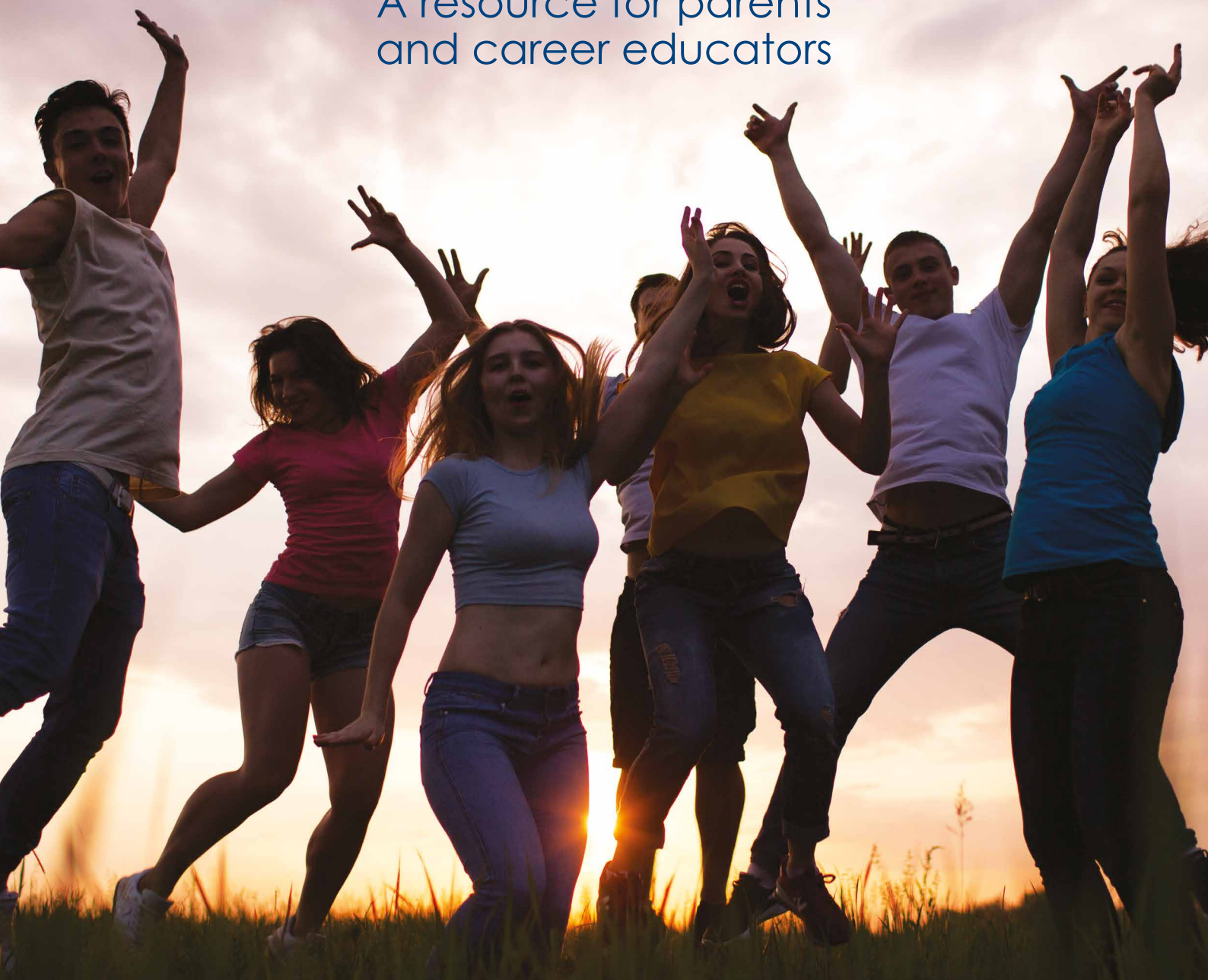


Dyslexic Career Journeys

A resource for parents
and career educators



By Dyslexia Scotland



New
edition

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Katie Carmichael
Career Coach
Dyslexia Scotland

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 responds to the needs and recommendations highlighted in these reports and to the Career Review (Skills Development Scotland, 2022) which promotes a person centred and asset-based approach, focussing on individuals’ strengths.

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.

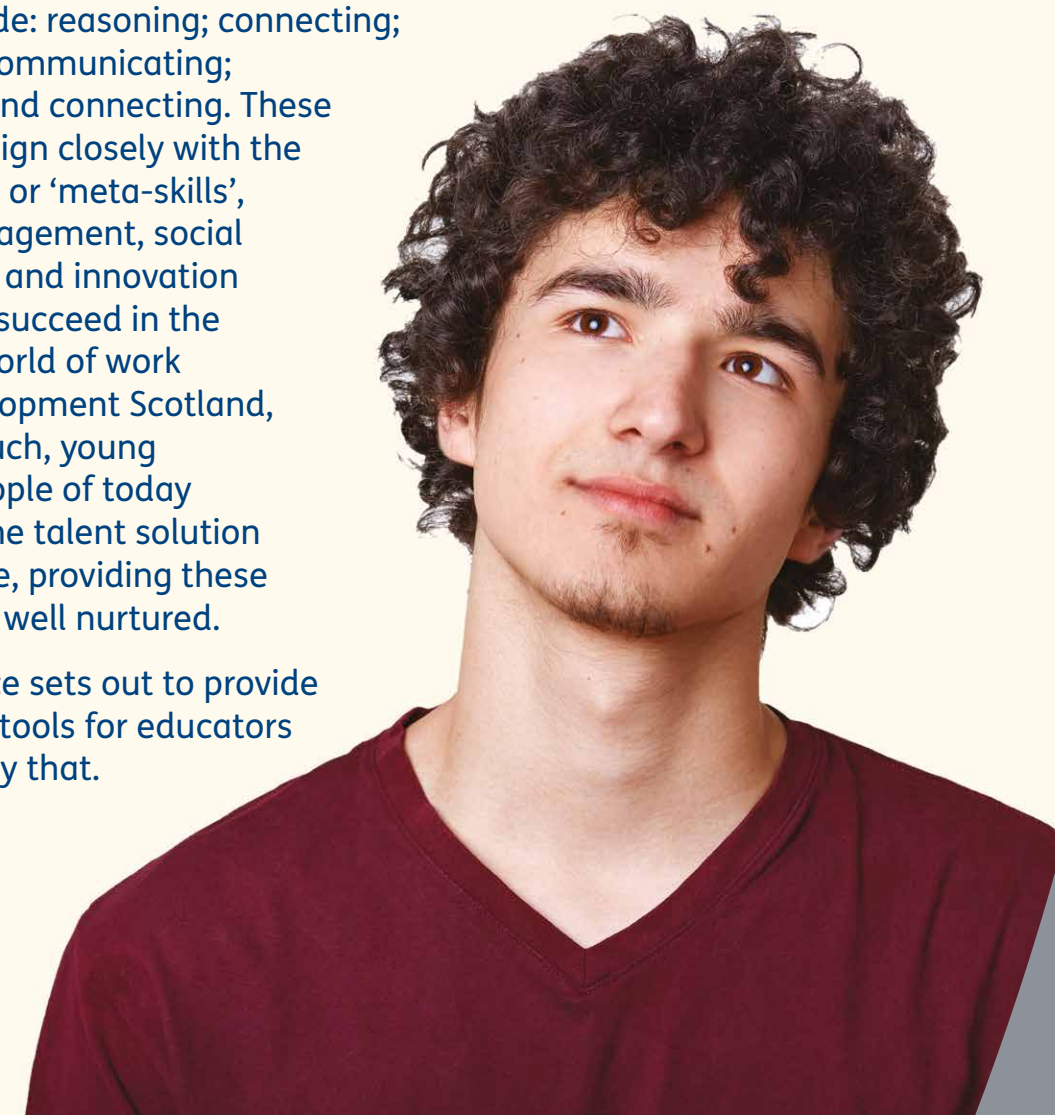
Indeed, the next generation are unlikely to have the same job for life, as their parents and grandparents expected; so adaptation to change, full understanding of themselves and awareness of the changing job market are key to putting their talents to best use.

