

## **Professional Standards and Ethics for Workplace Needs Assessors (Neuro Diversity)**

The B.D.A. is the leading charity in the field of dyslexia and related neuro diverse conditions and for setting standards of professionalism for those working in the field. It is the accrediting body for specialist teachers for dyslexia and a professional membership body. In recent years, there has been a growth in the development of workplace needs assessment for adults with dyslexia and other neuro diverse conditions. The B.D.A. is the only organisation to offer an accredited qualification for such workplace needs assessors. This document sets out the process of workplace needs assessment and the professional standards and ethics that we expect assessors to follow.

### **Values, standards and ethics**

Having agreed values and behaving ethically is at the heart of what it means to be a professional. This is particularly important in a field such as supporting those with neurodiversity who may be vulnerable adults or exposed to discrimination and negative behaviours from others in society who are not aware of these conditions and their outcomes. Our values are as follows:

- Integrity
- Confidentiality
- Always provide a high standard of service
- Act to promote awareness of these conditions and trust in the profession
- Treat all others with respect
- Take responsibility for own actions
  - Work within your own level of current competence, whilst reflecting and developing your professional knowledge and skills
- Use dyslexia friendly practices in our communications.
- Workplace Needs Assessors should have achieved the BDA's "Workplace Needs Assessor" Award (Level 4) as a minimum before undertaking assessments in this arena.

### **What Workplace Needs Assessors Should Do, and How**

#### **1. Providing information about your services**

This information should be accurate, be transparent and clear about your level of knowledge and skill, and state any key areas that you do not operate in, for example, "I cover dyslexia, dyscalculia, DCD dyspraxia but not Autistic Spectrum Disorders).

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You should ensure that any information you send meets the B.D.A. style guide requirements for dyslexia friendly communication.

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## 2. Information Gathering

Before going to a meeting with a client, it is essential to prepare yourself with as much information about that person's context and needs as possible. The aim of this is to prepare yourself to be able to help that person as much as you can.

It is normal to request pre information from the client and from their line manager, and potentially a representative from HR (particularly if the client indicates that they have disclosed to HR) if the client is agreeable.

All requests for information should be done in a "dyslexia friendly" way, offering different options for completion; a realistic timeframe should be allowed for the individuals to respond so as not to cause additional stress for them. All information gathered must be treated as confidential.

## 3. Visiting the Client

You should offer an appointment and preferably an alternative, if that is practically possible. Once the appointment is agreed you should confirm this in writing, for example, by email to the client and anyone else you have arranged to see.

On the day before your visit, you should send an email to the person being assessed to confirm that you are coming and the time. This is a reasonable adjustment to aid those with challenges relating to their memory or organizational difficulties and aids those who have additional social/communication difficulties.

Everything you do when visiting the client should meet the values and standards described above. You should arrive punctually, and be aware of the need for confidentiality throughout, e.g. when signing in, it may mean that you need to be unspecific about your purpose.

Ensure you present a professional image but also demonstrate a caring and listening attitude. You should set aside sufficient time to do the assessment and talk to the manager and colleagues as planned. It is important to arrange to have discussions with the client and manager in privacy. However, you also need to see the work environment if at all possible and ask for, or seek permission to take, photographs of the working space to add to your file of information on this client.

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If you see something that is easily rectified/provide an adjustment then do give advice immediately. Ensure that you agree the plan of action subsequent to your visit before you go.

#### 4. After the visit

You should respond with a written report within a maximum of 15 working days of the visit. The report should:

- contain all necessary details for contact
- be specific to the role to be carried out, and not go beyond that remit
- include a summary job description or a copy of the actual job description
- maintain confidentiality of information provided to you by any of the parties through the pre information or during the visit which they would not want to share or which could cause deteriorations in their relationship
- include positive aspects of the person's performance, not just discuss the challenges and adjustments required, in order to provide a balanced picture to their manager
- not refer to schooling or education attainments as these are not relevant in this context
- be written, using sensitive language appropriate to an adult. To ensure it is in a "dyslexia friendly" form of communication, you should write it to meet the requirements of the BDA style guide and offer to send it in alternative formats such as pdf, or email.
- State your recommendations for reasonable adjustments, with due regard for compatibility for software, together with a choice of three suppliers, if possible, and costs. Please note that you cannot recommend yourself as a supplier as you have personally carried out the assessment unless you disclose this within the report.
- The report should initially be sent to the individual who has been assessed for them to check for accuracy. Allow a reasonable timeframe, such as up to 5 days, for their response. The BDA workplace needs assessor is a highly trained individual capable of making judgments regarding appropriateness of recommendations. Therefore, the purpose of the client viewing the report is not to invite them to challenge the recommendations or request specific preferences. If there is a significant request by the client to change the report, then you should telephone the client to resolve the issue.

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## 5. Feedback and Complaints procedure

It is always good practice to gather feedback after an assessment so that you can use it within your own reflective practice. You should include a feedback form in your procedures, either to be sent as standard with your terms of business, or to be included with the report.

Inevitably, there will sometimes be conflict about the reasonable adjustments you have recommended and some which the client would have liked to have had. For this purpose and any other, you should have a complaints procedure which can be used for any conflict which cannot be resolved by a quick phone call.

## 6. Mediation

It is not uncommon for conflict to arise between the dyslexic employee and their line manager, particularly where awareness of dyslexia and its effects are not known. It is hoped that the process of the workplace needs assessment will increase manager's interest and knowledge of dyslexia. However, sometimes this is not the case and the working relationship may have deteriorated. It is not the workplace needs assessor's responsibility or remit to act as a mediator between the client, their manager or colleagues. The workplace needs assessor should know who to signpost the client to though if asked. ACAS provide a good process for mediation and they have a section on their website which relates specifically to dyslexia. For general advice on disability see:

<http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1859> and for a specific article on dyslexia see <http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=5859>

## 7. Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

It is incumbent on all professionals to strive to maintain and the currency of their knowledge and to further develop their skills. There is a need to remain up to date with the current knowledge relating to Workplace Needs Assessment such as changes in legislation, government campaigns and change in Access to Work provision and terms. It is also essential that you keep to date with changes in coping strategies, including software/hardware and any other supports used to provide reasonable adjustments.

It is recommended that you maintain formal records of your CPD at a minimum of 10 hours of formal development and 15 hours of informal development per year.

Formal development means undertaking training courses, attending conferences, engaging in webinars or anything that is formally organized.

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Informal CPD covers reading relevant articles, engaging in activities which might not be directly connected to workplace needs assessment but still develop skills transferable to it (eg being a Trustee of a Charity or undertaking counseling training).