

British **Dyslexia** Association

SHOWCASING the ND WORKPLACE



Introduction - The Case for Inclusion

Over the last 18 months, there has rightly been a shift of focus onto the strengths of those with Neuro Diverse (ND) brains in order to present a more balanced picture of reality. There is also a substantial change coming in the nature of work. It is predicted that 50% of retail jobs in the U.K. will have disappeared within 10 years. Both the Labour and Green Parties are proposing a 4 day week in order to even out work opportunities. However, there are significant shifts in the type of jobs that will be needed with the increase in robotics and artificial intelligence. This could be an era where we really need those who are highly IT savvy, can think creatively and produce unique solutions, are ingenious, can visualise in 3D, and recognise patterns in big data sets. Whilst these talents are not usually present in one individual, they are all aspects of the upside of the ND brain. So, to find such future talent, we must also look within that community. For that reason alone, there are business and common sense, as well as the moral, reasons for encouraging an inclusive workplace. The latest surveys and reports suggest strongly what we should do, but not how. So, this document has been written by BDA to describe clearly how to do it at a strategic level, with examples showcasing employers who have already put inclusive, ND friendly practices into effect. The BDA is also publishing its latest version of its "Code of Practice" which will give you advice at an operational level.

The Business Case

Recruitment and induction are expensive activities. CIPD estimate the costs of recruitment alone as equivalent to six months' salary. Added to that, a new employee takes at least three months before they are contributing significantly in the role. It makes no sense to recruit someone and then not provide them with the environment or coping strategies they need to do the job effectively, particularly when these are relatively inexpensive for Neuro Diverse (ND) individuals. Glasses are a coping strategy ,or reasonable adjustment, for those who are short or long sighted. Imagine how productivity would fall if everyone needing them, was required to leave their spectacles at Reception! Yet, that is exactly what we do when we do not provide text reading software! Here is a worked example of the cost to benefits for the provision of reasonable adjustments.

Cost

of Reasonable Adjustments Max **£3,121***, for many individuals the spend is less

Benefits

Savings upwards of **£20,000** via: increased productivity up to 15%; increased standard of service levels to customers leading to increased sales; reduction in turnover; reduced recruitment costs (**min £12,000**) and retention of knowledge capital (how things get done, organisational memory, discovery and learning).

**Source Access to Work Stats 2017/8.*

The business case is clear. Yet despite this, what the BDA sees daily through its Helpline is a costly and destructive cycle which is unhelpful to the employer and employee. This pattern shows the ND employee is recruited but does not feel safe to disclose their dyslexia, dyspraxia or dyscalculia. The employee works longer hours in

order to cope but eventually is unable to maintain performance. They then become even more stressed and their doctor signs them off onto sick leave. Eventually, performance management is started and the employee discloses their condition. However, by this stage the trust between the employee and their manager is damaged beyond repair. Employee is dismissed, risking more costs of **£20,000** at an Employment Tribunal. Further costs are inevitable through recruiting their replacement.

Currently many employers are working within a compliance culture of implementing reasonable adjustments when they have to. As can be seen above, this is not the best way forward as it so easily results in loss of trust upon which effective working relationships are built. What is needed is an inclusive approach and below we will show how this can be implemented with examples from employers who have trialled a different approach.



The Moral and Common Sense Case

The business case is compelling enough but there is a strong moral case too. **1:7** individuals are Neuro diverse. That's **1:7** of our employees and **1:7** of our customers. It's a very large segment of our society. It is also the largest single disability group in the UK but awareness of what these conditions entail is still very low. Few children at school with these conditions get the appropriate support they need and that is what leads to problems with reading and spelling quickly and accurately, not the conditions themselves. Nonetheless, the changes these conditions confer on individual's' brains mean that all have strengths and many have talents that businesses really need, such as creative thought, atypical problem solving, pattern recognition and empathy. There is no doubt that we need a workforce like this as can be seen from recent studies*.

* Source EY and MadebyDyslexia Report.

What Dyslexia Friendly Employers are doing

1. Culture and Infrastructure

There is a need for employers to make their workplaces comfortable for ND individuals even before they are knowingly recruited. So what do you need to do as an employer? You need to ensure that the culture and infrastructure are ND friendly.

