people who can work and who want to work are supported to secure that opportunity."

A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: employment action plan
The Scottish Government (2018)

Supporting Dyslexia in Career Development and Employability Settings: Context and Need

"Young disabled people are much more likely to experience difficult transitions through education and to be unemployed after they leave education."

Developing Young Workforce - Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy

The Scottish Government (2014)

DYW - Youth Employment Strategy

National Youth Work Strategy

"Linked to academic underachievement and poor literacy is a lack of ability to be able to engage well with professional life after school."

The Human Cost of Dyslexia
Report from the Westminster All-Party Parliamentary Group for Dyslexia and other SpLDs (2019)

"A greater awareness of neurodiverse abilities can help educators facilitate and employers capture untapped talent."

Valuing Dyslexia: Dyslexic Strengths and the Changing World of Work
Ernst and Young (2018)

"A different approach, focussed on both remediation of dyslexic challenges and targeting of strengths through skills, could provide an opportunity to refocus effort and assist with bridging the skills gap."

Valuing Dyslexia: Dyslexic Capability and Organisations of the Future
Ernst and Young (2018)

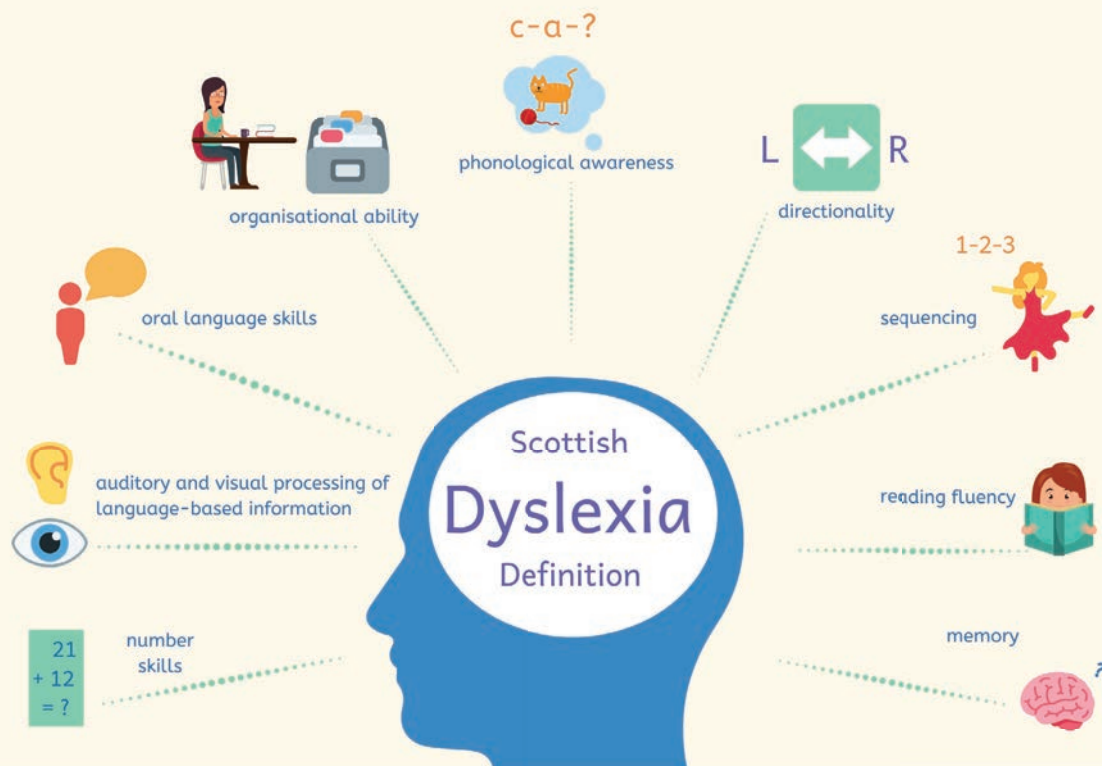
"Many neurodivergent people are ready and willing to work but find themselves faced by insurmountable barriers. Navigating recruitment challenges can be more stressful and demanding than the challenges of the job."