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.

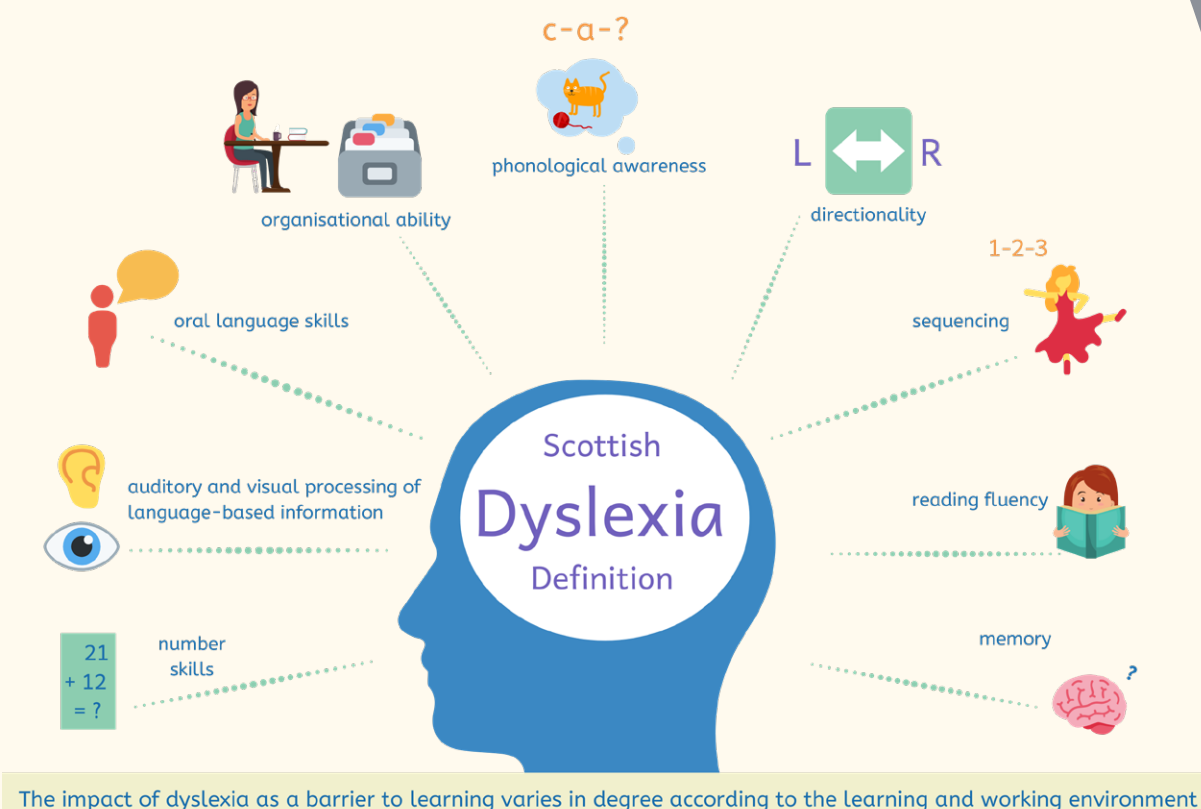
As such, for people with dyslexia, learning that supports self-understanding, self-reflection and metacognition can be particularly beneficial in developing strategies for self-management (Doyle and MacDowall, 2015) and self-belief, leading to improved self-confidence and career optimism (McLoughlin 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:





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



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.



Constructive encouragement

As you guide young people along their learning journey, it's important to give them feedback that helps them progress.

When a young person we support doesn't believe in themselves, it can be tempting to buoy them up with praise like, "that's amazing!" or, "aren't you brilliant?!".

But this short-lived self-esteem boost doesn't help the learner in the long term. Flattery gets them nowhere, but constructive encouragement builds their confidence and efficacy.

As a partner in a learning process, the feedback you offer should be encouraging and evidence-based.

At regular stages in the learning journey, create time and space for shared exploration of what has been learned, and what needs to happen next, ensuring that you are praising with care, thoughtfulness and real examples.

Your encouragement will be more valuable if it causes the learner to think about how to move forward and take ownership of their learning journey.

Refer back to the 'rating myself' exercise. What areas did the young person want to build on? Concentrate your feedback discussion on these areas. This is an opportunity for the young person to self-reflect and use their learning portfolio as evidence of progress, as well as for you to share your own observations.

Some prompts for you to ask the learner:

- What is going well on your learning journey?
- What do you still need to learn?
- What are you still not sure about?
- How can I be helpful?
- The learning journey could be even better if....
- What rating would you give yourself now?

How to deliver constructive feedback in relation to progress on the self-ratings throughout the learning journey

Ask the learner if you can share your observations. Ask "Can I tell you what I'm seeing and hearing?"

Give your observations of the progress the learner is making in their portfolio, or their participation in the activities. For example, "You said at the start of this journey that you don't think you have any strengths. I can see from your portfolio that you give a lot to your family and community and these demonstrate a lot of valuable skills and character strengths. How can you capture these strengths?"

Or

"You shared lots of ideas in our career conversation about problems you want to solve. That says to me that you are positive about your future and can see opportunities. What else does this say about your strengths?"



1

Self and Strengths



Resources:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning at my Best worksheet/ 4 blank sheets of paper/zones within the learning space
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Writing and drawing pens/pencils

Develops:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-understanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-awareness
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meta-cognition
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicating
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaborating

Learning At My Best

Modelling
how the learner
learns by drawing
or acting

Understanding how learners think and learn at their best can support self-understanding and promote positive relationships between group members. For educators, these insights can help you to design an enabling environment.

For young people, developing awareness of how they learn at their best and how they communicate this to others can support them in the future to recognise how they work at their best, and how they might communicate what reasonable adjustments to request in employment.

This activity can be carried out on the worksheet opposite, but may work better with four large, blank sheets provided for drawing on and/or as a group share. The questions are based on Clean Language coaching, which uses questions with an uncommon structure. These are designed to promote thinking about thinking, so it's important to ask them as they are phrased on the worksheet.

In some settings, this activity could work well as a drama-based activity, where participants physically express learning at their best.

In a group setting, participants can learn about one anothers' needs and co-design an inclusive learning space.



When you are learning at your best, you're like what?

What do you need from others, for you to be like that?

What will others see or hear?

What does the learning space need to be like for you to be learning at your best?

Resources:	Develops:
• Blank paper	• Optimism
• Coloured pens and pencils	• Confidence
• Craft papers/coloured papers	• Initiative
• Age appropriate magazines (for collage)	• Creativity
• Writing and drawing pens/pencils	

Visualising, capturing and developing a positive self-image

Fantastic Future Self

Have the learner imagine their most fantastic future self in great detail. This could be their learning self or their working self. It may help them to close their eyes and use their imagination to create a vivid scene in their minds.

Invite them to re-create their mental image on paper, by drawing or using collage. Encourage as much detail as possible.

A strong image of a positive future self can impact on career confidence and motivation. Encourage free expression and imaginative ideas. This is a creative exploration and not a plan.

Working one to one with the learner, or in pairs or small groups, use the following prompt questions to draw out more information about the Fantastic Future Self. From imagining, to drawing, to talking about their visualisations, participants are able to develop a strong sense of a positive future that begins to feel possible.

- What is future you doing?
- What is future you wearing?
- Whereabouts is future you? What place are you in?
- Who is future you with?
- What is different about future you?



A large, empty rectangular box with a light yellow background and a thin blue border, intended for the learner to draw or create a collage of their 'Fantastic Future Self'.

