



Dyslexia
Scotland

Election Manifesto 2026

Urgent action needed:
supporting dyslexic and
neurodivergent learners
across Scotland

Contents

Introduction	4
Our vision	4
Our three urgent asks:	5
• Development and implementation of a School Leavers Passport	
• Urgent funding and promotion of adult dyslexia assessments	
• Mandatory dyslexia and neurodivergence training in all teacher education	
Our desired outcomes: a transformed Scotland	15
The hidden cost of inaction: why Scotland cannot ignore dyslexia	17
About Dyslexia Scotland	19

Introduction

Dyslexia affects approximately 10% of the Scottish population, with significant overlap across the wider neurodivergent community. Despite growing awareness, systemic gaps in identification, support, and transition continue to limit opportunities for thousands of Scottish learners and adults.

As Scotland prepares for the 2026 elections, Dyslexia Scotland calls on all political parties to commit to urgent, transformative action. The challenges facing dyslexic and neurodivergent people require immediate attention - delays mean continued disadvantage, lost potential, and unnecessary hardship for individuals and families across Scotland.

This manifesto outlines critical policy asks that will deliver measurable improvements in educational outcomes, workforce participation, and lifelong wellbeing. The time for action is now.

Our vision

A Scotland where dyslexia and neurodivergence are understood, supported, and celebrated from early years through to adulthood.

Our three urgent asks



1

Development and implementation of a School Leavers Passport

The challenge

Young people with dyslexia and other neurodivergent learning differences often leave school without comprehensive documentation of their learning needs, successful strategies, and reasonable adjustments. This information gap creates barriers in further education, employment, and accessing adult support services. Many must restart assessment processes, losing critical time and momentum during a pivotal transition period. For many the cost of the dyslexia assessment is a barrier to the young person.

Our ask

We call on the next Scottish Government to develop and implement a standardised School Leavers Passport for all learners with identified learning differences, including dyslexia and neurodivergence.

What this should include:

- Comprehensive learning profile documenting strengths, challenges, and successful support strategies.
- Robust assessment evidence that meets the standards required by further and higher education, employers, and adult services - ensuring school assessments are fit for purpose beyond the school gates.
- Details of reasonable adjustments that have proven effective in educational settings.
- Professional reports compiled during school years, properly documented and quality-assured.
- Learner voice reflecting the young person's own understanding of their needs.
- Portable digital format accessible across education, training, and employment settings.
- Clear guidance for receiving organisations on how to implement recommended adjustments.

What the next Scottish Government must do

- Strengthen dyslexia assessment in schools immediately to ensure quality, consistency, and portability of evidence.
- Invest in AI-powered assessment tools that can support teachers in early identification and provide consistent, evidence-based screening at scale - making quality assessment more accessible and cost-effective.
- Establish a national working group including educators, learners, parents, and employers to design the passport framework by December 2026.
- Develop digital infrastructure leveraging AI to create intelligent, adaptive passport systems that can recommend adjustments based on learning patterns and outcomes data.
- Pilot the scheme in secondary schools across diverse local authorities from August 2027.
- Roll out nationally by August 2028, with all school leavers with identified needs receiving their passport.
- Create accompanying guidance and training for relevant agencies including further education institutions and employers.

Expected impact

- Smoother transitions for young people into further education, training, and employment.
- Eliminated need for costly reassessment in post-school settings.
- Improved employment outcomes and workplace inclusion.
- Enhanced self-advocacy skills and confidence amongst young people
- Improved mental health and wellbeing.
- Better continuity of support across life stages.
- Investment in high-quality school-based assessment and the School Leavers passport will significantly reduce future demand for costly adult assessments and prevent duplication across the system.



Urgent funding and promotion of adult dyslexia assessments

2

The challenge

Many adults in Scotland remain unidentified as dyslexic despite experiencing lifelong challenges with literacy, organisation, and information processing. The cost of private assessment (typically £400-£800) creates a significant barrier, particularly for those in lower-income brackets who may benefit most from identification and workplace adjustments. There are currently no free dyslexia assessment services available in Scotland for adults, or young people aged 16 to 18 years not in education. Every day without a dyslexia identification is another day of lost opportunity and unnecessary struggle.

Our ask

We call on the next Scottish Government to establish an urgent, funded national pathway for adult dyslexia assessment, working towards free assessment for all adults who need it.

What this should include

- Immediate subsidised assessments for adults who suspect they have dyslexia, working towards legislation to make adult assessment free
- Cross-cutting adult dyslexia policy lead across Scottish Government to coordinate action and drive change.
- Comprehensive action plan developed within the first six months of the new Parliament.
- Clear referral pathways through local authorities, JobCentre Plus, colleges, universities, employers and community services.
- Increased capacity in dyslexia assessors including psychologists and specialist teacher assessor services.
- Public awareness campaign to reduce stigma and promote the benefits of identification at any age.
- Post-assessment support including guidance on workplace adjustments and assistive technology.
- A long-term commitment to achieving universally free adult dyslexia assessment across Scotland, ensuring cost is never a barrier to identification or support.