Neurodiverse Voices: Opening Doors to Employment
The Westminster Achievability Commission for Dyslexia and Neurodivergence (2018)

Equalities Act 2010

Fairer Scotland Action Plan

The Human Rights Act



The impact of dyslexia as a barrier to learning varies in degree according to the learning and working environment

The Scottish Definition of Dyslexia

Dyslexia can be described as a continuum of difficulties in learning to read, write and/or spell, which persist despite the provision of appropriate learning opportunities. These difficulties often do not reflect an individual's cognitive abilities and may not be typical of performance in other areas.

The impact of dyslexia as a barrier to learning varies in degree according to the learning environment, as there are often associated difficulties such as:

- auditory and /or visual processing of language-based information
- phonological awareness
- oral language skills and reading fluency
- short-term and working memory
- sequencing and directionality
- number skills
- organisational ability

Dyslexia exists in all cultures and across the range of abilities and socio-economic backgrounds. It is a hereditary, life-long, neurodevelopmental condition.

Learners with dyslexia will benefit from early identification, appropriate intervention and targeted effective teaching, enabling them to become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.

About the Resources

This pack is in worksheet form with educator support notes for each activity. Support notes in section 1 include suggested resources, as well as the dyslexic strengths and meta-skills the activity develops.

Some worksheets refer to an online video. QR links to videos are included on the worksheets. The videos feature dyslexic Scots talking about their careers. Dyslexic people benefit from role models, such as the ones featured in these videos, as learning from the life experiences of other dyslexic people can support with their own optimism and resilience (Eide and Eide, 2011).

The structure of this pack is flexible, designed –

- With young dyslexic learners in mind, though it can be used more broadly
- To be followed either as a whole programme of learning or as standalone activities to ‘dip in’ to where appropriate
- To be delivered as short activities, or whole sessions, depending on the nature of your setting and the needs of the learners
- To be used in one-to-one settings, as home-based learning, or within group and peer-learning settings, or as self-coaching resources where appropriate
- To support development of a personal strengths portfolio
- With resource sheets which can be photocopied as worksheets, or to be adapted as more multisensory, interactive activities
- In dyslexia-friendly formats (Dyslexia Scotland, 2018), with dyslexia-supportive approaches to learning
- Not to directly address difficulties outlined in the Scottish definition of dyslexia but to support aspects of the social and emotional inhibition which can affect dyslexic learners’ career aspiration, and to provide some practical strategies for early career preparation
- To support young people at all stages of career learning

Measuring Impact

How will I know I am making a positive and sustained difference to dyslexic learners' career development?

Capturing and reflecting on the 'distance travelled' will support their self-understanding as a learner, and your confidence as a practitioner.



Using a five-point rating scale at the start and end of the learning programme, learners can say to what extent they agree with statements relating to confidence, self-awareness, self-efficacy, creativity and optimism. Calculate a score by averaging their ratings and noting the change at the start and the end of the learning programme.

This, combined with learners' impact statements and the strengths portfolio developed through participation in these activities provides a concrete evidence base for their growth and development.

As with all of the activities in this resource, their success is as much down to the delivery as the content. Some learners will be content to complete a worksheet version of this baseline and measurement tool, while some will prefer an active version, or the opportunity to think out loud about each statement. Close support may be needed so learners understand the colour and number key. They may even appreciate seeing you provide your own ratings for yourself, demonstrating that you are a partner in a shared learning process.

This measure is provided in a scaled list format and as a spider graph, so choose a format that works for you and the learner. The scaling format captures numerical totals, the spider graph captures a shape. Alternatively, design a more interactive version, for example by using the learning space to physically walk out the scale from one side of the space to another. So long as the learner has a record of where they started and where they progress to, the method used can be as creative you like.



Rating Myself

1 = strongly disagree; **2** = disagree; **3** = neither agree nor disagree;
4 = agree; **5** = strongly agree.

I look for opportunities before I look for problems	
I feel positive about the future	
I can be creative and think of new ways of doing things	
I know what my strengths are	
I can communicate about myself in positive ways	
I know how I learn	
I can overcome many difficulties	
I can achieve the goals I set for myself	
I believe I can succeed at almost any task I set my mind to	
Total score	



Rating Myself

1 = strongly disagree; **2** = disagree; **3** = neither agree nor disagree; **4** = agree; **5** = strongly agree.

Mark each section with a dot to show your rating, then join them up as a whole shape.

