

Recommendations of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Dyslexia and other SpLDs to reduce the human cost of dyslexia UK



When young people are supported, they are less likely to 'fall off the map' and disengage from active participation in their community. While there may be a cost implication in the short term for school funding, there will be long term savings in terms of taxes gained and earnings of individuals.

The British Dyslexia Association and Driver Youth Trust have provided evidence to the APPG for Dyslexia and other SpLDs on policy changes that could be made to improve support for young people with dyslexia and their families.

Whilst more work needs to be done to look across the sector at themes around how the legislative environment should change to improve outcomes for people with dyslexia, this section is a snapshot of some policy recommendations from independent charities in the sector.

Specialist support in each school

The British Dyslexia Association says that the clearest solution lies in the training of specialist dyslexia teachers. Such teachers would be able to support learners, oversee and direct teaching and support provision and carry out diagnostic assessments that identify individual needs. In this way, expertise and knowledge would be readily available to class teachers in every school or every cluster of schools.

High levels of spending on litigation by parents fighting to access support for their children is estimated to rise to £100 million in 2019.¹⁶

Currently, this process of litigation is the only avenue available for parents seeking support for their dyslexic children where the schools or local authorities (LAs) are unable or unwilling to provide adequate support. This can often lead to social injustice for those who are unable to pursue legal action.

An approach of strategic investment in specialist teachers would, the British Dyslexia Association believe, remove pressure on the current Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) and appeals process. It costs c£3,500 to train a specialist teacher. Such investment would in effect, release funds within this sector for those individuals with high or more complex needs.

Training of classroom teachers

The British Dyslexia Association also recommends that there is increased focus of SEND within initial teacher training (ITT) programmes but is also mindful that this is a crowded curriculum already. It, therefore, would recommend that newly qualified teachers (NQTs) are enabled to access mandatory CPD leading to a Level 2 or 3 Award in dyslexia and SpLD as part of a continuing professional development (CPD) programme within the first two years of becoming qualified teachers. It is only in this way that all teachers can truly become teachers of SEND. Even with such CPD, however, there would still be a need for dyslexia specialist teachers to support learners who are dyslexic, and teachers.

The British Dyslexia Association acknowledges that there has been some investment in training from the Department for Education.¹⁷ This training has, however, been light touch and focussed on awareness raising and not training at the specialist level that is required in order to support learners and enable them to access the curriculum in a way that leads to engagement and longer-term academic success.

The Driver Youth Trust says Ofsted should judge ITT providers on the quality of training delivered to trainee teachers on SEN including supporting learners with literacy difficulties. They add that Department for Education should ensure that all funded literacy CPD includes training on literacy difficulties.

With regard to better ways of working with the sector, Driver Youth Trust say teacher educators should develop National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) in SEN and literacy as part of the new plan to support teachers to develop and progress their career without needing to pursue a traditional leadership route.

Furthermore, researchers should develop a “what works” evidence base for learners with literacy difficulties and discover how many learners with literacy difficulties there are. Reinforcing this, school leaders should ensure their provision enables learners with literacy difficulties to access the curriculum and that the door to a more rigorous education and curriculum is open to all. Teachers, across all areas of the curriculum and all school phases, should know how to adjust their teaching for learners with literacy difficulties.¹⁸

Ensure that adequate pastoral, academic and mental health provision is made in schools

There is currently no roadmap forward for how young people's mental health should be supported, despite commitments to developing parity between its treatment and that of physical health (Committee of Public Accounts, 2018). While mental health difficulties and learning difficulties are identified within policy as SEND matters, some schools have systems which do not integrate or allow for robust support between the different aspects of academic difficulties and social, emotional and mental health (SEMH), and their link to behavioural difficulties. Schools must take care to ensure that they assess the potential needs of any learners who do find positive engagement with schools difficult.

¹⁶ Based on 2019 research by the British Dyslexia Association.

¹⁷ Department for Education provided funding for a dyslexia and SpLD project between 2016 – 2017. The project was managed by British Dyslexia Association and other partners included Patoss, Dyslexia Action, Helen Arkell, Manchester Metropolitan University, Dyspraxia Foundation. The project value £750,000. The purpose was to develop resources for all SpLDs and to provide awareness training.

¹⁸ Literacy difficulties: The DYT position, 2019.

*Sourced from: The Human Cost of Dyslexia - April 2019
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