

Barnsley Educational Child and Community Psychology Service

Dyslexia Practice Guidelines



BARNSLEY
Metropolitan Borough Council

Overview

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the shared rationale for dyslexia within Barnsley Local Authority.

Defining dyslexia

Children learn to read and write at widely differing rates. Within this spectrum there are children with severe and persistent difficulties. These children who are failing to make reasonable progress over time may have a specific learning difficulty which may also be described as dyslexia. Dyslexia is thought to affect 4 per cent of the population severely and is one of the more common of the specific learning difficulties. Specific learning difficulties (SpLD), affect one or more specific aspects of learning. This encompasses a range of difficulties such as dyslexia, dyscalculia and dyspraxia. The term dyslexia comes from the Greek words 'dys', meaning impaired, and 'lexia', meaning word. There is a range of differences in understanding of what is meant by dyslexia. No single definition has been universally accepted.

In 2009 Sir Jim Rose's independent report to the Secretary of State for Children Schools and Families on 'Identifying and Teaching Children and Young People with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties' gave the following description of dyslexia. This definition has been adopted by the British Dyslexia Association Management Board. Barnsley Educational Child and Community Psychology Service (BECCS) have subsequently adopted this definition which states that:

'Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling.'

- **Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed.**
- **Dyslexia occurs across the range of intellectual abilities.**
- **It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut-off points.**
- **Co-occurring difficulties may be seen in aspects of language, motor co-ordination, mental calculation, concentration and personal organisation, but these are not, by themselves, markers of dyslexia.**

A good indication of the severity and persistence of dyslexic difficulties can be gained by examining how the individual responds or has responded to well-founded intervention.'

The definition emphasises the need for appropriate teaching, and the interaction between teaching and learning. A key aspect of this definition is that it recognises that dyslexia does not occur in a vacuum and that learning opportunities have a key role to play in acquiring reading and writing skills.

In the past there was an assertion that dyslexia was associated with an ability-achievement discrepancy. This has now been refuted (British Psychological Society, 1999). Phonological processing and competence has been found to be independent of general cognitive ability and intelligence. The validity of identifying dyslexia based on unexpected discrepancies between actual and expected literacy attainment derived from the predictions of IQ scores does not have a supportive evidence base (BPS, 1999).

Perspectives on Reading and Spelling

Reading and spelling are complex skills that do not necessarily develop naturally. They need to be taught and children need to learn and practise the skills involved. Parents/carers, as well as teachers and other school staff, play a vital role in helping their child to master the skills involved in reading and spelling. Children/young people (C/YP) with dyslexia can demonstrate marked differences between their abilities in different areas – particularly oral versus text based skills – and that recognising their strengths can increase their success and engagement with learning. All learning difficulties, including dyslexia, are complex and interactive in their nature and so can only be fully understood with reference to a range of contexts in which they occur.

As dyslexia is best thought of as a continuum, not all individuals with dyslexia will present in exactly the same way. They may experience strengths and difficulties in a number of different domains to a greater or lesser extent, which will also be effected by the child's developmental age and the educational input they have accessed. It is important to note that the difficulties experienced by individuals with dyslexia are often balanced with particular strengths such as:

- Effective oral presentations
- Good conceptual abilities
- Good problem-solving abilities
- Imaginative, creative thinking
- Analytic thinking
- Inquiring mind

In a dyslexia-friendly school all teachers are empowered, through training, policy and ethos, to identify learning issues and take front line action. This is the policy of early intervention being translated into classroom practice.

It is important to note that not all literacy difficulties are due to the individual having dyslexia. Literacy difficulties can arise from a whole range of factors, which should be taken into consideration as part of the assessment process.

These may include:

- Visual impairments
- Visual stress, sometimes remedied by use of coloured overlays or tinted lenses
- Hearing impairments including glue ear
- Developmental delay
- Learning difficulties
- Gaps in education
- Speech and Language difficulties
- English as an Additional Language
- Factors in early childhood which influence how a child adapts and responds to the learning environment
- Lack of exposure to print

Assessment and Response

All schools have a Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) policy and outline through their local offer how they work with parents to identify and respond to pupil's additional and special educational needs. Each school has a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) who oversees the SEND policy and co-ordinates provision for children with SEN. If parents have any concerns about their child's learning then it is important to discuss those concerns with the child's class teacher or form tutor. If concerns continue then a discussion would be arranged with the schools SENCo.

There is no single test for checking whether a child has dyslexia. Assessment through teaching is the model best regarded for both identifying dyslexia and determining the degree of severity. Identifying and assessing dyslexia is an ongoing process of information gathering over a period of time, rather than a single test carried out on one occasion. Assessment is a continuous integral

part of the teaching/learning process and should be regarded as a way of identifying strategies to promote effective learning, not merely as a tool to identify deficits. This process is supported through the graduated 'Assess Plan Do Review' response outlined in the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice.