What the next Scottish Government must do

- Facilitate cross-cutting adult dyslexia policy lead across Scottish Government immediately to coordinate action across health, education, employment, and justice portfolios.
- Develop an action plan within six months to subsidise adult assessments and establish a clear pathway to legislation making adult assessment free.
- Deploy AI-powered screening and pre-assessment tools that can be accessed online by adults, reducing the cost burden on the system while maintaining quality - enabling wider access at lower cost.
- Allocate £5 million annually to fund adult dyslexia assessments through local authorities, JobCentre Plus, colleges and universities, employers and other services.
- Invest in technology-enabled assessment pathways that combine AI screening with specialist human assessment, maximising efficiency and reducing waiting times.
- Establish regional assessment hubs in partnership with further education colleges, equipped with modern assistive technology.
- Train and deploy 50 additional specialist assessors across Scotland by 2028, supported by AI diagnostic support tools where applicable
- Launch a national awareness campaign highlighting success stories and available support.
- Create an online self-referral portal and resource hub with AI-powered guidance tools.
- Develop partnerships with employers and trade unions to promote workplace assessment, reasonable adjustments and technology-based workplace adjustments.

Expected impact

- Identification and support for thousands more adults annually
- Improved employment prospects and career progression for adults identified as dyslexic.
- Reduced mental health burden associated with unidentified learning differences.
- Enhanced workplace productivity through appropriate adjustments
- Increased diversity and inclusion in Scottish workplaces.
- Economic benefit through improved workforce participation and reduced reliance on benefits.





3

Mandatory dyslexia and neurodivergence training in all teacher education

The challenge

Despite prevalence rates suggesting three learners with dyslexia in every classroom, teacher preparation in Scotland does not consistently equip educators with essential knowledge and skills to identify and support dyslexic and neurodivergent learners. This results in late or no identification, inappropriate interventions, and missed opportunities for early support that can transform outcomes. Every cohort of teachers trained without this knowledge means another generation of children misses early identification.

Our ask

We call on the next Scottish Government to mandate comprehensive dyslexia, neurodivergence and inclusive practice training as a core, assessed component of all Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes and continuing professional development.

What this should include

- Mandatory ITE content covering dyslexia, ADHD, autism, and related learning differences, including assessment skills for early identification.
- Practical teaching strategies for differentiation and inclusive pedagogy
- Early identification skills enabling teachers to recognise potential indicators.
- Awareness of formal and informal assessment approaches.
- Assistive technology training on available tools and implementation,

including AI-powered reading, writing, and organisation tools that are transforming support for dyslexic learners.

- Lived experience input from dyslexic and neurodivergent people in training delivery.
- Regular professional learning updates as part of professional standards requirements.
- Professional Recognition programme backing up training, either GTCS-accredited or university-validated.

What the next Scottish Government must do

- Invest in development of comprehensive training for teachers on assessment and support of dyslexia.
- Integrate AI and technology throughout teacher training, demonstrating how digital tools can support both assessment and intervention - reducing workload while improving outcomes.
- Work with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) to update professional standards by June 2027.
- Require all universities delivering ITE programmes to embed dedicated neurodivergent modules from academic year 2027/28, including hands-on experience with AI-powered assistive technologies where appropriate.
- Mandate assessed competencies demonstrating understanding and application of assessment skills, including use of technology-enhanced screening tools.
- Fund and promote the development of high-quality training resources and materials, including digital platforms and AI-enhanced learning modules that make training more accessible and cost-effective.
- Provide all teachers with access to AI-powered classroom tools that can flag potential learning differences and suggest evidence-based interventions.
- Ensure these AI-powered classroom tools are nationally funded, standardised, and embedded across all schools to support early identification, reduce workload, and ensure consistent inclusive practice
- Establish a network of specialist educators to support ITE delivery.
- Require all practising teachers to complete accredited dyslexia and neurodivergence professional learning within three years of qualifying.
- Allocate £3 million for professional learning development and delivery infrastructure, including investment in digital training platforms.

Expected impact

- Early identification becomes the norm rather than the exception, supported by AI screening tools where appropriate and applicable, that can monitor all learners.
- All newly qualified teachers equipped with essential dyslexia identification and support skills, plus confidence in using technology to enhance their practice.
- Reduced workload for teachers through AI-powered tools that handle routine screening and progress monitoring.
- Earlier identification of learning differences in primary schools, preventing years of struggle.
- Cost-effective intervention at scale - technology enables support for more learners without proportional increases in staffing.
- Reduced attainment gap for dyslexic and neurodivergent learners
- More inclusive classroom practices benefiting all learners.
- Increased confidence amongst teachers to support diverse learners
- Cultural shift towards neurodiversity-affirming education.