Culture

Culture is developed as much by the unwritten code of “what works here” as the policies and rules that guide behaviour. So, the first step is to analyse the current culture*, and sub cultures, that you have. This entails observing:

- actual norms of behaviour (which may well differ from the organisation’s desired behaviours).
- the organisation’s staff rules and policies
- organisational structure, where staff are located, the physical environment, how work is delegated and management style
- the heroes, heroines, anti heroes or heroines and stories that embody what is valued
- the aims and ethos of the organisation

* with thanks to E. Schein for concepts of culture.

When new people join an organisation, they do this analysis informally and research indicates that this is the priority for new employees for the first three months, which is why such importance is given to effective induction of new staff. It has particular importance for new ND staff who will be assessing whether it is a safe environment for them. Is it a place in which they dare disclose their condition?

Ensuring that your organisation is a safe place for disclosure is particularly important for both parties. If you have employees who are hiding their challenges, they are not able to give 100% of their energies to the job. They will be much more likely to suffer from workplace stress, which can easily lead to extended sick leave and the associated costs.

It can be quite difficult to do this analysis of culture if you are already familiar with the organisation. It’s a bit like noticing your own decor at home, after a while you aren’t aware of it. So it may be advisable to bring in someone from outside who can use fresh eyes on it and even better, if it is someone who knows what ND employees need. This cultural analysis is something that BDA has the experience and knowledge to help with.

Infrastructure

Have you got text reading software loaded into your IT system so that anyone can use it? Employers who have implemented this have subsequently found that busy managers who are not ND find it very helpful too. They use it to hear routine emails so they can quickly prioritise those that need their undivided attention.

Is your website accessible? With new legislation in force since September 2018, public organisations are required to ensure that their websites and mobile devices are accessible. Under the regulations WCAG.2.1, these e sites have to be “perceivable, operable, understandable and robust” for all users.

Are your communications accessible. You can check these by reviewing them against the BDA’s Style Guide, see www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/employer/dyslexia-style-guide-2018-creating-dyslexia-friendly-content

Are your staff aware of what it really means to be Neuro diverse? This is particularly important for managers and the fact that someone has not disclosed their condition may not be sufficient as a legal mitigation if the signs are very obvious. Ensuring that staff can recognise the signs is easy through a short BDA elearning programme and very inexpensive at £30 per head or via a webinar.

Have you got an ND Network organised in your workplace. These are often set up as a volunteer activity by those with these conditions. They are a very helpful source of support to both individuals themselves but also to managers who may well be seeking to do the right thing but are not very confident in their knowledge of these conditions. The BDA has a good Toolkit on how to set up and run dyslexia Networks, see www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/common/ckeditor/filemanager/userfiles/Dyslexia_Networking_Toolkit_Final.pdf

JLL

JLL is a world leader in real estate services with nearly 85,000 individuals worldwide. Embracing diversity, inclusion and equality creates a welcoming workplace culture and ensures we attract the brightest talent focused on innovative and creative solutions for our clients. With this in mind we set up the JLL UK Neurodiversity Network over a year ago to raise awareness of dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, autism spectrum disorder including Asperger's syndrome and ADHD in the workplace, including staff who are parents and carers of people with learning difficulties and differences.

The network offers access to Neurodiversity e-learning, awareness campaigns (particularly focused around adjustments which are readily available within the organisation), mentoring and a forum for sharing experiences for our people who are neurodiverse, colleagues, and parents and carers. We recently welcomed BDA CEO Helen Boden to a lunch and learn session for JLL people which received very positive feedback. We are now preparing to co-host an event with the BDA to discuss the power of different thinking and the rise of Neurodiversity Networks with a number of organisations.

