



Dyslexia
Scotland

Sean Connery Foundation Dyslexia Initiative

Annual Report | June 2025

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Executive summary

This is the final report of the Sean Connery Foundation Dyslexia Initiative, marking the conclusion of the programme.

The report describes the structure and the aims of the Initiative, the training of teachers and support staff and their subsequent deployment in participating schools.

The number of learners with literacy difficulties/dyslexia who participated in the Initiative was 996, from 61 schools.

In total 1752 teachers and PSAs received training, including more than 1500 teachers and Pupil Support Assistants who received standalone, whole-school training in how to help learners with literacy difficulties/dyslexia.

The report presents quantitative data from pre and post intervention assessments; and qualitative data from a range of feedback mechanisms. Evidence is presented of statistically significant improvements in learners' reading ability scores.

Qualitative, subjective data from the feedback of learners, staff and parents/carers continues to demonstrate almost universal high levels of satisfaction with the work of the Initiative.

Work has commenced on ensuring the legacy of the Initiative in the form of Continuing Training Modules to be hosted on the Open University Open Learn Platform, funded by a grant from HSBC UK bank.



“The generous funding given to the City of Edinburgh Council by the Sean Connery Foundation in conjunction with Dyslexia Scotland has allowed our authority to develop and extend our strong interventions for children with literacy issues.

Our intensive interventions are deployed when quality teaching and additional support has not led to competence in literacy skills.

The SCF funding has allowed such intensive interventions to be delivered to many more children in Edinburgh. There is a strong evidence base for these interventions and for their sustainability. Many thanks to the SCF for allowing us to deliver this work across Edinburgh.”

Dr Lynne Binnie, Head of Education (Inclusion), City of Edinburgh Council

“As the Sean Connery Foundation Dyslexia Initiative nears the end of the three years, it is clear that its success is testimony to the close collaborative working between all the partners involved, including the substantial financial support from the Sean Connery Foundation, the hard work, commitment and in-kind support of the City of Edinburgh Council teams, the guidance and mentoring advice from Dyslexia Scotland’s consultant, the Initiative’s Steering Committee and the involvement of the ‘Mission Dyslexia’ team in the delivery of their primary school workshops across the authority.

The programme has provided intensive training for education staff in the area. This final report shows the positive impact on dyslexic children and young people and their families, as well as on the professional development of teachers and Pupil Support Assistants. Beyond the three-year programme, key learning from this pioneering collaboration with the City of Edinburgh Council, the Sean Connery Foundation and Dyslexia Scotland will be shared through online modules available to teachers across Scotland with the support of HSBC UK.”

Cathy Magee OBE, Chief Executive, Dyslexia Scotland

“The Sean Connery Foundation Dyslexia Initiative has been a great example of excellent collaboration between public, private, charitable and philanthropic organisations and it has been a pleasure to be involved as a parent representative as volunteers for Dyslexia Scotland. The impact on schools and children in Edinburgh has been self-evident throughout the process and we have seen regular positive and complimentary feedback from parents/carers of the school children involved. We are additionally happy to note the enduring and sustainable actions in the form of online modules which will further assist parents/carers in supporting dyslexic children and young adults, made possible by additional funding from HSBC UK. We sincerely hope that this collaborative approach and positive impact on young adults and Scottish education can be recreated in the future. On behalf of parents/carers, we would like to take this opportunity to thank all on the steering group for their enthusiasm, professionalism and energy in delivering this unique initiative to improve children’s literacy in Scotland.”

**Jonathan Rae and Cara Davidson, Parent representatives, Volunteers
Dyslexia Scotland**

Programme overview

The Sean Connery Foundation Dyslexia Initiative has been a unique partnership between the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC), Dyslexia Scotland and the Sean Connery Foundation. The aim of the programme was to enable more learners in City of Edinburgh schools to reach their full potential by benefitting from high-quality, targeted interventions which enhance literacy and build personal confidence, thereby improving life chances. The support from the Sean Connery Foundation enabled the City of Edinburgh’s established Literacy/Dyslexia Support Team (L/DSTeam) to provide intensive tailored programmes to an increased number of learners. Teachers and Pupil Support Assistants (PSAs) benefitted from bespoke training courses before being deployed on secondments to schools across Edinburgh. This led to a significant scaling up of identification and support for individuals and groups of learners with dyslexia.

The 2023 Annual Report covered the first year of the programme. Training for the Initiative had commenced in August 2022 for L/DSTeam teachers and PSAs. The teams had operated in schools over three blocks during academic year 2022/23.

The 2024 Annual Report provided an update on progress over the second full year of the programme, three more blocks, coinciding with academic year 2023/24 (plus half of the first term of 2024/25).

This 2025 Annual Report, the final report, updates the 2024 report and considers the full period of the Initiative, from 2022 to 2025.

Between 2022 and 2025 the programme worked in 61 Edinburgh schools: 51 primary schools and 10 secondary schools. Teams from the Initiative worked with 1752 teachers and PSAs, and 243 parents/carers (see Tables 1, 2 and 3 below for a breakdown and explanation).

Learners were assessed at the beginning and end of each intervention in order to provide a basis for objective evidence of the impact of the programme.

A statistical analysis of pre and post intervention assessment scores concluded that there was a statistically significant improvement in pupils' learning. This analysis reinforced the subjective reports, which were overwhelmingly positive.