Our desired outcomes: a transformed Scotland

Early identification

- Every child identified in primary school, enabling timely intervention.
- Teachers equipped with assessment skills to spot early indicators.
- Systematic screening embedded in early years and primary education.

Technological innovation

- Investment in technological, innovative collective solutions for assessment and support.
- AI-powered tools that provide personalised learning pathways, real-time support, and intelligent assessment - making high-quality intervention accessible to all.
- Assistive technology accessible to all who need it, not just those who can afford it - with AI reducing costs and increasing effectiveness.
- Digital platforms that connect learners, families, and professionals.
- Technology that supports teachers and reduces workload whilst improving learner outcomes.
- AI-enabled workplace adjustments that make employment more accessible for dyslexic adults at minimal cost to employers.

Groundbreaking research

- Research partnerships with universities developing transformative approaches, particularly in AI and educational technology.
- Evidence-based practice informing all dyslexia support across Scotland
- Scotland recognised as an international leader in dyslexia, literacy research, and AI-enhanced learning.
- Innovation that benefits not just Scotland but the global dyslexic community.
- Technology solutions that make Scotland's approach scalable and exportable, creating economic opportunities alongside social benefits.

Lifelong support

- Seamless transitions from school to adult life.
- Adults able to access assessment and support at any age.
- Workplaces that understand and accommodate neurodivergent employees.
- A society that celebrates neurodivergence as a strength.



The hidden cost of inaction: why Scotland cannot ignore dyslexia

Unidentified dyslexia in adulthood carries profound social and economic consequences for Scotland. When dyslexia goes unrecognised, individuals face years of avoidable struggle that translate into lower educational attainment, reduced productivity, underemployment, poorer mental health and limited access to lifelong learning. Dyslexic adults without identification are more likely to experience anxiety and depression, which increases pressure on NHS services, and they are less likely to secure or remain in stable employment, resulting in lost earnings and reduced tax revenue.

Employers miss out on productivity gains that appropriate adjustments could unlock at minimal cost. International evidence shows that late identification leads to higher dependence on benefits, increased job turnover and reduced workplace efficiency. The effects are felt across society, literacy difficulties contribute to early school dropout, reduced employability and higher long-term public spending on mental health, justice and social support.

Dyslexia and other learning differences are disproportionately represented in the prison population, which creates significant costs across policing, courts and custody. Early identification and support could substantially reduce these pressures. By contrast, timely assessment and intervention for children and adults produces strong economic returns, with higher employment, improved productivity, reduced healthcare spending, lower reoffending rates and a more skilled and confident workforce.

The conclusion is clear: failing to act harms individuals, weakens communities and costs Scotland significantly more in the long term.

The time for action is now

These asks represent achievable, evidence-based interventions that will transform outcomes for dyslexic and neurodivergent people across Scotland. The integration of AI and technology throughout these proposals means we can achieve wider reach at lower cost - supporting more learners, empowering teachers, and enabling employers to create inclusive workplaces without prohibitive expense.

Technology is not replacing human support - it's enabling it. AI-powered tools have the potential to handle screening, monitoring, and routine support tasks, freeing up specialist professionals to focus on complex cases and personalised intervention. This approach delivers better outcomes for individuals while making the system financially sustainable and scalable.

The urgency cannot be overstated. Every year of delay means:

- More children struggling unnecessarily through school.
- More young people leaving school without the evidence they need.
- More adults going unidentified and unsupported.
- More potential lost.
- Missing the opportunity to lead in educational technology innovation.

We call on all political parties contesting the 2026 Scottish Parliament elections to:

- Commit to these urgent policy priorities in your manifestos.
- Take immediate action in the first six months of the new Parliament.
- Engage with Dyslexia Scotland and the neurodivergent community in policy development.
- Allocate appropriate funding to deliver meaningful change.
- Champion inclusive education and workplace practices.
- Support innovation through matched funding and research investment.
- Together, we can build a Scotland where every dyslexic and neurodivergent person thrives, but only if we act now.

About Dyslexia Scotland

Dyslexia Scotland is the national charity dedicated to inspiring and enabling people with dyslexia, regardless of their age or ability, to reach their potential in education, employment, and life. We provide information, advice, training, and support to individuals, families, and professionals across Scotland.

This manifesto represents the collective voice of dyslexic people, families, educators, and employers across Scotland who are united in the vision of a truly inclusive society. We cannot afford to wait.



**Dyslexia
Scotland**

Dyslexia Scotland

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