Guys and St Thomas's NHS Trust

The Trust employs 13,000 staff. Six years ago, they began their journey to become more dyslexia friendly. They contacted the BDA to ask what they should be doing. BDA Training ran an awareness course for a group of staff across all disciplines who were interested in developing coping strategies. During Dyslexia Awareness Week that year, the BDA had volunteers present in the main foyer so that staff, patients and visitors could ask questions about these conditions. The Trust also hosted the BDA's Art Competition that week with pictures and sculptures displayed very noticeable. Soon after this, the Trust installed text reading software on its server so that any member of staff could use it without the need to publicly disclose their need for it.

The Trust now has a dyslexia Network in place and this year it committed to achieving the BDA's Quality Mark, the highest standard for Dyslexia Friendly inclusivity.



2. Recruitment

This, along with appraisal, is the most challenging area for most ND individuals because the process puts more emphasis on the challenges they experience, rather than on their strengths and talents. This gives a very distorted view of the individual. The WAC report* in 2018, based on responses from 600 ND individuals, detailed the specific difficulties which showed that more recent changes to recruitment processes were resulting in considerable challenges. Here are ways you can review your recruitment and selection processes to see if they are indirectly discriminatory or just preventing you from recruiting the best person for the job.

Are you attracting the widest possible pool of applicants for your vacancies? Experiences have shown that many ND individuals will not apply to some organisations because they think they have no chance of a career there. This can be mitigated by including case studies or short videos on your website where you carry your vacancies.

Many job adverts carry requirements that are not actually fundamentally needed to perform the job well. For example, they often require GCSE English but that level of written competence may not actually be needed for the job. This is very offputting to some ND individuals who will then just not apply. So scrutinising your job specifications and then the advert is sound practice.

Does your process include applying online, does the site time out, and do you use telephone interviews as a sorting out process? With advances in IT, all of these methods have been found to reduce time in the recruitment process. Unfortunately, they are all indirectly discriminatory to many ND applicants. However, if you make it explicit that a candidate can use a helper to complete an online application as long as the information provided is accurate then that would be a good coping strategy.

Many ND individuals are reluctant to just do that because they feel it is dishonest of them. Timing out of applications is a very particular problem, particularly if the applicant is unable to save what they had entered to be able to return to it and complete it later. There is no good recruitment reason for timing out applications. This has not yet been tested in Court but undoubtedly is discriminatory to those with dyslexia which is recognised as a disability under the Equality Act(2010).

In selection, the aim is to get to know the applicants' potential match to the job, in a short timeframe. The unintended consequences of this are that many of the activities bear little resemblance to the actual tasks to be performed. It is often the case that these selection tasks seem almost designed to show up the challenges of individuals with ND. Psychometric tests are known to give unreliable results for those with ND profiles, and giving extra time as a reasonable adjustment does not improve their validity. Interviews create extra stress for everyone but in the ND individual, stress can result in a collapse of their usual coping strategies. Consequently, the person who has great strengths for the actual job can come across very badly in an interview or Assessment Centre.

Obviously, though it is important to gather information about the applicant, so what works best? A sample of the work will give the highest correlation between the person's abilities and the job to be done. This is not difficult to organise and has the additional benefit that the individual can see if they would be comfortable working within the team (which might avoid a different but costly recruitment mistake). For interviews, permit the person to arrive early and give them the questions to study quietly and make brief notes. Then ask the questions in the same sequence as that provided in advance. Be prepared to run an alternative selection process so that you can attract and form an accurate assessment of your ND candidates.

*Westminster AchieveAbility Commission Report, see

www.achieveability.org.uk/main/policy/wac-report-is-released-and-presentation-at-bda-conference-2018

Barclays Bank

Barclays Bank are engaged in the initiative "Movement to Work" which is encouraging young people who are not in education, employment nor training to find jobs via internships. The Bank wanted to recruit those with disabilities but found that they were not even attracting such young people to apply to them. Their solutions were radical. They have instigated life skills courses for young people and invited their managers to observe these. Subsequently, these managers have been happy to recruit most of those attending but acknowledged that this was unlikely to have been the result of their standard recruitment campaigns. Many of the young people recruited in this way are enjoying successful careers in Barclays and are strong advocates for the scheme.