Work has commenced on ensuring a legacy for the Initiative. In October 2024 Dyslexia Scotland were awarded a grant from HSBC UK as part of their 'Supporting Our Communities' programme, which supports local bank branches to get involved with helping local initiatives. The intention of the grant is that it should be used to develop training for teachers and parents/carers. Beyond the lifetime of the Initiative, online courses and masterclass webinars will continue to support school children, their teachers and parents/carers, and local authorities to build understanding of dyslexia and to improve literacy levels.

Organisations involved with the Initiative were as follows:

- Sean Connery Foundation
- The City of Edinburgh Council
- Dyslexia Scotland
- Education Scotland
- University of Glasgow
- Educational Consultant
- Parental representatives, Dyslexia Scotland South East
- Mission Dyslexia

Interactions between the different organisations supporting the Initiative proved to be very effective. The Steering Committee met quarterly, producing a well-documented action log. Frequent operational meetings between individuals and between participating organisations were held as required for effective programme delivery.

A series of documents was produced to facilitate the programme and to provide update reports. These were all agreed by the Steering Committee and shared with the wider educational community to help drive change.

Documents included the following:

- Initiative Introduction/Brochure
- Training Report
- Interim Report (Impact Report, January 2023)
- Thematic Analysis (Blocks one and two)
- Evaluative reports on some of the participating schools
- Dyslexia and Inclusive Practice Module Data
- 2023/24 Annual Report
- 2024/25 Annual Report
- Statistical Significance of Assessment Results for Learners Receiving Individual Support through the Sir Sean Connery Literacy/Dyslexia Initiative
- Case Study on GTCS Professional Recognition Qualification – Sarah Switzer

The Steering Committee played an indispensable role in driving forward the work of the Initiative. The range of partners included representatives from Dyslexia Scotland (from their Board and parental reps), City of Edinburgh Council, Education Scotland and University of Glasgow. The partnerships were based on mutual trust and respect for the particular contribution each person/organisation brought.

Mission Dyslexia is a highly regarded book/resource for 7 to 12 year olds, based on characters developed during a pilot programme, 'Mission Superheroes'. These workshops are now delivered throughout Scotland. The resource and a linked professional learning guide on the Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit encourage children to recognise the strengths that dyslexia can bring to their lives through identifying with cartoon superheroes such as Creatia, Persisto and Willforce.

The initiative is led by Paul McNeill, who is head of community football for the Scottish Football Association, and also an experienced public and keynote speaker. Paul is dyslexic and volunteers as an ambassador for Dyslexia Scotland.

The CEC offered the opportunity to Edinburgh primary schools to participate in tailored Mission Dyslexia workshops. The overall objective of the workshops was to work with the Edinburgh City Council Sean Connery Foundation L/DSTeam to help support children within the learning environment. Workshop aims were to: highlight the positive aspects of dyslexia; build confidence in children with literacy difficulties in an identification (or in assessment process) of dyslexia; work on innovative and creative ways to overcome challenges learners face in school; create the start of a coping strategy that can be used in school and at home.

During workshops, a cohort within a school is introduced to the cartoon superheroes, Creatia, Persisto and Willforce. Paul introduces himself as: "I am Paul and I learn differently from others. I'm 50 but can't spell the word 'spell.'" Children are not asked to identify as dyslexic, thereby reducing the potential for parental complaints or misunderstandings where a child has not yet been formally identified.

43 workshops were completed between 2022 and 2025, along with two

workshops for a total of 50 adults, and three webinars involving 130 teachers. All 860 children who participated received a copy of Mission Dyslexia.

There has been independent assessment of workshops, and feedback was found to be very positive from pupils and staff attending. Children were fully engaged and involved throughout the session, including a few with complex profiles. Paul McNeill was said to be a charismatic presenter, and his personal testament to overcoming diversity was inspiring.

Quotes from attendees included the following:

“It was clear they had a better understanding of their own strengths related to dyslexia and how to see this positively”.

“A key was the facilitator, Paul, as he has a clear interest in this area and a very engaging way to support the children.”

“Paul was very enthusiastic and engaging.”

“The children were all chatting and discussing their superpower. It created a very inclusive and supportive environment.”

“Greatly received by all. It would be useful in the future if there were any opportunities to roll out the programme with other year groups in the school. Please could you provide a date of when Paul can do the parental workshops with the parents/carers and their children?”

Team make-up and training

Before the Sean Connery Initiative started, the CEC provided a specialist team to support learners with literacy difficulties/dyslexia: the Literacy/Dyslexia Support Team (L/DSTeam), staffed with a range of highly experienced specialist teachers.

During the three years of the Initiative there were typically four teams working in schools, each consisting of one teacher and one PSA. (Depending on staff availability these numbers could vary by one or two members of staff either way.) Each team would typically work in two schools per term.

The PSAs changed throughout the 3 years with only 1 PSA working throughout the full term. This required the development of PSA focused training and this was developed over the three years. Newly employed PSAs undertook three weeks of intensive training, followed by training input throughout their term of deployment, building up skills as they worked in schools.

As well as core training for new PSAs, there were separate training sessions for teachers and PSAs, and plenary sessions bringing teachers and PSAs together. These included:

- attendance at Dyslexia Scotland Conferences
- developing Comprehension and Vocabulary – led by a City of Edinburgh Council Speech and Language Therapist
- further training on Dyslexia and bilingual learners
- further training on using ICT (One-Note) to support the learning of learners with literacy difficulties/dyslexia
- supporting learners in the Secondary context – which enabled Team teachers to support the development and presentation of Secondary Whole School training, with a greater emphasis on strategies to support literacy/dyslexia within the classroom.

Training made use of a blended learning approach, with recorded training, online modules, face-to-face teaching, practical assessments, and opportunities for PSAs to shadow staff, and coaching and mentoring from

specialist staff. This all represented the continued development of a fresh new approach to staff development in the CEC.

