

What happens when dyslexia is missed or poorly supported?



Mental health and behavioural difficulties: Research has shown that young people who have dyslexia and/or literacy difficulties report higher levels of mental health difficulties¹. In addition to the internalised mental health difficulties, young people with dyslexia often display externalised behaviours which are linked to their literacy difficulties. These behaviours are often contrary to school expectations and can negatively impact their academic progress and lead to further negative consequences for their educational and post-school outcomes. Feedback received from the survey² identified a recurring theme of anxiety and mental distress from both children and their parents.

Academic underachievement and post-school pathways: Learners who experience literacy difficulties can lack the skills necessary to be able to engage effectively with the curriculum. When further combined with the increasing number of exclusions from school and the increased numbers of children, including those of primary age, entering pupil referral units (PRUs)³ there is significant grounds for concern about disengagement from education. The skills necessary to engage with the curriculum are also necessary for learners to be able to achieve well academically, particularly in examinations. Those with literacy difficulties because of their dyslexia may not achieve academic success. Linked to academic underachievement and poor literacy is a lack of ability to be able to engage well with professional life after school. Much research has shown a disproportionately higher rate of dyslexia in offender cohorts. As such, it is vital that the needs of dyslexic learners are identified early, and appropriate support is implemented.

¹Evidence from Dr Helen Ross, Dyslexia/SpLD expert, Helen's Place to APPG for Dyslexia and other SpLDs.

²Research developed for the APPG for Dyslexia and other SpLDs. The survey was distributed through social media (Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn). Over 1,300 responses were received.

³Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) teach children who aren't able to attend school and may not otherwise receive suitable education. This could be because they have a short- or long-term illness, have been excluded or are a new starter waiting for a mainstream school place. www.gov.uk