As outlined in the SEND code of practice, high quality teaching, differentiated for individual pupils, is the first step of schools using their best endeavours to respond to and meet the needs of all pupils including those with literacy difficulties. Schools should regularly and carefully review the quality of teaching for all pupils. This includes reviewing and, where necessary, improving, teachers' understanding of strategies to identify and support vulnerable pupils and their knowledge of the SEN most frequently encountered. This SEN support should take the form of a four-part cycle of:



The staged intervention approach to identification, assessment and intervention is rooted in sound educational practice where teachers plan teaching approaches based on assessment, implement those approaches and review the outcomes in terms of progress made by the child/young person. Within the SEND code of practice this is known as the graduated response where decisions and actions are revisited refined and revised with growing understanding of the pupil's needs. The pupil's response to such support can help identify their particular needs. The needs of the great majority of children can be met by teachers, using, where necessary, differentiated approaches to curriculum delivery. As soon as a child is seen to be struggling with literacy, the difficulties can be identified by teaching staff and a response developed within school.

Children with dyslexia should not require teaching from a specialist teacher. If a child's literacy progress continues to cause concern despite good quality first teaching and additional small group targeted teaching then a more personalised response should be developed. There is no one size fits all in relation to literacy interventions. Greg Brooks has researched a whole range of interventions that school can review for themselves in relation to the particular needs of the child they are responding to. The impact of any intervention needs to be carefully and regularly monitored and evaluated. Adjustments to the intervention need to be made based on evaluation

findings made by the teacher through their process of 'assess plan do review'. A child's reading and/or spelling problems should not be referred to as dyslexia unless the child has fully engaged with the word reading and/or spelling intervention that has been taught appropriately and over time. If a child continues to have persistent and severe difficulties in acquiring reading and/or spelling skills then it is likely that they have dyslexia. The child does not need to undergo a one off assessment by an external professional to ascertain if a child's difficulties are dyslexic in nature.

Role of the Educational Psychologists

If a child/young person fails to make progress despite the school setting appropriate targets and implementing a focused programme of support over time, schools may request the assistance of professionals from outside the school in the cycle of assessment, planning, intervention and review. In the case of severe and persistent literacy difficulties, such professionals are likely to include an educational psychologist.

Educational psychologists (EPs) have a wide role in supporting schools with their literacy and provision for pupils with additional needs. Barnsley Educational Child and Community Psychology Service can provide information and training to school staff on how they can respond to literacy difficulties and develop dyslexia friendly classrooms. Educational Psychologists can become involved in a consultation with school staff when children are not making adequate progress. They may work with school staff parents and pupil to achieve a better understanding of the factors that may be helping or hindering progress and to identify ways forward. The EP will examine the interaction between the learning opportunities provided and teaching methods employed and explore the cognitive, emotional, social and environmental factors that may be involved. The main focus of EP involvement will be to clarify the child's needs and to inform an appropriate teaching approach and intervention. The EP will consider child's views and the child's emotional and behavioural responses to their literacy difficulty and the intervention.

Good literacy interventions for children with specific literacy difficulties should:

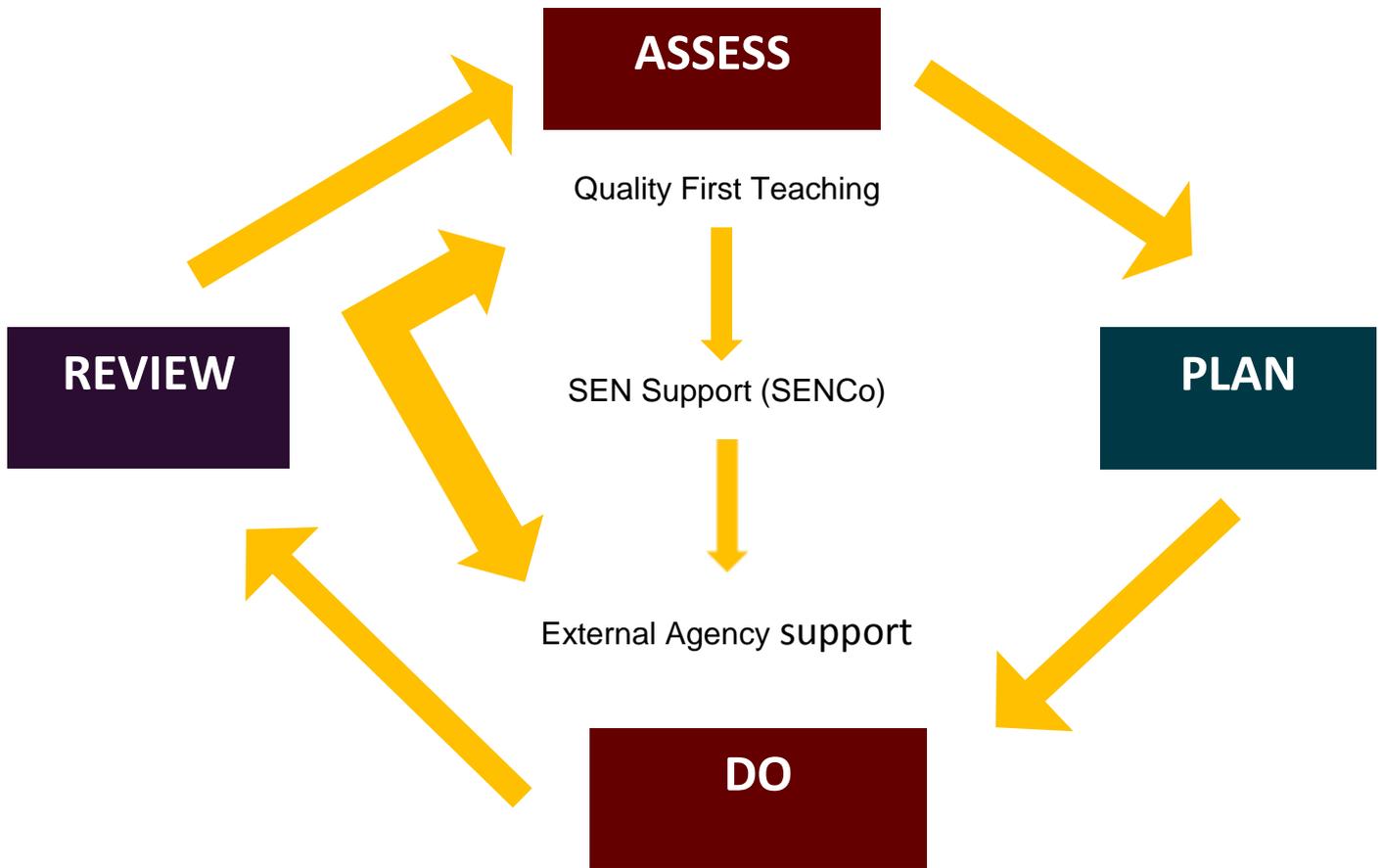
- Explicitly teach letter-sound correspondence alongside blending and segmenting skills
- Include regular supported reading
- Be highly structured and sequential delivered using a multi-sensory approach
- Be cumulative and progressive with overlearning built in to maximise consolidation and mastery of skills before moving on
- Be delivered little and often. For example, 3 short sessions a week with some independent reinforcement practice between sessions
- Be evidence based with proven success in accelerating progress for children with literacy difficulties
- Be delivered positively and recognises and builds on achievement
- Be carefully monitored and reviewed in relation to delivery and child's progress and engagement

Where progress is not being made following an intervention then teachers along with the SENCo will need to consider the following:

- Does the intervention match need
- Are co-occurring difficulties a barrier
- Liaison between intervention process and class/subject teacher in relation to targeted learning
- Intensity/regularity and timescale of intervention
- Skills of adult delivering intervention
- Insufficient understanding of the programme
- Amount and appropriateness of intervention
- Pupils views and understanding and perceptions of their difficulty and the intervention

It is not necessary to have a dyslexic diagnosis to be able to develop an appropriate response to address a child's literacy difficulties. Teachers in schools, skilled in literacy teaching, are well placed to identify reading and spelling needs, assess specific difficulties and develop and implement a plan of support. The SENCo offers an additional layer of expertise in school to support teachers in their assess plan do review process and where needed can consult with the EP as appropriate.

The diagram below outlines the graduated proactive response to literacy difficulties for pupils in Barnsley schools:



Many of the same principles of good quality first teaching apply to all children who experience barriers to learning with reading and spelling. Ongoing assessment and evaluation of teaching and learning styles, is an essential process in helping children progress. If children are not learning through the way we are teaching them then we need to consider how to teach in the way they best learn.

Acknowledgements

Aberdeen City Council Dyslexia Practice Guidelines, Specific Learning Difficulties and Dyslexia in context September 2011

Bolton Council recommended Pathway for Literacy Difficulties developed by Learning Support Service and Educational Psychology Service.

Highland Council Psychological Service, Dyslexia – Guidance on Identification, Assessment and Intervention

Devon County Council, 2011, Dyslexia, Guidance on Identification Assessment and Intervention

References

Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years. Statutory guidance for organisations who work with and support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, June 2014

British Psychological Society (1999: reprint 2005) Dyslexia, Literacy and Psychological Assessment: Report by the Working Party of the Division of Educational and Child Psychology of the British Psychological Society, BPS, Leicester

Jim Rose Independent Report: “Identifying and Teaching Children and Young People with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties”, Jim Rose (2009)

Useful Resources

British Dyslexia Association (BDA):

www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

Inclusion Development Programme. Teaching and supporting pupils with dyslexia

www.idponline.org.uk

Brooks, Greg (fourth edition, 2013) What works for children and young people with literacy difficulties. The effectiveness of intervention schemes

DfES, Primary National Strategy (2005) Learning and Teaching for Dyslexic Children