L/DSTeam teachers developed and delivered an additional training course for teachers: 'Literacy Difficulties/Dyslexia – Strategies to Support Learners with Severe Literacy Difficulties/ Dyslexia. L/DSTeam share their practice.' The training sessions were very well attended and received.

Staff teams completed a feedback exercise seeking views on how the training prepared them to undertake their new roles. The evaluations continued to be overwhelmingly positive. Feedback was used for continuous improvement and to improve the training programme.

Continuing training modules

One of the objectives of the programme from the outset was that there should be an enduring legacy, both within City of Edinburgh schools, and more widely throughout Scotland. The programme's training course proved to be highly successful and valued by participating staff. The next stage has been to capture and share the high leverage activities with the wider educational community using modular learning. Currently there is a focused plan of development of modular training units, free at the point of access.

Education Scotland and Dyslexia Scotland have developed a suite of three online modules, staged on the Open University (OU) Open Learn platform. The intention is now to build on this established platform to develop two more modules to capture and share the work of the Initiative across Scotland and the wider educational community. This work will continue past the completion of the rest of the Initiative programme.

The module content is relevant for all educational practitioners and supports teachers to meet the required General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) Standards for Professional Learning (gaining a digital badge on completion).

These are specific modules to support dyslexia and literacy difficulties:

- Module 1: Introduction to Dyslexia and Inclusive Education
- Module 2: Supporting Dyslexia, Inclusive Practice and Literacy

- Module 3: Dyslexia: Identification and Support.

Module 1 is designed as an entry level module suitable for all staff and parents/carers. The later modules are more specialised.

Two further modules are in development. Module 4 will provide a training opportunity for teachers and PSAs to learn about assessment, reporting, practical classroom intervention and strategies deployed to such good effect by the SCFL/DS team. The module will include information and guidance on supporting practitioners and will be especially relevant for staff taking forward the role of support for pupils within both the primary and secondary sectors. The module can also support teachers working with neurodivergent learners, as there can be co-occurrence of dyslexia and autism as well as other neurodivergent conditions. Module 5 will provide a training opportunity for staff, parents/carers and partners to learn about Mission Dyslexia and to gain access to a range of curriculum support materials to help staff build on the initial workshops. Associated costs are being funded by an HSBC UK bank grant. Module 4 content is in the process of being written and is moving into the later stages of development. Module 5 is currently at the design stage, with an experienced writing team in place.

There is an evolving strong community of practice and sharing of expertise about dyslexia and inclusive practice, including the teaching staff involved in the SCF programme in the City of Edinburgh Council, the Dyslexia Scotland/ Education Scotland GTCS-accredited Professional Recognition programme and the Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit working group. For example, alumni from the PR programme and others who help with Masterclasses, as well as the Panel, are to help review submissions in future programmes. Also, there is a great deal of professional learning and sharing in teachers' own schools, authorities and across Scotland from the practitioner enquiries.

38 City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) teachers have participated in training provided by L/DSTeam pursuing formal Professional Recognition accredited by the General Teaching Council for Scotland.

During 2024/25 two of the Initiative teachers were invited to Education

Scotland's Literacy and English Collaborative, supporting development of the updated Scottish Curriculum.

Communications and publicity

All primary and all secondary schools in Edinburgh were offered the opportunity to participate in Mission Dyslexia.

The work of the Initiative has been widely shared on the CEC and Dyslexia Scotland websites and social media, so raising awareness within the CEC educational and wider dyslexia community.

As described in the 2023 Annual Report, in June 2023 the Scotsman newspaper ran a two-page story with the headline 'Connery dyslexia scheme success hailed,' and with Stephane Connery being quoted as saying that for his father learning to read was the single most important thing to happen in his life.

In October 2024 Jenny Gilruth MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, visited Roseburn Primary School in Edinburgh in order to view the work of the Initiative. Ms Gilruth said: "The Sean Connery Foundation Dyslexia Initiative in Edinburgh has been life-changing for hundreds of young people. It has been fascinating to see the innovative work they are supporting to ensure that children with dyslexia are given the tools they need to thrive in their education."

"The Scottish Government shares this goal, which is why we are working closely in partnership with Dyslexia Scotland and Education Scotland to improve the learning experiences of children and young people with dyslexia."

The visit was reported on the Scotsman website, and the article included a quote from Samara Connery on how inspiring she found the visit.

In May 2025, the Dyslexia Scotland Initiative's educational consultant

provided updates to the Scottish Parliament Cross-Party Group on Dyslexia at Holyrood. They described the work of the Sean Connery Initiative as a unique international partnership which has had significant impact on learners in the CEC.



Who benefitted from the initiative?

Scope of Initiative within City of Edinburgh Council

Table 1 - Numbers of Learners Participating

Stage of Intervention	Number of learners 2022 - 2025	Description of support
Learners with significant delayed progress in all aspects of literacy.	97	Intensive individual interventions from both the teacher and PSA during the block on all aspects of literacy.
Learners not making the required progress in a targeted area of literacy (termed 'Hotlisters').	713	Targeted shorter individual intervention for specific reading spelling or writing difficulty, delivered by the PSA but overseen by the teacher. Learners could be added to or removed from the list during the block.
Group work	186	Groups of up to 6 learners with similar profiles work together on spelling skills, reading or cursive writing. Delivered by the teacher and /or PSA.
Total	996	
Learners attending the Lunchtime club. (This number is not included in the total because many of the Lunchtime club attendees are included in the categories above.)	72	Learners are able to socialise with friends and develop new skills and build their confidence. Run by the PSA.