Resources:	Develops:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paper bag or cardboard box	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-reflection
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coloured pens and pencils	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-understanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Craft glue	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Confidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Age appropriate magazines (for collage)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Optimism
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Question cards to prompt discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communication

Bag or Box Selfie

This activity is a gentle introduction to developing useful communication skills for job interviews. The activity supports young people to talk about themselves positively and to provide concrete examples of interests and experiences.

Young people create a self-portrait on one side of their box or bag to represent themselves in the here and now. On the opposite side, they create a self-portrait representing their future best-self. (You could use the version created in the previous exercise; this activity adds value to the ‘Fantastic Future Self’ activity). Encourage them to use imagination and visualisation, to generate a vivid mental picture before committing to drawing.

Portraits can be drawn or painted, made from collage or photographs. Allow the time to explore how they perceive themselves now and who they want to become.

Young people can then fill their bag or box with items that represent them, their strengths and their life.

As a group, young people can take turns to ask one another questions and to give answers, about their box/bag and its contents.

This can be done informally at first, using the card prompts over the page, then at a future point, a more formal set up could be introduced with a role play of a panel and interviewee.



Developing a positive self-image and the ability to communicate strengths

On a paper bag or cardboard box, create a self-portrait on one side of who you are now, and on the other side, of your future best self.

Fill the bag or box with items that represent you, your strengths and your life.

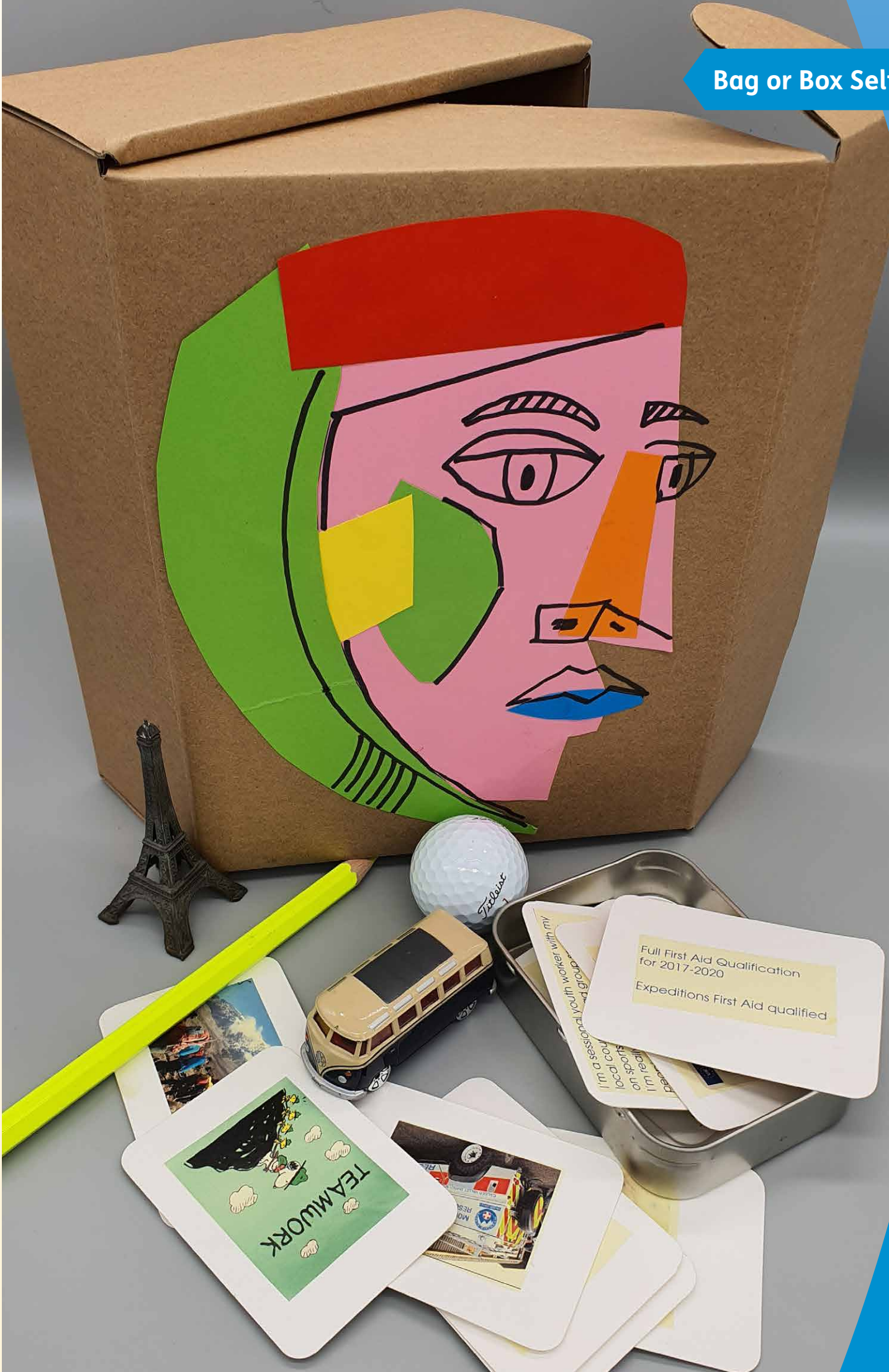
Show and tell others about your design on the outside and about what’s represented inside your bag or box.

Make prompt cards to facilitate discussion about the learners’ bag or box portrait and contents, either one-to-one or in small groups.

Pairs can take turns as questioner and answerer. This activity is a gentle introduction to developing useful communication skills for job interviews. The activity supports young people to talk about themselves positively and to provide concrete examples of interests and experiences. Here are some questions you can use:

Bag or Box Selfie

What are you most proud of inside your bag /box?	What is different about your current self and your future best self?
When have you already been like your future best self?	What does your favourite thing inside your bag /box represent?
What needs to happen for you to become your future best self?	Is there anything else about your bag/box you’d like to share?
Choose something at random from inside the bag /box. Tell its story.	Choose something at random from inside the bag /box. What does it mean to you?
What strengths are represented in or on your bag /box?	What strengths are not represented on your bag /box? How might you include those?
What else needs to be in your bag/box?	How could the world be different when you are your future best self?
What is the first step you can take to becoming your future best self?	In what ways are you already like your future self? What tiny thing could you do to be more like that now?



Resources:

- Pens/pencils for writing or scribing
- Optional larger sheets of paper for a more kinaesthetic approach to the activity

Develops:

- Self-understanding
- Confidence
- Meta-cognition
- Sense making

Reframing negative self-thoughts about dyslexia

Positive Talk

Turning negative thoughts about dyslexia in to positive ones can help a dyslexic individual to explain their way of doing things to others, confidently and unapologetically.

With more awareness in how they learn, plan and work, a dyslexic person can better self-advocate, actively creating the conditions they need to learn and work at their best. This can be particularly useful when preparing for transitions into further education or a new job where reasonable adjustments may be needed.

Dyslexic people can tend to engage in more negative self-talk than positive. Finding the positive message to counter the negative thought may be a challenging to adapt to and require some prompting and suggestions. This can be an effective peer group activity, where learners feel encouraged to ‘problem solve’ collectively. Participants take turns to share a negative thought about their dyslexia and the group collectively problem solve and identify a positive take on the individual’s identified challenge.

The worksheet provides a couple of examples. The activity can be delivered more interactively using larger pieces of paper and post-its to note the problems and solutions generated, though learners will benefit from having their own record to refer back to.



Turn negative thoughts about dyslexia into positive ones. This can help explain your dyslexia to others, to help them value your way of doing things.

