



Northamptonshire Local Offer:

Dyslexia Information Pack

What is Dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty (SpLD), which means it causes problems with certain abilities used for learning, such as reading and writing. Unlike a learning disability, intelligence isn't affected. Up to one in ten people in the UK has some degree of dyslexia. It is a lifelong problem that can present challenges on a daily basis, but support is available to improve reading and writing skills.

Signs of Dyslexia

The signs of dyslexia differ from person to person. Some of the most common signs of dyslexia are outlined below.

Signs in Pre-School Children (0-4)

- Delayed speech development compared with other children of the same age (although this can have many different causes).
- Speech problems, such as not being able to pronounce long words correctly and "jumbling" up phrases (for example, saying "hecicopter" instead of "helicopter", or "beddy tear" instead of "teddy bear").
- Problems expressing themselves using spoken language, such as forgetting the right word to use or putting sentences together incorrectly.
- Little understanding or appreciation of rhyming words, such as "the cat sat on the mat" or nursery rhymes.
- Difficulty with, or little interest in, learning letters of the alphabet.

Signs in School Children (5-12)

- Problems learning the names and sounds of letters.

- Spelling that's unpredictable and inconsistent.
- Putting letters and figures the wrong way round (such as writing "6" instead of "9" or "b" instead of "d").
- Confusing the order of letters in words.
- Reading slowly or making errors when reading aloud.
- Visual disturbances when reading (for example, a child may describe letters and words as seeming to move around or appear blurred).
- Answering questions well orally, but having difficulty writing the answer down.
- Difficulty carrying out a sequence of directions.
- Struggling to learn sequences, such as days of the week or the alphabet.
- Slow writing speed.
- Poor handwriting.
- Problems copying written language and taking longer than usual to complete written work.
- Poor phonological awareness and word attack skills.

Signs in Teenagers and Adults (13+)

- Poorly organised written work that lacks expression (for example, even though they may be very knowledgeable about a particular subject, they may have problems expressing that knowledge in writing).
- Difficulty planning and writing essays, letters or reports.
- Difficulties revising for examinations.
- Trying to avoid reading and writing whenever possible.
- Difficulty taking notes or copying.
- Poor spelling.
- Struggling to remember things such as a PIN or telephone number.
- Struggling to meet deadlines.

Diagnosing Dyslexia

If You're Worried About Your Child

If you're concerned about your child's progress with reading and writing, first talk to their teacher. You may also want to meet with other staff in the school.

If there's an ongoing concern, take your child to see a GP. It may be that your child has health problems that are affecting their ability to read or write. For example, they may have:

- Vision problems, such as short-sightedness or a squint.
- Hearing problems as the result of a condition such as glue ear.
- Other conditions, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

If your child does not have any obvious underlying health problems to explain their learning difficulties, there are other teaching techniques that may help your child.

Dyslexia Assessments

If there are still concerns about your child's progress after they have received additional teaching and support, it may be a good idea to have a more in-depth assessment.

This can be carried out by an educational psychologist or an appropriately qualified specialist dyslexia teacher. They'll be able to support you, your child and your child's teachers by helping improve the understanding of your child's learning difficulties and suggesting interventions that may help them.

Requesting a Dyslexia Assessment

There are various ways to request an assessment for your child. The first step is to meet your child's teacher and their school's special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) to discuss your concerns and any interventions that have been tried already.

The school can refer for assessment by a local authority educational psychologist or another specialist in dyslexia. Or you can approach an independent educational psychologist or another suitably qualified professional directly.

You can find a directory of chartered psychologists on the British Psychological Society's website (www.bps.org.uk/lists/DIR). You can also contact the British Dyslexia Association (www.bdadyslexia.org.uk) or the Northamptonshire and Buckinghamshire Dyslexia Association (<https://nbda.org.uk>) for help arranging an assessment.

What Happens After an Assessment

After your child has been assessed, you'll receive a report that outlines their strengths and weaknesses, with recommendations of what could be done to improve areas they're having difficulties with.

Depending on the severity of your child's learning difficulties, it may be possible for their difficulties to be managed through **SEN Support** in school. This is an action plan drawn up by their school and parents.

In some cases where a child's difficulties do not improve and progress does not seem to be made, you, or the school could ask for your child to be assessed for an **Education Health and Care (EHC) Plan**. An EHC plan sets out a child's educational needs and the support required.

Managing Dyslexia

While dyslexia is a lifelong problem, there's a range of specialist educational interventions that can help children with their reading and writing. These interventions are generally most effective if they're started at a young age. The type and extent of intervention needed will depend on the severity of your child's difficulties.

A specific action plan for your child may be drawn up and implemented by their school. These are often referred to as Individual Education Plans (IEP). Most mainstream schools should be able to offer suitable interventions for your child.

Educational Interventions

A number of educational interventions and programmes are available for children with dyslexia. These can range from regular teaching in small groups with a learning support assistant who delivers work set by teaching staff, to 1-to-1 lessons with a specialist teacher.