Table 2 - Numbers of Schools Participating

Schools	Number of schools 2022 - 2025
Primary	51
Secondary	10
Total	61

Table 3 - Numbers of Teachers, PSAs and Parents/carers Participating 2022 to 2025

Number of teachers worked with/ trained in school	71
Cooperative teaching – number of in-school teachers	21
Number of in-school PSAs trained while working directly with the teams	90
Standalone whole school training – number of staff trained	1524
Dyslexia assessment training – number of staff advised/ supported/ trained	46
Parent/Carer group – number of participants	164
Number of parents/carers meeting L/DSTeam teachers for individual discussions of their child’s assessment outcomes, etc.	79
Total	1995

Outcomes, indicators and measures

At the commencement of the Initiative, a series of desired outcomes and targets, together with indicators for each one, and means of measurement, were identified. These are shown in tables in Appendix 1, which also displays progress statements against each.

Challenges

The Initiative faced a number of challenges during its three years. The calibre of the professional learning delivered by the L/DSTeam specialist staff to the seconded staff was of the highest quality, as evidenced in the feedback from the staff and PSAs. However, this training proved to be very demanding on the time of the team delivering the training. In order to minimise this issue in future, digitalising of some elements of the training is currently being developed in partnership with Education Scotland for inclusion in module 4.

One of the main challenges to the programme was retention of PSA members of the teams. One of the PSAs acquired promoted posts in specialist provision schools as a result of their newly-acquired knowledge and skills. Four PSAs were inspired to enter teacher training.

As this is a peripatetic role, PSAs found travelling to schools further from their homes time-consuming. Each team consisted of just two members, a teacher and a PSA; therefore, if a member left the programme at short notice the programme for that team could have been placed in jeopardy because of the lead time required to recruit and train a replacement.

Outcomes for learners receiving group interventions were initially found to have been less successful than those receiving one-to-one interventions because of the diverse profiles of learners put forward by school staff. Some schools put forward learners for groups who were not well matched in terms of need: ideally groups would be homogenous. When groups were not

well-matched extra assessment was necessary, as the L/DSTeam teacher had to assess some learners, rule them out and then assess again to ensure that the group would benefit all the learners within it. Schools tried to give as many learners as possible the opportunity, but did not necessarily recognise that groups are typically more effective when needs are closely matched and group dynamics enable maximisation of progress to be made in the short time available. This was addressed by working more closely with school staff to identify appropriate groups of learners and by putting together smaller groups of learners (3 to 4 where possible) with more similar profiles.

The Initiative proved successful for primary school and younger secondary school learners, but earlier in the programme there was limited involvement with older learners. Following recruitment of a teacher from a secondary school to the team and with more participating senior schools, there was an increase in older learners being supported.

On occasions challenges were experienced in finding sufficient space to work in schools, and availability of staff in school to attend training sessions. It was found that PSAs were often needed to provide support elsewhere in the school, and that Support for Learning teachers were often unable to observe individual programmes as they were required to cover classes.

Quantitative data

Overview

The key test of the Initiative must be whether there is objective, quantifiable evidence of improvements in learners' reading/comprehension and spelling, immediately following their involvement with the Initiative in the form of a 10 to 12 week intervention, whether this progress was maintained longer term.

Learners participated in three types of assessment, each on three separate occasions: before their involvement in the Initiative, at the end of L/DSTeam involvement and one year later. The three types of assessment were as follows:

- the phonemic decoding section of the Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE)
- knowledge of phonic patterns and their use in reading
- knowledge of phonic patterns and their use in spelling.

The 2024 Annual Report presented the outcome of the assessments undertaken by 53 primary pupils and 6 secondary pupils. This was supplemented during year 3 with results from primary pupils with group sizes ranging from 13 to 29; and from secondary pupils with group sizes ranging from 4 to 10.

The pre and post assessment scores were subjected to non-parametric statistical analysis using a sign test. This method assigns a plus when the post-intervention result was higher than the pre-intervention result, and a minus when the post-intervention result was lower than the pre-intervention result. The numbers of pluses and minuses were used to calculate the level of significance of the results.

The statistical analysis was carried out numerous times on the various data sets. (In a few cases for secondary pupils the sample sizes were too small for the analysis to be carried out.) In all cases except one the conclusion was that the interventions had been successful at a statistically significant level.