I'm not good at typing or writing	I use voice recordings, video and speech-to-text programmes to get my message across
I think slowly	I take time to process all the information so I make the best decision

Resources:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pens/pencils for writing or scribing• Larger-scale daisy for an optional kinaesthetic version of the activity

Develops:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-understanding• Confidence• Initiative

Strengths Daisy

It’s not unusual for dyslexic people to be hyper-aware of their difficulties and less aware of their strengths. This can be the case if learning and working environments have been unsupportive, or if dyslexia has been identified late.

Building awareness of strengths can support a dyslexic person to build a more realistic picture of their abilities, which can help develop self-confidence.

Worries about lack of attainment can be addressed by showing the learner how qualifications and training are just one petal on the flower. Strengths across other areas of life are as important for career success.

This worksheet can be used as a mind-map for writing and drawing on. A more interactive activity might be creating a scaled up version on the floor or wall, where the learner can engage with the concept more kinaesthetically.

Support learners to reflect on each petal’s meaning and to brainstorm strengths they have developed there. Consider also any networks that provide support, opportunities or encouragement as an aspect of strengths.



Holistic strengths: drawing on life and learning experiences

Career strengths come from all different areas of our lives. Brainstorm your strengths using the petals of the daisy for ideas.



Ways to get more ideas:

- Ask friends, family or adults you get along with
- Try career strength quizzes

Resources:	Develops:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pens/pencils for writing and drawing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Confidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Card blanks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adapting
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Word processor and printer (Optional alternative to handwriting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creativity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sense making

Strengths Portfolio

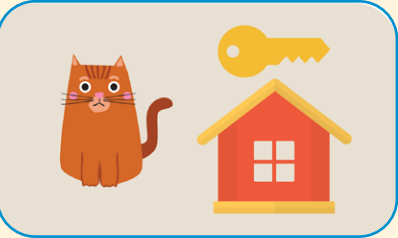
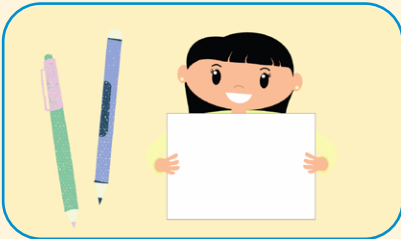
Using their strengths daisy, young people can make a collector card to represent each strength.

Think back to your youth. What did you collect? If you curated a handful of bubble gum cards or sports stickers, you probably remember the look of them, how they felt in your hand, and what information they had. Young people can capture this long-term learning about themselves using this same method.

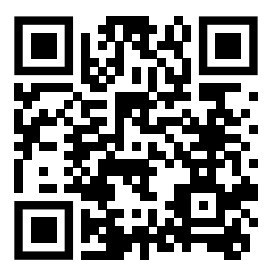
On one side of a blank card, young people can write an example of a strength and how they have used it, and on the other, an image to represent it. Start building up a pack of cards to refer to when strengths awareness is needed for confidence, communicating to others or to support with problem solving. This collection can be added to every time a new strength is identified.

A personal strengths bubble gum card collection


design skills:
made the poster to advertise the
local concert



trustworthy:
I feed my neighbour's cat when
she is on holiday



Strengths portfolio blank cards:

Resources:	Develops:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Episode 6 of Dyslexic Career Journeys https://youtu.be/wY577gojR2g3 different colour paper circles or post-itsPens or pencils	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Self-understandingConfidenceOptimismAdaptingCreativity

Strength Strategies for Success

In Episode 6 of Dyslexic Career Journeys, Blogger Suzy says “It’s not about ‘overcoming’ dyslexia... it’s about realising that dyslexia gives you the ability to think about your situation in a different light.” She shares how she has made a job from using her strengths in telling stories to make the most of a dyslexic attribute of muddling up words.

The following activity can help learners consider their own strengths and difficulties and ways they can see them in a different light, like Suzy has.

This activity can be approached by showing the video then using the worksheet to list the strengths and difficulties and cross-match them to generate solutions.

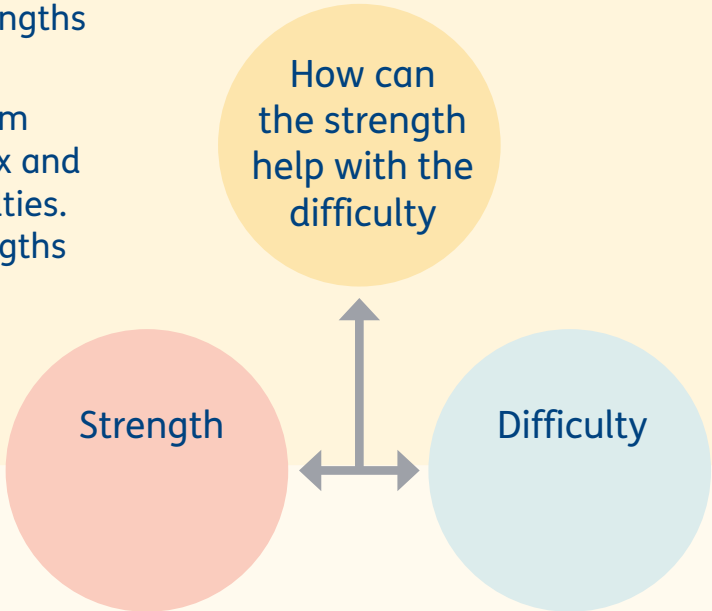
As people with dyslexia tend to be lateral thinkers, they are better able to access solutions when linear and logical approaches can be disrupted. Support more free-flowing ideas by providing larger, pre-cut coloured circles and make a game of mixing and matching strengths and difficulties in a variety of combinations. This can lead to more creative cross-pollination of ideas.



Cross-pollinating strengths and difficulties

Strength Strategies for Success

Like Suzy, you can use your strengths to help with your difficulties.
Choose your top 5 strengths from the strengths daisy exercise. Mix and match them beside your difficulties. How can you use your top strengths to help with your difficulties?



Example:

Brilliant at making videos	writing essays is tricky	Make a documentary on the topic

Resources:	Develops:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drawing or collage materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-understanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Blank paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creativity
Some learners might feel keen to tell their story through film, comic art, animation, song writing, model making or other creative formats, so support and encourage this.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communication

Reflecting on and communicating experiences in imaginative ways

My Learning Journey Story

As the learning programme draws to a close and the learners have developed a substantial strengths portfolio, there will be much to reflect on, celebrate and share with others. At the end of any learning programme, it’s useful to find closure and consolidate the experience with a celebration and presentation of your learning to others.

A challenge for dyslexic learners is that they may struggle to remember the activities or the learning and to describe it in words. However, they also tend to have a natural ability to think in metaphor. This is a story-telling gift that can be harnessed and nurtured for all kinds of communication, and an end of programme consolidation is an opportunity to practise it.

This activity encourages the learner to describe what their learning journey has been like in terms of something else, and to present it in a format of their choosing - wall art, object, spoken word piece, song, video, animation or performance. Drawing on all that they’ve learned in the format in which they best express themselves is a positive way to close the programme meaningfully and capture the learning as a whole.

Perhaps the journey has felt “like a salmon, swimming against the tide, but ultimately succeeding”, “like a progression of notes along a piano, coming together in a brilliant tune”, or “a brick wall built up from skills and experiences developed along the way”: all real examples from learners reflecting on their career development learning journeys.



My learning journey has been like...

2

Dyslexic Role Models



Dyslexic Role Models and their Learning and Career Journeys

The following section contains a set of prompts for discussion around the Dyslexic Career Journeys episodes on Dyslexia Scotland TV on You Tube. The videos were developed to give young people an insight to the career journeys of dyslexic adult role models.

One approach to using these videos is to allow learners to watch the video all the way through to make their own discoveries and raise their own talking points, then to watch a second time through the lens of the prompt questions.

These videos can be used alongside activities from section 1, to further explore strengths.



VIDEO CASE STUDY <<<



Kat
Manager in the
Scottish
Government

Kat | Talking Points

About Kat

- Kat talks about having dyslexic challenges.
- What helps her to work at her best?

