



Hiring and supporting dyslexic staff

Dyslexia can be classed as a disability under the Equality Act (2010). This means that as an employer, you are obliged to make reasonable adjustments to your recruitment processes and for people who work for you. Making adjustments not only helps level the playing field for dyslexic candidates, but it helps you get the best out of the candidate at interview and in the role to which they are recruited .

Here are some adjustments that can help your new employee with dyslexia:

Applications

Consider allowing applications in alternative formats. This is a standard offering by Disability Confident Level 2 employers. Alternative formats could include spoken word or video applications.

Challenge point: Are you giving enough time before the closing date? If you provide a longer time to apply, you'll be more likely to receive high quality, well-written applications.

Interviews

- Offer a choice of time of day to be interviewed.
- Allow the person being interviewed an opportunity to deliver a presentation ahead of answering set questions (people with dyslexia can sometimes struggle to 'fit' their answers to interview questions). If you allow a candidate to deliver a presentation as part of the interview process, you could get a lot more insight to their suitability for the role than using set questions.

- Provide the questions in advance to help the person narrow down their thoughts to what you want to find out.
- If competency-based questions are important for your organisation, ask for answers in a CAR (context, action, result) format instead of STAR (situation, task, action, result)
- Ask multi-part questions one part at a time for focussed answers.
- For online interviews, allow the candidate to switch their camera off for some parts of the interview if seeing themselves is distracting.
- Applicants aren't obliged to tell you that they are dyslexic, it's a personal choice. Some people might feel reluctant to let you know that they are dyslexic out of fear that they might be discriminated against.

4 simple things you can do to help your dyslexic team members

Good communication

Encourage staff to talk about any workplace difficulties and let them know you want to support them. Ask them if there are things that they think might help them maximise their performance. Very often, small changes can make a big difference not just to dyslexic employees but the whole workforce.

Assessment

There are online screeners that you and your employee can use but these cannot identify dyslexia, rather indicate a likelihood.

An assessment by a psychologist or dyslexia specialist would give more in-depth information but this costs from £300 – £650 (and occasionally more). Funding is not readily available but ask your employee if they have been assessed before and if there is a copy of a report, or consider the benefits of contributing to all or part of the cost.

Access to Work

This programme can provide appropriate aids and equipment for employees with dyslexia. Access to Work will carry out a workplace assessment of the individual's needs. They might meet the partial or full costs of what they

recommend, depending on the size of your company. Your employee should apply to Access to Work either online or by phoning 0800 121 7479 for help with the application.

Some examples of aids an employee with dyslexia might find useful are:

- voice recognition software to convert speech into text
- text-to-speech software to read documents
- a scanner for longer documents to use with text-to-speech software
- a digital recorder to record spoken information, such as instructions from someone else, a meeting or to-do lists.

Reasonable adjustments

Reasonable adjustments are changes that you can make to help your employee do their job. Benefits of reasonable adjustments include:

- helping realise the strengths of your workforce
- improving efficiency and the service you offer
- improving motivation and maintaining loyalty of staff
- reducing stress, staff turnover and sick leave.
- Examples of adjustments could be:
 - demonstrations of tasks if appropriate (hands-on learning, crib sheets and repetition can be useful)
 - additional assessment arrangements can give support with tests and exams
 - low cost/no cost assistive technology solutions to help with reading and writing
 - breaking tasks into smaller chunks
 - use of flow charts or images instead of text
 - supplying instructions where possible to help with memory

- supplying templates of any documents required, for example taking telephone messages
- allowing use of assistive technology to organise day to day task management
- working in a quieter/less distracting area of the workplace.
- It is likely that the employee will have used some of these solutions in the past and will often be the best person to talk to about what could help.

You should also aim to raise general awareness about dyslexia with all staff, for example through training around dyslexia, or by distributing our leaflets in your workplace. Make sure that adjustments are agreed and put in place and check that they are working. Dyslexia Scotland can provide training in the workplace.

Arrange bespoke training with Dyslexia Scotland

dyslexiascotland.org.uk/dyslexia-training