Extraordinary Individuals

This is a small recruitment agency designed specifically for the ND market. They have been trialling video applications with considerable success. Instead of the usual text application, a short talking heads video of the individual put forward for the role is provided. One of the interesting outcomes from this is that employers are saying they are able to get a far better appreciation of what the individual has to offer than a standard application would provide.

Induction

It is critical that the ND individual is able to use their talents and have coping strategies for the things they find difficult, in place from day 1. Unfortunately, this is rarely the case and so many individuals do not get the chance for a good start which is damaging to both parties. There is no economic barrier to this, the barrier is simply awareness of what is available.

The gold standard here would be to have a current diagnostic assessment combined with a workplace needs assessment done either immediately before the start date or within the first few days. BDA provides both of these assessments and details are available in the appendix. The diagnostic assessment gives us the greatest detail on the individual's areas of strength and why they have very specific areas of difficulty. The workplace needs assessment matches their profile of strengths and weaknesses to the job requirements, and recommendations are made for relevant reasonable adjustments. It should be noted that providing reasonable adjustments is a legal duty for all employers.

Typical reasonable adjustments for those with dyslexia are assistive software, such as voice to text, text reading and concept mapping software; training in the use of such software; plus, coping strategy training (which, for example, might include personal organisation skills for setting work priorities or specific technical term spelling lists) and how to integrate the assistive software into the required tasks; and awareness training for managers and colleagues. These are inexpensive items and, as mentioned above, Government figures show the spend is less than £4k. In fact, many dyslexic individuals requirements are less than this figure with lots of strategies costing nothing at all.

There should not be an economic barrier to implanting reasonable adjustments as the Government's scheme, Access to Work, is set up to fund many adjustments for those with disabilities.

Hampshire Police

The BDA started working with Hampshire Police almost a decade ago. Initially, it provided awareness training for staff. This developed into Hampshire Police deciding to have in house workplace needs assessors. They saw a clear benefit from having staff who already understood the culture and nature of policing, to be trained to assess the needs of the ND individual to carry out their job effectively. It is well appreciated that the percentage of individuals with dyslexia is higher in our blue light services. So over the last five years, they have been offering voluntary screening to all new recruits. As a result they have supported 150 police recruits. Their own analysis of the likely improvements in service delivery, particularly to victims of crime, is striking.



Training, Professional Development and Exams

It is accepted in case law, that these are all areas of normal work activity and therefore that reasonable adjustments must be provided. So, what needs to be done?

Training

It raises a spectre of potential risk for many ND individuals with shades of the difficulties experienced at school or university. There are some very simple reasonable adjustments that can be put in place which will actually be beneficial for all employees.

Often training is offered at a different location. In that case, having clear directions with pictorial signals are very helpful. During face to face training, it is important not to put ND individuals on the spot. Thus it's better not to ask them to be a scribe or to read aloud. It's always an improvement for everyone's retention if training is delivered in a multi sensory way. On the other hand, if the training is being offered by elearning, then following the principles of the BDA Style Guide will result in good coping strategies.

NVQ Assessments

There has been considerable learning and experience in NVQs about how evidence of competence can be gathered through photographic, video or direct evidence. Consequently, the requirements to write extensively are relatively rare making NVQs generally a good option for workplace accreditation.

Unfortunately, some apprenticeship schemes still require candidates to pass basic maths, English and IT subjects through traditional methods. This can be a real stumbling block for those who are really good in practical ways at work but are not very fluent in written English. BDA continually campaigns for better reasonable adjustments in this area.

Professional Training and Exams

The majority of professional education centres are aware of dyslexia and the need to implement reasonable adjustments. Many professional institutions have had a long relationship with the BDA and have sought their advice. When it comes to professional exams, the exam boards will provide reasonable adjustments but they normally require a recent diagnostic report to do so. Most employers pay for these to be done (and they can be done through the BDA), and arguably this is a reasonable adjustment which is by law the responsibility of the employer.

The Institute of Mechanical Engineering

The Institute has a support network as part of the Institute and a couple of years ago engaged with the BDA about increasing awareness of engineers about dyslexia. They also had had requests for support from your engineers doing their final exams and in their chartership process. The Institute were keen to support them and have put aside funding which will pay for a diagnostic assessment for any family member who may be dyslexic. Again it is known that the percentage of those with ND conditions is higher in engineering disciplines than the general population.