About you

- What helps you learn at your best?



Activity link: Learning at my Best

Video link: <https://youtu.be/0DwJh8eg26M>





Gavin
Police Officer

Gavin | Talking Points

About Gavin

- How is dyslexia an advantage to Gavin the Police Officer?
- What are Gavin's dyslexic strengths?
- What dyslexic difficulties does Gavin have at work?
- What helps Gavin with his difficulties?

About you

- What are your dyslexic strengths?
- How can you use your strengths to help with your difficulties?



Activity link: **Positive Talk**

Video link: <https://youtu.be/Siv5Hv4FtVQ>



Suzie
Blogger and Student

Suzie | Talking Points

About Suzie

- Suzie looks for ways to combine her strengths in her story-telling, humour and creativity to help others understand dyslexia.

About you

- Think about your strengths. How could you combine different strengths?
- What could that result in?
- How can you use your strengths to help others?



Activity link: **Strength Strategies for Success**

Video link: <https://youtu.be/wY577gojR2g>



>>> VIDEO CASE STUDY

Brian
Business Improvement
Manager in the
Engineering Sector



Brian | Talking Points

About Brian

- Brian uses the metaphor of 'a bumpy road' to describe his learning journey. What do you think he means by this?
- What dyslexic strengths does Brian talk about using?
- Brian talks about mistakes and failure. How does he view these?

About you

- Brian's learning journey has been 'a bumpy ride'. Think about your learning journey so far. It's like what?
- What would you like your career journey to be like?
- What do you relate to in Brian's story?
- Is there anything else you'll take away from Brian's story?



Activity link: Learning at my Best

Video link: <https://youtu.be/f08MEBEvmfA>



VIDEO CASE STUDY

Charneh
Support Worker and
Drama Facilitator



Charneh | Talking Points

About Charneh

- Charneh makes a link between her two jobs. What is it?

About you

- Think about two areas of learning you are involved in. How could you make those work together?
- What would that be like?



Activity link: Strength Strategies for Success

Video link: <https://youtu.be/lyTi614Q5hQ>



Discover more dyslexic career journeys at
www.youtube.com/dyslexiascotlandtv

More Talking Points

- Looking back over the videos, whose story stands out to you most?
- Who do you relate to?
- What can you learn from them?
- Who would you pick as your dyslexic role model? Or would you design a hybrid of multiple people? How can you 'be' that person? Combine their desirable qualities with you at your best. What does that look like?
- How do you feel when you are being your best self?
- What needs to be the next step in your learning journey to being your best dyslexic self?

Activity:

Draw or write a plan for being your best dyslexic self.

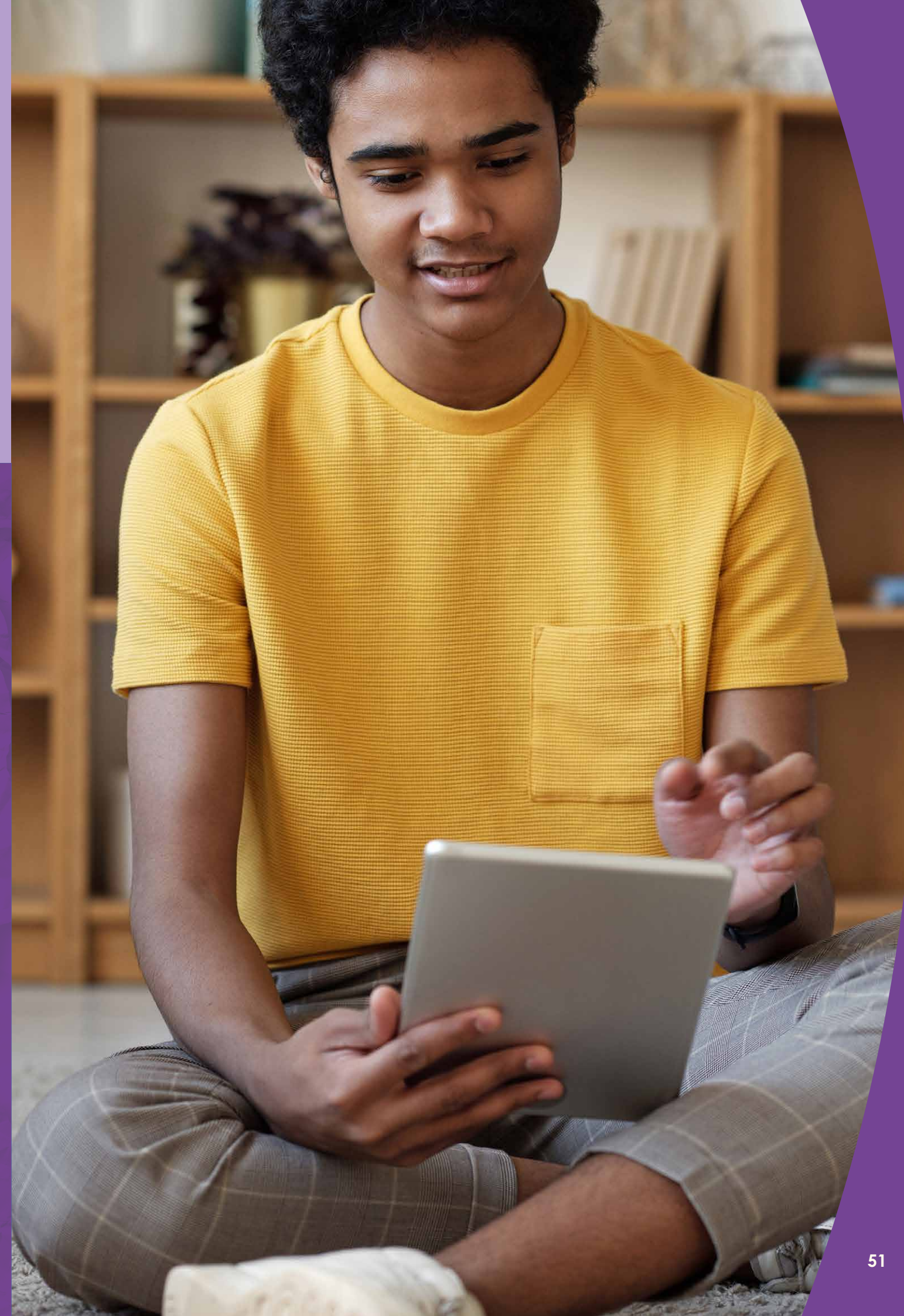
Draw or write a plan for being your best dyslexic self.



Activity link: **Strength Strategies for Success**

3

First Steps to Work



Dyslexic children and young people can be anxious about what they will do for a living when they grow up, especially if school is a struggle. So, how can we nurture their career interests without fostering unrealistic expectations or self-limiting beliefs?

A template for a light-touch talk

We have little idea what jobs of the future are – or aren't – so we can't begin to imagine whether jobs of today will still be around, or what other new occupations today's young people can expect to fulfil as adults. They're not likely to have just one job, but a suite of jobs, and roles that change throughout their career. Their career prospects are being shaped every day by global issues beyond anyone's control. Think back just 15 years ago. Did you ever dream that jobs like Social Media Manager, Data Miner, 3D Print Technician or Driverless Car Engineers would exist, let alone be the norm? Fast forward 15 years from now, can you begin to imagine what industries and roles might exist that dyslexic young people and their differing abilities will excel in?

The good news is that, according to Ernst & Young's report *The Value of Dyslexia*, the jobs of the future will need dyslexic thinking skills, and the young dyslexic people of today represent the talent solution of the future, providing their natural skills in problem solving and collaboration and their character strengths and values are well nurtured. Farai Chideya, author of *The Episodic Career*, predicts that 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.

So, instead of the dreaded 'what do you want to do when you grow up?' question, this exercise provides a more helpful way to open a career conversation and when it is appropriate, identify some sectors or roles that 'fit' the values and interests the young person expresses through the activity as possible paths to meaningful work.