Most interventions focus on phonological skills, which is the ability to identify and process word sounds. These interventions are often referred to as phonics. Phonics interventions can involve teaching a child to:

- Recognise and identify sounds in spoken words (for example, helping them recognise that even short words such as "hat" are actually made up of 3 sounds: "h", "a" and "t").
- Combine letters to create words, and over time, use the words to create more complex sentences.
- Practice reading words accurately to help them read more quickly.
- Monitor their own understanding while they read (for example, by encouraging them to ask questions if they notice gaps in their understanding).

These interventions should ideally be delivered in a highly structured way with development in small steps, and should involve regularly practicing what's been learnt.

It can also help if your child is taught in a multisensory way, where they use several senses at the same time. An example of multisensory teaching is where a child is taught to see the letter "a", say its name and sound and write it in the air, all at the same time.

How You Can Help Your Child

Read to Your Child: This will improve their vocabulary and listening skills, and will also encourage their interest in books.

Share Reading: Both read some of the book and then discuss what's happening, or what might happen.

Overlearning: You may get bored of reading your child's favourite book over and over, but repetition will reinforce their understanding and means they'll become familiar with the text.

Silent Reading: Children also need the chance to read alone to encourage their independence and fluency.

Make Reading Fun: Reading should be a pleasure, not a chore. Use books about subjects your child is interested in, and make sure that reading takes place in a relaxed and comfortable environment. Parents also play a significant role in improving their child's confidence, so it's important to encourage and support your child as they learn.

Technology

Many older children with dyslexia feel more comfortable working with a computer than an exercise book. This may be because a computer uses a visual environment that better suits their method of learning and working.

Word processing programmes can also be useful because they have a spellchecker and an autocorrect facility that can highlight mistakes in your child's writing.

Most web browsers and word processing software also have text-to-speech functions, where the computer reads the text as it appears on the screen.

Speech recognition software can also be used to translate what a person is saying into written text. This software can be useful for children with dyslexia because their verbal skills are often better than their writing.

There are also many educational interactive software applications that may provide your child with a more engaging way of learning a subject, rather than simply reading from a textbook.

Adults With Dyslexia

Much of the advice and techniques used to help children with dyslexia are also relevant for adults.

Making use of technology, such as word processors and electronic organisers, can help with your writing and organising daily activities.

Using a multisensory approach to learning can be helpful. For

example, you could use a digital recorder to record a lecture and then listen to it as you read your notes.

It can also be useful to break large tasks and activities down into smaller steps.

If you need to draw up a plan or make notes about a certain topic, you may find it useful to create a mind map, rather than writing a list. Mind maps are diagrams that use images and keywords to create a visual representation of a subject or plan.

Adjustments at Work

If you're in work, let your employer know that you have dyslexia, as they're required by law to make reasonable adjustments to the workplace to assist you. Examples of reasonable adjustments may include:

- Providing you with assistance technology, such as digital recorders or speech-to-text software.
- Giving you instructions verbally, rather than in writing.
- Allowing you extra time for tasks you find particularly difficult.
- Providing you with information in formats you find accessible.

Read more about your rights at work on the government's website: <https://tinyurl.com/v2jur746>.

Relevant Organisations

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British Dyslexia Association (BDA) A membership organisation that works to achieve a dyslexia-friendly society. It offers assessments, information, training, and a helpline. Web: https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/ Tel: 0333 405 4555 Email: helpline@bdadyslexia.org.uk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helen Arkell Dyslexia Charity, Surrey The Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre provides support services for people of all ages with dyslexia. The website has advice and an online shop. Web: https://www.helenarkell.org.uk/ Tel: 01252 792400 Email: enquiries@helenarkell.org.uk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Advice and Support Service for Special Educational Needs and Disability in Northants (IASS) Offers free information, advice, and support in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Web: http://www.iassnorthants.co.uk/ Tel: 01604 364772 Email: contact@iassnorthants.co.uk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northamptonshire and Buckinghamshire Dyslexia Association (NBDA) Local charity offering a helpline, a befriender service, assessments, events, training (for parents, professionals, and employers), a newsletter, and a parent forum. Web: https://nbda.org.uk/ Tel: 01604 328075 Email: info@nbda.org.uk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OpenDyslexic Typeface An open-source (free) font created to increase readability for readers with dyslexia. Download from the website. Also on Kindle. Web: https://opendyslexic.org/ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Association of Teachers of Students With Specific Learning Disabilities (PATOSS) National membership organisation for teachers of students with specific learning difficulties. Web: https://www.patoss-dyslexia.org/ Tel: 0330 135 7033 Email: info@patoss-dyslexia.org
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ryman - Dyslexia Shop Ryman sells a range of ergonomic and coloured stationery, learning aids, and technology that may help with dyslexia and visual stress. Web: https://tinyurl.com/5fpnbrbn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening4Dyslexia, Surrey A private dyslexia consultant that offers regular webinars for parents via Zoom. Web: https://tinyurl.com/de69dv7 Tel: 07557 952073 Email: screen4dyslexia@gmail.com 	<p>The Northamptonshire Local Offer - This document was produced by Northamptonshire's Local Offer team. The Local Offer is a website for young people, families, and professionals that sets out in one place, information about local services. www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/localoffer</p>

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This document was co-produced with the [Northants Parents' Forum Group](#)

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