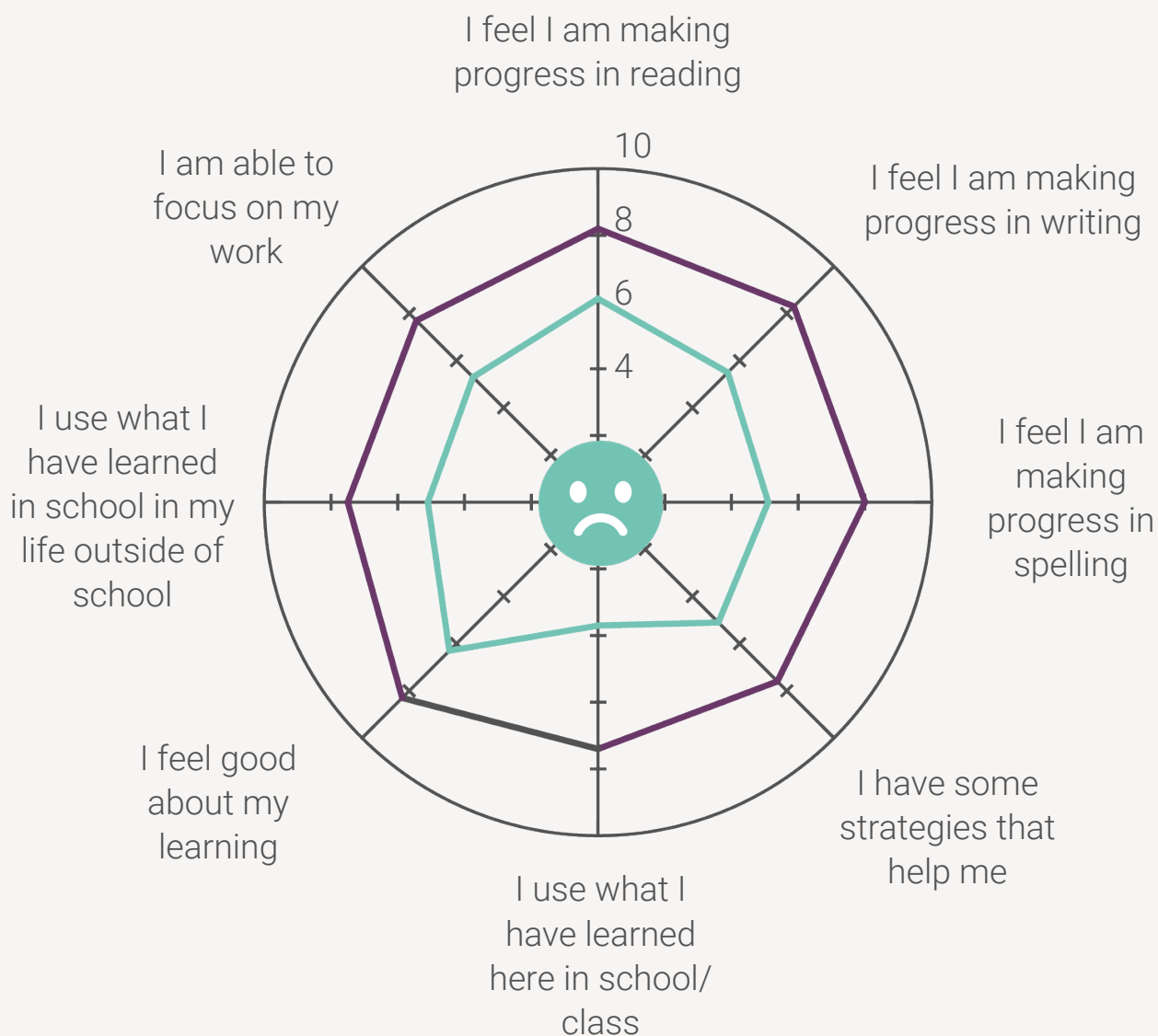
A more detailed description of the statistical analysis carried out during 2025 is presented in Appendix 2. Earlier results can be found in the 2024 Annual Report.

It was overall concluded, with a very significant degree of confidence, that the analysis of assessment results demonstrated that the teaching intervention carried out with the dyslexic pupils was extremely successful.

It is to the credit of the schools, teaching staff, pupils and their families that pupils have made such positive progress with their learning.



Mean score before
Mean score after



The Wellbeing Web diagram provides a pictorial representation of learners' responses to a series of wellbeing-related questions, before and after their involvement with the initiative. The diagram shows that, from 89 learners' responses, there was a very significant improvement in every category.

Qualitative data

As stated in the previous section, objective evidence of improvements in reading and spelling is essential in assessing the success of the Initiative. However, hardly less important is the subjective impact on the pupils who participated. Throughout the programme feedback has been obtained from participants: pupils, teachers, PSAs, parents/carers.

The first annual report, produced in September 2023, included a Thematic Analysis and a Thematic Map, which gathered together a large range of feedback and carried out a formal analysis of it. There was persuasive evidence of improvements in children's self-esteem and confidence; improvements in engagement and motivation; and enhanced hopes for the future.

An insightful feature of the Initiative's annual reports has been the Wellbeing Web. Throughout the programme pupils were invited to colour in a diagram, a pictorial representation of their feelings toward eight aspects of their learning before and after their participation in the programme. They were invited to provide a mark out of ten for each of eight statements, including, "I feel good about my learning," and "I feel I am making progress in writing."

Responses were remarkably consistent throughout the programme. Before the intervention marks ranged from about 3.7 to 6.3 out of 10. After the intervention these had improved substantially, with a range from about 7.5 to 8.3. Subjective as these responses were, it is not difficult to infer the unhappiness and low confidence inherent in the "before" numbers, and the improved happiness and confidence resulting from the higher "after" numbers.

The Wellbeing Web combining feedback from the full three years of the programme is shown below.

Also presented below is a selection of quotes from some of those who have participated in the programme.

Selected quotes from participants

“My success story hasn’t been with anyone in particular, but by just building a great bond with all the children I have worked with. My success story has just been being able to work in such a valuable job, and learning more about dyslexia than ever before.”

L/DST Team PSA

“The training was well-organised with clear objectives and aligned with the CEC Literacy and Dyslexia guidelines. The accessible resources provided through Teams offered valuable ongoing support for continued learning. Furthermore, the incorporation of group activities was impactful, fostering collaboration and enhancing our understanding of the strategies to support our learners effectively.”

Teacher

“I can read now! Thank you for coming to our school.”

“I like handwriting and practising the sounds over and over again, then joining them up to make words.”

“I am more confident with my writing using the words you guys have taught me.”

“Reading is easier in class - I can read my messages now.”