Your career can be about something that matters to you, and you can use your strengths to make it enjoyable.

Use these questions to interview yourself or a partner.

Invent a job role based on the answers you get.

- What type of person do you want to be?
- What problems do you want to solve?
- What difference do you want to make to the world?
- What strengths can you use to do that?
- If all of that was a job, what would you call it?
- What would that job involve doing?
- How would you describe it to others?
- What would you wear in that job?
- Is there anything else you can imagine about that job?

Add a title and some descriptions about what the job involves that you invented.

Job title

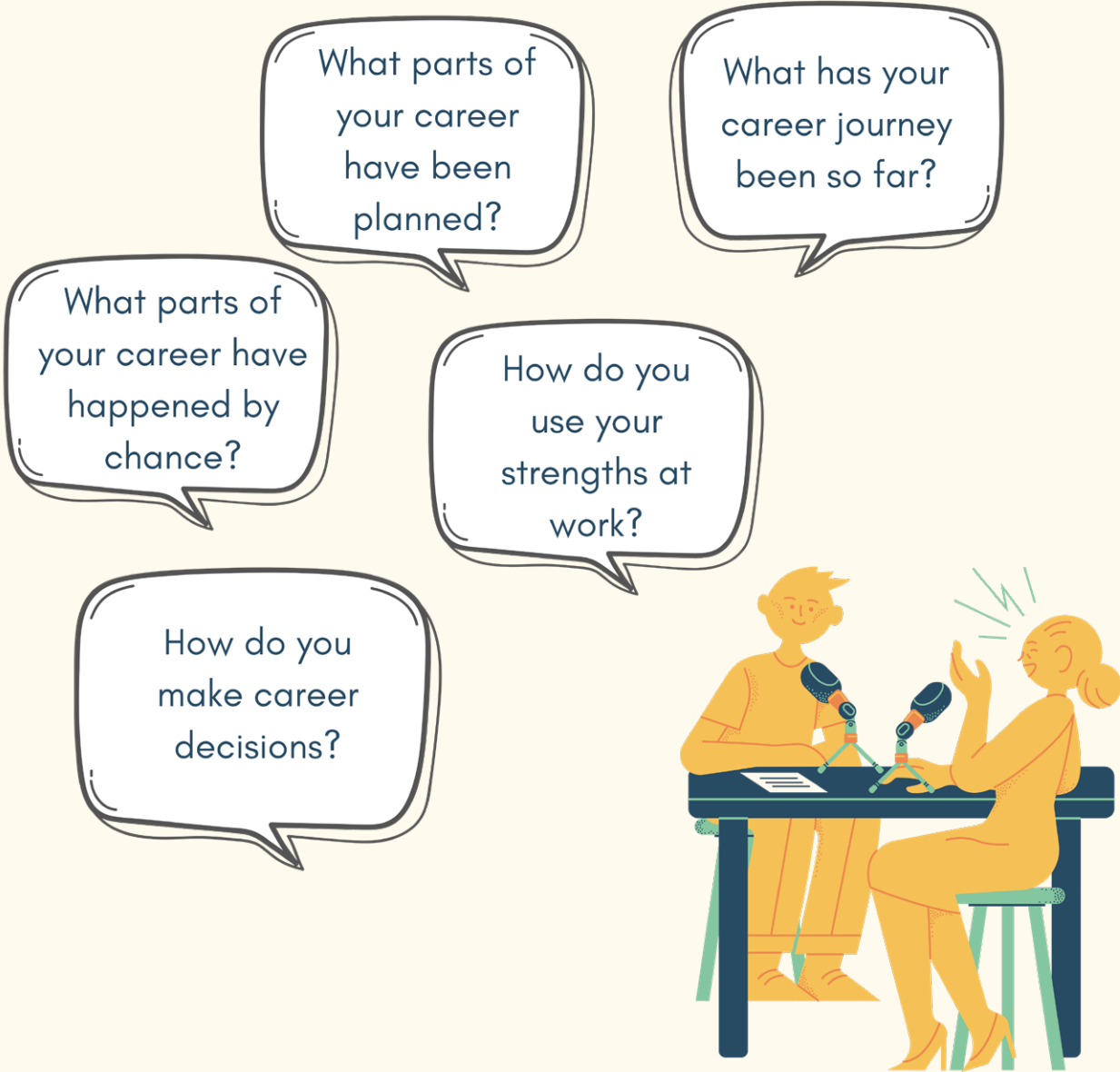
Job description

Draw the job role you invented.

Great careers aren't always planned; often they're discovered. Everyone has their own path.

Interview a dyslexic person you admire about their career journey so far for a podcast or a blog.

Here are some questions you could ask them:



Writing about yourself can be an intimidating process if words don't come naturally and you lack confidence in yourself. Young dyslexic learners benefit from strategies for bridging the gap to writing their first CV. By breaking the process down into more tangible activities, young people can approach the task with more confidence.

Providing a model to learn from

The activities in Section 1 lay the groundwork for CV building. Invite learners to use the materials they produced for those exercises as a source of information about themselves. For example, they can sort their strength cards into piles based on each CV section. Using all the information they have about their selves and strengths, learners can begin to consolidate their positive attributes on paper.

Show them the WAGOLL CV (What a good One Looks Like) as a model to work to. Dyslexic learners tend to be non-linear thinkers, so they're not likely to be able to sequence their information chronologically at first. One approach is to use post-its for each new piece of information as it emerges, then sort them into the best order before committing to a real draft. Then, using the template provided, or other accessible templates you have, you can support the learner to put together a typed version of their CV. The following resources provide a paced process towards CV making:

- WAGOLL CV
- Mind map or brainstorm template
- Word document templates
- Pre-cut strengths to stick onto a photograph



Some young learners may not have heard the term 'CV' before. Take a moment to explain what these letters stand for and what a CV is. You can use the WAGOLL over the page to illustrate.

Jo Blogs

1 Hill Street, Anytown 012345 67891 jo.blogs@email.com

Friendly, trustworthy and hardworking individual with excellent communication skills. Currently seeking an entry level role with an organisation that makes a positive difference to nature and the environment.

Main strengths

- Very good people skills
- Friendly and approachable
- Excellent IT skills: film-making, podcasting and poster design
- Great team player
- Natural problem solver
- Creative

Main Achievements	Academic Qualifications	Training Highlights
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Duke of Edinburgh Award• Gold Arts Award• John Muir Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National 4 Mathematics• National 5 Music• NC Digital Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First Aid• Fire Safety• Food Hygiene• Manual Handling

Work Experience

Volunteer Assistant, Pet Shelter, July 2020-August 2020
Pet Shelter is a local charity that takes care of lost and stray animals and helps to unite them with loving homes. I volunteered as an assistant during my school holidays as part of my Duke of Edinburgh award. I helped other volunteers clean the animals' enclosures and assisted my supervisor with taking animals to the vets for check-ups. I learned a lot about working as part of a team, taking responsibility for caring for animals and how to plan and organise my work.

Young Leader, Newtown Youth Club
As part of my Gold Arts Award, I had to lead an art workshop in my community. I worked with the Youth Worker at Newtown Youth Club to plan a project about climate change for the Primary 6/7 group. Over three sessions, I taught them to make photo montage posters about environmental issues they cared about. At the end of the term, I organised the poster display for the parents' night. The Youth Worker said that she saw my confidence and organisational skills improve through doing the project, and that the younger people had learned new skills from me.

Personal and Life Experience

I'm passionate about nature. I enjoy being outside hill walking and visiting the beach near my house. I'm learning photography and plan to start my own website and social media pages with photographs of Scottish wildlife and scenery. This is helping me develop more skills for work.

