

Personal Statement (Patrick Keaveney)

As an undiagnosed dyslexic person I left school at 16 without any qualifications to take up a blue collar trade. However, in my late 30s, after being diagnosed as dyslexic I fought hard to get reasonable adjustments both in work and university. I was one of the first part-time students to receive 'Disability Students Allowance' and with this help managed to achieve a good degree, and become a senior manager for a major disability organisation. I am also a father of a dyslexic daughter, who this year is struggling through her GCSEs needing my help to get reasonable adjustments. So I see dyslexia from the position of a parent and a dyslexic adult. Dyslexia has significantly impacted every day of my life. My commitment and passion regarding dyslexia issue is significant, and deep. I don't want the next generation of dyslexic people to have to face the discrimination I faced, and so recently retired early to campaign for and to work on dyslexic issues.

Until last year I was a senior manager with the Royal National Institute of Blind People. I setup and managed their national advice service. We started with 3 advisers and by the time I retired last year the service was set to have 60 paid staff, with many more volunteers and a budget larger than the BDA. I say this to illustrate the experience, skills and professionalism I would bring to your board. My specialism was understanding and maximising the impact of projects and services for every pound spent; which I believe will be essential in this role.

One of the key things I took from The RNIB was it changed It's named from an "organisation for blind people" to "an organisation "of Blind people". I would like to see this for the BDA, an organisation run by Dyslexic people, not just for them. I feel too often dyslexic spokespeople are education or dyslexia professionals, not dyslexic people, many of whom are intelligent and professional enough to represent ourselves. Apart from 2002 when I was employed as the founder university disability officer at Goldsmiths college I have never earned money from dyslexia. My involvement and my commitment to this organisation is my concern in how dyslexia affects me and others. As a trustee, I will represent dyslexic people and their parents, with no conflict of interest.

My professional training, skills and experience mean as a trustee I would be able to understand follow and evaluate a budget. My background as a senior manager in one of the UK's largest and most respected disability charities gives me a good understanding of services and their impact and reach, which will help your board.