“I used to write half a page in class but today I wrote 2 ½ pages. It was a lot easier. I used to write ‘was’ the wrong way round but now I think about and I don’t. I remember what I learned.”

“I feel good about myself.”

Pupils

“Learning about dyslexia allows me to know more about what my child speaks about when they talk about how they are finding spelling difficult in school.”

“I now realise that my son takes more time to process things, so I am more patient with him.”

“I wondered if my child was lazy, but I realise now that he is not and that he is trying hard.”

Parent

“Thank you to the family of Sean Connery and the Sean Connery Foundation for enabling us to make a difference to children and young people with literacy difficulties/ dyslexia, their families and the education staff who work with them.”

**Hilary Aitken Chartered Teacher (Lead) Sean Connery Foundation
Literacy/ Dyslexia Support Team**

“At the start of the programme, this little girl was struggling with low self-esteem. The CT reported that she was often in tears in class and would avoid or reject certain tasks. From the get-go, she engaged well with all the different parts of the lesson. I think working one-to-one changed everything for her: the focused environment, the attention, the targeted support based on assessment of her needs. By the end of the programme, she could often lead activities herself and she would come into lessons smiling. The CT also reported that she felt she saw a huge difference in the learner’s mental health - she was engaging much better in class.”

L/DST Team Teacher

Conclusion

This report has shown the scale and impact of the programme during its three years from 2022 to 2025. The number of learners participating in the programme has increased from 305 at the end of Year 1 to a cumulative total of 716 at the beginning of year 3, and to 996 by the end of year 3.

More than 1750 staff benefitted in varying degrees from high-quality specialist training in how to support dyslexic learners and their parents/carers. This is of particular value as it promulgates knowledge and expertise beyond the scope and timescale of the Initiative.

Work on production of free-to-access training modules is continuing with separate funding.

More than 240 parents/carers engaged meaningfully with the parental group sessions offered by the team, or through individual sessions.

The table of Outcomes, Indicators and Measures in Appendix 1 records the successes and progress of the Initiative.

The statistical analysis of reading ability scores has demonstrated statistically significant improvements, showing the impact made by the Initiative over the three years of the programme and beyond.

Across the CEC there is a continuing heightened awareness of how the Sean Connery Foundation has benefitted many of Edinburgh's children and their parents/carers. There has been recognition of the Initiative at the Scottish Parliament and the highest level of the Scottish Government.

It has also been noted throughout the three years of the Initiative that it has been successful in supporting a significant number of learners who were previously disengaged from education or who had previously masked their difficulties by stopping cooperation with their teachers.

This final annual report, together with the previous reports, provides

evidence of the success of the Initiative throughout its three-year duration. Almost 1000 learners benefitted from the programme, in which 61 schools participated (approximately half of Edinburgh's schools). 1752 school staff participated, and it is to be expected that their increased skills and knowledge will continue to benefit learners in Edinburgh's schools into the future.

Over the duration of the Initiative there was continuing rigorous and systematic evaluation and reporting on the impact of the work on learners, staff and parents. On reviewing the trends over time there were five essential features of success interacting and co-existing to support specialist staff to deliver change:

- partnerships
- parents
- PSAs
- assessments (learners)
- professional learning.

Acknowledgements

This report captures the significant impact of the Initiative on learners, staff and parents/carers in approximately 50% of the schools in the CEC. An Initiative of this complexity across the CEC's extensive school estate was only possible due to the generosity and support of the Sean Connery Foundation in partnership with Dyslexia Scotland.

The L/DST Team, ably led by Hilary Aitken, was instrumental in ensuring the effective staff were recruited, trained and supported well in delivering the Initiative in targeted schools.

Final words

A key outcome of the Initiative has been the invaluable role of its highly trained PSAs.

“It has been wonderful to see the huge difference the project makes to learners which is the best possible reward for me. Through the Initiative I have gained a vast amount of knowledge and experience of working with children that I would not have gained elsewhere. Thanks to my time working on the project, I have been offered a place on the Post Graduate Diploma Course at University of Edinburgh. Thank you...”

PSA

Appendix 1 - Outcomes, Indicators and Measures

Benefits to Children and Young People			
Outcome/Target	Indicator	Measure	Progress
Improvements in literacy	Parameters relevant to each evaluative tool (e.g. word recognition threshold of concern; standardised norms; sight word efficiency and phonemic decoding efficiency). Tracking of test outputs over 3 year period of programme.	Edinburgh Diagnostic Reading Assessment Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOW-RE)	97 learners across 61 schools received intensive individual interventions from both the Sean Connery Foundation (SCF) Initiative teachers and PSAs during the block on all aspects of literacy; almost all made significant gains in their literacy skills. 713 learners received shorter individual interventions; almost all made progress in their literacy.
More positive view of dyslexia; developed strategies to build on strengths, leading to improved self-advocacy, building of more successful relationships, self-esteem, confidence and resilience.	Analysis of ten-point scale emoji responses. Individual learners' subjective opinions/responses.	Learner Progress and Wellbeing Web Evaluation Tool School focus groups	Almost 100 learners completed the Learner Progress and Wellbeing Web Evaluation Tool (pictorially illustrated in the Wellbeing Web diagram): striking progress was observed across the eight self-reported categories.