References: Available on request

My character strengths and main work interests

Main strengths

Achievements, qualifications, youth awards, certificates and training

Work and volunteering experiences

Life experiences, hobbies and interests

Essay-style application form answers can be intimidating and confusing for dyslexic learners, particularly if they've never had to complete one before. This activity is helpful for when young people are actively beginning to apply for jobs, to help them make sense of written application forms.

It's really helpful to model what an effective personal statement looks like, then work back from that point.

The following activity puts the young person in the employer's shoes.

They have two application forms, and only one can be selected for interview. They need to tick off the essential criteria met in each personal statement, to choose which candidate to take forward to an interview.

Going through this process will:

- help the young person make sense of what an effective personal statement looks like
- raise their awareness of how to address the person specification
- help them understand what they need to be working towards

The young person might be happy to work through the activity reading the materials themselves, or you might agree to read the statements out loud as they tick the person specification checklist.

Reflect with the young person on the following:

- What made you decide who had the stronger application form?
- What did that person do well?
- What could the other person have done better?
- What ideas can you take from these for your own application forms?

Strategies for writing application form answers



Written application forms can be tricky. Some employers will accept alternative formats, such as video or voice recorded applications. Look at the section on reasonable adjustments on page 66.

Who gets an interview?

Imagine you are the employer at Whole Care. You have one space left for interviews, and two applications to choose from.

Whose application meets the person specification best?

Tick the person specification list or use a highlighter on the applications to show how they match up.

Health and Wellbeing Support Worker vacancy

At Whole Care we believe everyone should have the chance to thrive.

Whole Care is seeking a full time Health and Wellbeing Support worker to work one-to-one with isolated people in the community to support them increase their wellbeing.

Person Specification - Essential

- Caring, respectful, polite and compassionate
- Good communication skills – verbal and report writing
- Willing to work flexible shift patterns
- Experience of working in a care environment
- Experience of working with people with a range of support needs
- Able to maintain confidentiality
- Able to plan and carry out tasks in a busy environment
- Able to contribute and work in a team environment
- Good interpersonal skills

Desirable

- IT skills
- Experience of working in a health and well-being setting
- Drivers Licence

Danny's Application

It is really important to me to support all people to access health and well-being services and I believe that this can be achieved through effective community-based support. I believe I would be good for this role, for the reasons I set out below:

Currently I work part-time at Soul Care, a community day care service people with a range of support needs including social, emotional and behavioural needs, and mental health difficulties. It's a demanding job where I work with adults and young people one to one and in groups.

I am highly caring and respectful towards all people, and clients I work with value my compassionate nature. Feedback forms from past clients the last year at my job with Soul Care show a 98% satisfaction rate. One recent comment was: "Danny has made a huge difference to my life. He is so polite and caring towards me, yet gives me the motivation I need to move my life forward. I couldn't have kept going without him."

In my role, I work with the team to plan and carry out individual wellbeing plans. Managers appreciate how organised I am, how well I plan and my ability to react when something changes.

At Soul Care, I work a varied rota, willing to work the early shifts, night shifts and holiday cover. The variety of times and flexibility of work suits me and I am willing to adapt to the needs of the work. I have very good interpersonal skills which I have demonstrated in my work at Soul Care. I am able to relate to people at all levels. Clients appreciate my ability to interact on their level, and colleagues and managers value the way I connect with clients and their families.

Within my role at Soul Care, I provide reports to colleagues and managers. I provide a verbal report daily at shift handover and I assist in writing up care plan reports weekly with senior staff. I take care to observe each client closely and record notes in line with our confidentiality policy.

In my spare time I volunteer with my local Foodbank. We are a team of 4, providing essential groceries to people in need in the community. The foodbank is extremely busy and I work behind the scenes packing the boxes and delivering to house-bound customers across the area. I encounter people with a range of needs. I pride myself on my ability to reassure them and connect them with other useful services in the community. As part of my role there, I have completed the Mental Health First Aid course. Reaching out to this group has helped me realise that I want to pursue a full time role in supporting isolated members of the community to increase their wellbeing.

I am competent and confident using computers and am able to use Microsoft Word and email programmes. I have a full, clean driving licence. I am ready to take on the challenges of a full time support worker role and I would relish the opportunity to develop my career with Whole Care.

Mastering Application Forms

“ Danny has made a huge difference to my life. He is so polite and caring towards me, yet gives me the motivation I need to move my life forward. I couldn't have kept going without him.

Lesley's Application

I have a lot of experience working with customers and have no problem working shifts.

I enjoy my work and have gained lots of knowledge and experience there. I have a friendly and helpful personality and find it easy to build good working relationships. I have a wide range of knowledge and skills gained through employment and participating in a range of work related projects as part of my ongoing personal development. I am capable and dependable with a methodical approach to planning and organising.

In my spare time I coach a hockey squad. Last season we reached the finals for our region.

At school I passed higher biology, PE and English. Since then I have been to college and completed an NC in Customer Service, which I loved doing.

When I worked at Shop-Smart I was employee of the month twice in 2016. I really like working with people and making them happy so I go out of my way to make sure the customer gets what they deserve. Everyone thought I was the best and I showed them what to do.

I am very ambitious and hardworking. I always make sure the job is done well and to a high standard. I am also a really good administrator and I pride myself on my ability to type 80 words per minute, which is a rare skill. My cousin had health problems when I was younger so it really matters to me to make sure these people get help.



Here's a video with a guide to using the CAR structure in a job interview answer:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-qWg5BUd44



Using writing frames to guide the process: Using CAR instead of STARR

Easy Impact Statements

Whether the task is making a CV, writing an application form, answering an interview question or delivering an elevator pitch, the expectation is usually to succinctly express your worth in a nutshell.

The STARR method (an answer that describes the Situation, the Task, the Action, the Result and the Reflections by the individual) is requested by many employers now, both in written and oral recruitment processes. Dyslexic learners can struggle to find the words and to structure such a response, often forgetting the acronym then not being able to distinguish between each step.

The following section breaks down the process in simpler terms, using the CAR structure instead: Context, Action, Result.

The CAR Cheat Sheet over the page provides a visual, memorable structure to develop the skill of providing punchy written or spoken answers in recruitment processes.

Following on from this is an application form writing frame with a step by step template to support writing impactful answers that address the essential criteria of a person specification.

Easy Impact Statements

Answering application and interview questions with the CAR structure

This template helps you structure answers employers look for in application forms and job interviews. Check out the example on the video link in the support notes.

Context

Set the scene. Where were you, what was happening?

Action

What did you do in this situation?

Result

What difference did you make?

Reflection

What did you learn from this?