Benefits to Children and Young People

Outcome/Target	Indicator	Measure	Progress
Individualised milestones using SMART targets, created from a range of evidence-based assessments.	Analysis of numbers of learners being assigned milestones/SMART targets.	Programme in- interim reports. Diagnostic Literacy Assessment results recorded on Tracking Assessment Tool.	996 learners in total participated in individual or group interventions, working towards individualised targets based on the Additional Support for Learning (ASL) Diagnostic Literacy Assessment carried out by the Initiative teams.
Evidence-based progress from prior levels of attainment to reach planned milestones.	Analysis of collated data of individual learners' progress.	Programme quarterly and biannual reports	As stated above under the Improvements in Literacy Outcome, almost all learners made significant progress against their planned milestones.
Improved monitoring of learners' progress.	Number of learners with dyslexia/literacy difficulties being actively monitored.	Diagnostic Literacy Assessment undertaken at start and end of intervention and undertaken a year later for learners undertaking an individual literacy programme. Programme quarterly and bi-annual reports.	The increased capacity funded by the Initiative provided robust objective scrutiny of learners' progress.
More one-to-one teaching from a specialist dyslexia practitioner.	Number of learners receiving specialist one-to-one teaching.	Programme quarterly and biannual reports.	713 learners benefitted from one-to-one access to highly-trained staff from the Initiative.

Benefits to Educators and Schools			
Outcome/Target	Indicators	Measure	Progress
Improved engagement in learning; improved optimism about their future.	Individual learners' subjective opinions/ responses. Qualitative information about individual learners from staff feedback and discussions.	School focus groups.	Feedback from learners and from staff demonstrated the impact of the Initiative on learners' engagement and levels of optimism.
Improved capacity of school staff to support learners with dyslexia or literacy difficulties.	Number of staff with relevant training and experience; assessed levels of capability and confidence.	Pre and post evaluations for Support for Learning staff and support staff: confidence in supporting learners, class teachers and assessing dyslexia.	Across the 61 schools supported by the Initiative, more than 1500 staff benefitted from whole-staff training on dyslexia, cooperative teaching, and from observing the teams operating within their school. There was clear evidence from the Good Practice school visits of increased confidence of staff in supporting learners with dyslexia.

Benefits to Educators and Schools			
Outcome/Target	Indicators	Measure	Progress
Improved access to the additional training offered by Dyslexia Scotland (including the annual Dyslexia Scotland Education conference and the Mission Dyslexia workshops and related Mission Superheroes resource pack).	Number of staff who have attended relevant literacy and dyslexia training	Whole school training evaluation: staff attending professional courses offered by Dyslexia Scotland and/or City of Edinburgh Council.	<p>An increased awareness of dyslexia has encouraged teaching practitioners to apply for training provided by Dyslexia Scotland. 120 staff from across Scotland undertook formal Professional Recognition, accredited by the General Teaching Council for Scotland. Twelve spaces were taken up by the SCF team at the 2024 and 2025 Dyslexia Scotland education conferences. Around 300 teachers across Scotland attend the conference each year. The Chartered Teacher (Lead) Literacy/ Dyslexia Support Team and Dyslexia Scotland Initiative's educational consultant presented on the programme at the 2023 conference.</p> <p>Mission Dyslexia continued to increase participation through 43 school assemblies/ workshops, two adult workshops and three webinars.</p>
Improved confidence in supporting learners by accessing high quality training from the team.	Evaluation (by direct observation and evaluation of responses) of educators' levels of confidence.	School staff focus group: questions for groups of different staff including teachers and support staff (PSAs).	Evaluative comments were extracted from feedback from focus groups, and they were universally positive in reporting improved confidence.

Benefits to Families			
Outcome/Target	Indicators	Measure	Progress
Central analysis of data from: analysis of the various assessments, supported by City of Edinburgh Council's Psychological Services team and Dyslexia Scotland, resulting in publication of interim and annual reports.	The Steering Committee for this Initiative: assessment of range and quality of data outputs.	Outputs of City of Edinburgh Council's Psychological Services' team data analysis and their evaluation via interim and annual reports.	The Psychological Services team undertook analysis of data to monitor progress, shared via the interim reports. The Steering Committee effectively oversaw the work of the Initiative by providing challenge and support.
Children seen to be progressing in their levels of literacy.	Evaluation of parent and carer views/ observations/ opinions.	Online/ hardcopy survey: parents/ carers provide feedback on the impact of interventions on their child.	Parent interviews were a feature of school Good Practice visits, and parents/carers speak highly of the improvement in their children's literacy.
Improvements observed in children's wellbeing and self-esteem	Evaluation of parent and carer views/ observations/ opinions.	Online survey: parents/ carers and carers provide feedback on the impact of interventions on their child.	Parents/carers interviewed during school Good Practice visits reported that their children experienced significant improvements in feelings of wellbeing and self-esteem.

Benefits to Families			
Outcome/Target	Indicators	Measure	Progress
Parents/carers better informed of strategies to support home learning.	Evaluation of parent and carer views/ observations/ opinions Evaluation of parental knowledge and understanding	Online survey: parents/ carers provide feedback on the impact of interventions on their child Focus groups of parents/ carers/ guardians	During parents/carers' groups, parents/ carers voiced their appreciation of working with the Initiative teams, and how it supported their understanding of what was happening to their child at school. This was also reflected in focus group feedback.
Meaningful engagement and involvement in the programme.	Evaluation (by means of face-to-face discussions and direct observation) of parent and carer engagement and involvement.	Focus groups of parents/ carers	As above, parents/ carers reported the positive impact of the interventions on their children's self-esteem and their own understanding of how to support their children.
Improved accessibility of specialist advice from skilled practitioners.	Evaluation of parent and carer experiences of seeking and obtaining advice.	Focus groups of parents/ carers	During their school placements the Initiative teams had regular contact with parents/ carers via regular meetings of parents/ carers' groups.