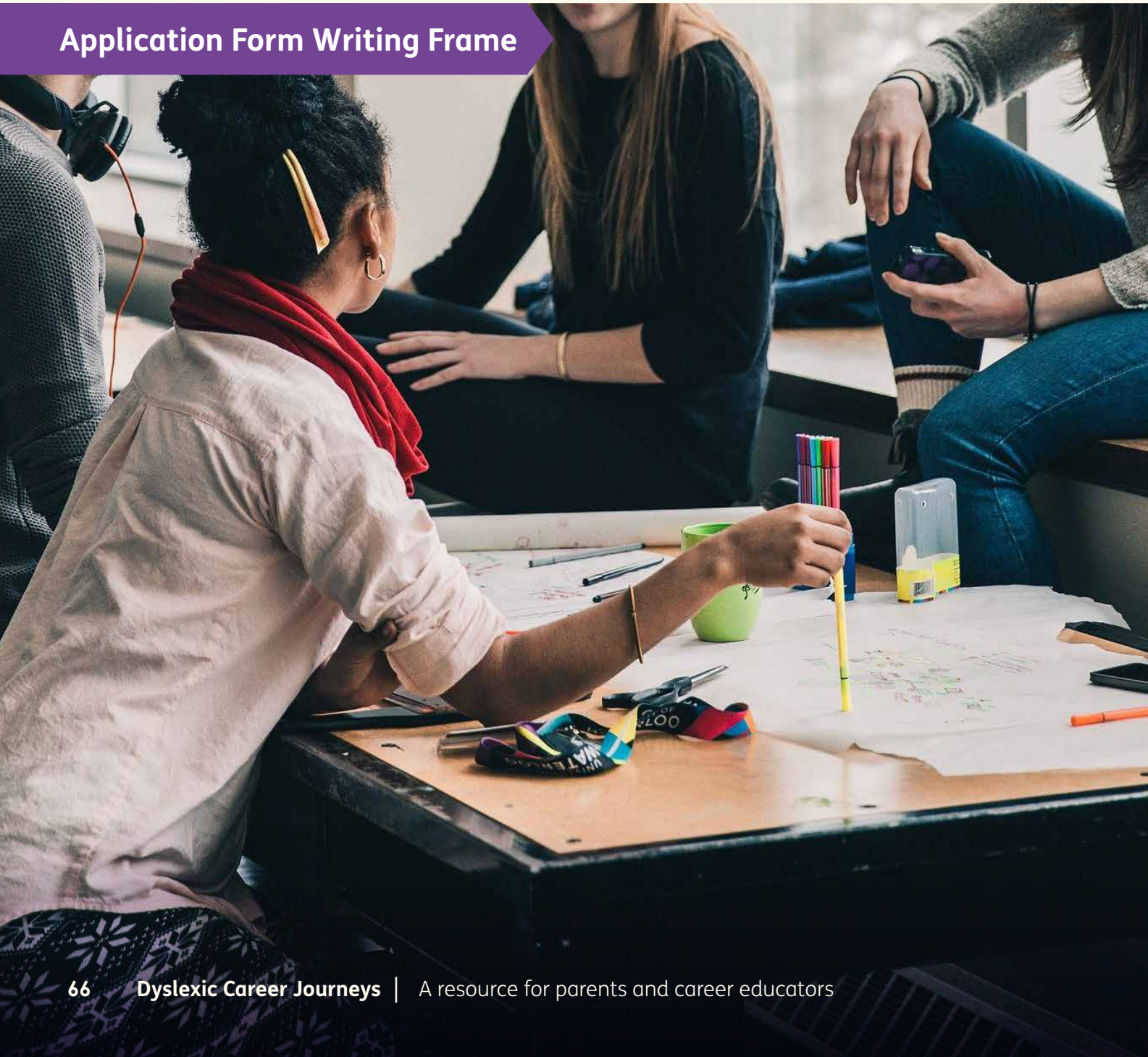
**Bonus
section**

The blank page can be intimidating for dyslexic learners but writing frames can help young people learn to structure a piece of writing.

The following resource outlines a structure for writing an essay-style application answer similar to Danny’s example on page 58.

This template can help you to structure an application form answer like Danny’s, addressing each part of the person specification in the job description.

Application Form Writing Frame



Opening Statement

Person Specification _____
Context
Action
Result

Person Specification _____
Context
Action
Result

Person Specification _____
Context
Action
Result

Closing Statement

What a good opening statement looks like

Here are some examples of opening statements for long application answers. You can use these for your own applications changing the words in **bold** to fit the job you are applying for.

I think I would be very well suited to the role of **Sales Assistant** for the following reasons.

I am very interested in working with **Whole Care** and I believe I am well suited to the above post for the reasons I detail below.

Protecting our wildlife is fundamentally important to me and I believe this can be achieved through **creative media campaigns**.

What a good CAR paragraph looks like

Person specification: Customer service skills

Start off by naming the person specification:

I have excellent customer service skills.

Context: When I worked in Good Foods Wholesale, I ran the busy information desk.

Action: A key part of my role was handling complaints. I developed the ability to actively listen to the customers' needs, reassure them and take appropriate action to address their concern.

Result: Managers often praised me for my ability to turn the customer experience around. I was nominated for three 'top colleague' awards for excellent service last year.

More ways to start your CAR paragraphs:

I am very good at _____

I am experienced in _____

_____ is a key strength of mine



Look back at Danny's application and how he used the CAR structure for his answers.



Use words from the job description or organisation's website in your application.

What a good closing statement looks like

Here are some examples of closing statements for long application answers. You can use these for your own applications changing the words in bold to fit the job you are applying for.

I would deeply value the opportunity to work with the team at **Fab Co.** to **deliver high quality customer care in our community**.

The opportunity to **transform children's lives through outdoor education** inspires and motivates me and I am ready to commit to this important role.

I would relish the opportunity to work with **Newtown Libraries** as **working with people and communities and helping them to access information and learning** is deeply important to me.

I recognise that the chance to take on a **leadership** role with **Charity Pot** is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and I am fully committed to contributing to the development of an **ethical** organisation which makes a positive difference to **people and communities**.

>>> SUPPORT NOTES

People with dyslexia can ask for adjustments to application forms or at interviews to level the playing field with other applicants.



Making the recruitment process work for you

Reasonable Adjustments



Reasonable Adjustments



Here are some examples of things that might help:

Job Applications

Disability Confident Level 2 employers can accept applications in different formats. You could ask to submit a video or spoken word application instead of a written one.

Interviews

You could ask:

- For extra time to process the questions and answer them
- To see the questions before the interview
- To have the questions on paper in front of you
- To give a presentation about why you are right for the job
- To bring notes in to help prompt you



Visit www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk/our-leaflets

Career A collective term for our life, learning and work experiences

Confidence A belief you can reach goals; having trust in people, plans or the future

Dyslexia A neurodevelopmental condition, characterised by specific strengths and difficulties

SpLD Specific Learning Difficulty or Specific Learning Difference

Metacognition Thinking about how I think; learning about how I learn

Metaphor One thing explained in terms of another

Neurodiversity An umbrella term for a range of different neurological challenges referred to as specific learning difficulties

Optimism The ability to view setbacks as temporary and something that can be changed; an ability to own accomplishments and perceive them as lasting; seeing the positive in situations

Resilient The ability to recover or 'bounce back' from difficult experiences

Self-awareness Awareness of your feelings and behaviours

Self-efficacy Belief in your ability to accomplish a particular task

Self-understanding Awareness of and ability to understand yourself and your actions

Self-reflection The activity of thinking about your thoughts, feelings and actions critically

Strengths Things we are good at and enjoy; strengths can include abilities, skills, qualities, training, learning and qualifications attained; life and work experiences; talents

Sources and Influences

Reference has been made to the following publications:

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David McLoughlin and Carol Leather: The Dyslexic Adult: Interventions and Outcomes (2013)*

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Education Scotland: Making Sense: Education for Children and Young People with Dyslexia (2014)

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

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Nancy Doyle and Almuth McDowall: Is Coaching an Effective Adjustment for Dyslexic Adults? In Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice (2015)

Skills Development Scotland: A Career Skills Management Framework for Scotland (2012)

Skills Development Scotland: Career Review (2022)

The All Party Parliamentary Group for Dyslexia and other SpLDs (Westminster): The Human Cost of Dyslexia (2019)

The Scottish Government: Developing the Young Workforce – Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy (2014)

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

The Westminster Achievability Commission Neurodiverse Voices: Opening Doors to Employment (2018)

*Available to borrow from Dyslexia Scotland's member resource library

Other influences and drivers include:

- Adam Grant, Organisational Psychologist
- Albert Bandura: Self-Efficacy
- Carl Rogers: Person Centred Approach
- Carol Craig: Creating Confidence
- Carol Dweck: Growth Mindset
- Character Scotland
- David Grove: Clean Language
- Dylan Wiliam: Formative Assessment
- Equalities Act (2010)
- John Krumboltz: Planned Happenstance
- Martin Seligman: Learned Optimism
- Narrative Coaching
- Paulo Freire: Culture circles
- Positive Psychology
- Youthlink Scotland: National Youth Work Outcomes

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**Dyslexia
Scotland**

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