Appendix 2 - Statistical Analysis of Year 3 Data

Analysis was carried out on three assessments. These were pre-and post-tests on the following:

- the phonemic decoding section of the TOWRE
- knowledge of phonic patterns and their use in reading
- knowledge of phonic patterns and their use in spelling.

Two sets of data were available. These were:

- data referring to results from the start to the end of the 10-to-12-week intervention
- data referring to results completed by schools after 1 year of intervention support.

The analysis used the sign test. The sign test assigned a plus where the post-intervention result for an individual is greater than the pre- intervention result, and a minus where the post- intervention result is smaller than the pre- intervention result. The numbers of pluses and minuses were then used to calculate the level of significance of the results. Significance level is determined with reference to Table D in Siegel S (1956), Non-Parametric Statistics for the Behavioural Sciences, McGraw Hill.

All the data were anonymised in that the names of the pupils were not provided.

The null hypothesis which required rejection was that there were no differences between the pre-and post-test results. A one-tailed test was used since our prediction is that post-test scores will be higher than pre-test scores. That is, our prediction is that the teaching interventions will improve scores from pre-to post-test.

Results

Data referring to results from the start to the end of the 10-to-12-week intervention

Phonemic decoding section of the TOWRE (Test of Word Reading Efficiency)

Primary sample

Sample size N=11 (4 pupils showed no change between pre-and post-test assessment and their results were, therefore, not used in the calculation of significance).

10 pupils scored plus (post-test results > pre-test results)

1 pupil scored minus (post-test results < pre-test results)

We can conclude that the teaching intervention was successful with a significance level ($p < 0.01$).

Secondary sample

There were only 9 pupils in the sample. All 9 pupils scored plus (post-test results > pre-test results).

We can conclude that the teaching intervention was successful with a significance level ($p < 0.01$).

Knowledge of phonic patterns and their use in reading

Primary sample

The sample size was N=13.

11 pupils scored plus (post-test results > pre-test results)

2 pupils scored minus (post-test results < pre-test results)

We can conclude that the teaching intervention was successful with a significance level ($p < 0.01$).

Secondary sample

The sample size was N=10.

8 pupils scored plus (post-test results>pre-test results).

2 pupils scored minus (post-test results<pre-test results).

We can conclude that the teaching intervention was successful with a significance level ($p<0.06$).

Knowledge of phonic patterns and their use in spelling

Primary sample

The sample size was N=14.

13 pupils scored plus (post-test results>pre-test results).

1 pupil scored minus (post-test results<pre-test results).

We can conclude that teaching intervention was successful with a significance level ($p<0.001$).

Secondary sample

The sample size was N=10.

9 pupils scored plus (post-test results>pre-test results).

1 pupil scored minus (post-test results<pre-test results).

We can conclude that the teaching intervention was successful with a significance level ($p<0.01$).

In summary, on the three assessments noted above the results indicate that for the primary and secondary sample the teaching intervention was significantly successful in terms of the pupils' phonemic decoding efficiency, their knowledge of phonic patterns and their use in reading and spelling.

Data referring to results completed by schools after 1 year of intervention support

Phonemic decoding section of the TOWRE

Primary sample

The sample size N=26 (1 pupil showed no change between pre-and post-test assessment and their results are, therefore, not used in the calculation of significance).

15 pupils scored plus (post-test results>pre-test results).

11 pupils scored minus (post-test results<pre-test results).

These results suggest that there was no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test results after one year.

It is not clear what the explanation is for this result. Every one of the 11 pupils scoring minus improved their results on the Knowledge of phonic patterns and their use in reading assessment (see below). For example, one pupil scoring minus on the decoding assessment raised their score from 62 to 150 on the pre-and post-test-assessment of Knowledge of phonic patterns and their use in reading. For completeness, all pupils scoring plus on decoding assessment improved their pre-and post-test scores on Knowledge of phonic patterns and their use in reading. Similar results held for Knowledge of phonic patterns and their use in spelling assessments. So, failure to improve scores on phonemic decoding did not seem to hold pupils back in these other two assessments.

Secondary sample

There were only 4 pupils in the sample and this was insufficient for data analysis.

Knowledge of phonic patterns and their use in reading

Primary sample

The sample size was N=29.

All pupils scored plus (post-test results > pre-test results) and none scored minus (post-test results < pre-test results).

We can conclude that the teaching intervention was extremely successful with a significance level ($p < 0.001$).

Secondary sample

There were only 4 pupils in the sample and this was insufficient for data analysis.

Knowledge of phonic patterns and their use in spelling
Primary sample

The sample size was N=28 (data for one pupil were incomplete).

25 pupils scored plus (post-test results > pre-test results)

3 pupils scored minus (post-test results < pre-test results).

We can conclude that teaching intervention was successful with a significance level ($p < 0.001$).

Secondary sample

There were only 4 pupils in the sample and this was insufficient for data analysis.

In summary, on the three assessments noted above the results indicate that for the primary sample the teaching intervention has been significantly successful over a one-year period in terms of the pupils' knowledge of phonic patterns and their use in reading and spelling. The results for the secondary sample were inconclusive because the sample size was too small.

Conclusions

A similar analysis to the one reported above had been carried out on different data in September 2024. Taking these results into account with the results reported here we can conclude, with a very significant degree of confidence, that the three assessments referred to above have demonstrated that, overall, the teaching intervention carried out with the dyslexic pupils has been extremely successful. It is to the credit of the schools, teaching staff, pupils and their families that these pupils have made such positive progress with their learning.



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