Performance Appraisal

Along with recruitment this is known to be an area which can be particularly challenging for ND individuals. Again it is the combination of form filling and stress inducing interviews which impact negatively on the individual's normal coping strategies.

However, there are good support strategies which help a lot. Firstly, performance appraisals should never include shocks for any individual. They should always be a summation of the many shorter interactions a manager has with an employee. To achieve this and make it less stressful on managers too, there needs to be effective training in how to carry out appraisals.

As a reasonable adjustment, ND individuals can be offered someone they trust to assist them with filling in Appraisal documents. What is more problematic, though even more critical to deal with, is the individual who has not felt safe enough to disclose. A great way of tackling this is to create dyslexia mentors and an ND Network in your workplace. BDA has free guide sheets for both such schemes. Dyslexia mentors are senior managers who are themselves ND and have gone through short but specific training.

This enables them to learn about the conditions, some specific tools in this Mentoring (which differ from a standard mentoring scheme) and where to signpost to when more knowledge or expertise is needed. These mentors are especially good at supporting more junior individuals through Appraisal and preparing them for promotion.

ShellUK

Having done a number of activities with Enable, the volunteer led charitable group in ShellUK, the BDA were invited to work with a small group of senior managers who were themselves dyslexic to train them as Dylexic Mentors. It was initially run as a pilot but within 9 months was seen to be so effective that the scheme was mainstreamed across the Company and the training implemented into the Company's standard training catalogue. One of the protégés subsequently commented that he had worked there for 15 years but this was the first time his Appraisal really had value as, for the first time, he was able to have a real conversation with his manager as he now knew he was dyslexic and what that meant.

Employee Relations

Conflict at work is, unfortunately, inevitable. However, with an inclusive culture a number of the reasons for such conflict are automatically reduced, leaving scope for better performance and increased productivity or service delivery.

Where the grievance or disciplinary procedures are invoked though, the same reasonable adjustments as in recruitment or appraisal should be used. Individuals with ND conditions should have clear instructions, preferably verbally as well as in writing, about the breaches they are making and any meeting that has been planned. In these procedures, there is always the opportunity for the individual to be accompanied to a meeting. It is particularly helpful if that individual has already been trained in dyslexia awareness.

Employers are frequently caught by surprise when an employee during a performance management interview suddenly discloses their condition, such as dyslexia. This is another benefit of having an inclusive culture as then this should happen rarely. However, when it does, here is what is needed. The process must be halted while the individual is given a workplace needs assessment. The assessor will make recommendations for reasonable adjustments which should then be implemented in full. Frequently, these adjustments involve implementing new coping strategies for personal organisation, the integration of assistive software into tasks and other new ways of working. Adapting to such change would take time for any of us, so the recommendation is that the individual is given six months to become fluent in these practices. During this period there should be an observable improvement in performance.

As described earlier, the danger in this situation is that the trust between the manager and the individual has reduced over many months. In large organisations, it is sometimes possible to give the individual a fresh start in a new area with a new boss with their new reasonable adjustments in place. However, this is not always realistic. In that case, providing awareness training or an opportunity with a ND specialist from

the BDA to explore why the person is like this, to understand these conditions can go a long way to rebuilding trust. ACAS is now getting more and more calls to their Helpline about these conditions, and they have been working with the BDA to provide good advice. They run an excellent mediation service which could be used too.

Inclusivity, where next?

We hope that the detail provided in this document will help you know not just what you should be doing but also how to do it. There is no doubt that these practices will help you get the best out of your existing ND employees, and with 1:7, you will have such employees even if they haven't told you! In order to be first in the race for talent which is inevitable in our changing work environment, you may want to send a strong signal to potential recruits. The BDA produces two quality standards, the Quality Mark and the new Dyslexia Aware SMART award. They both have distinctive logos which would enable you to signal your implementation of an inclusive workplace. For further information on these, see www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/services/bda-dyslexia-smart-award

For further information on any of the content of this document, BDA is able to support you with any of the items listed above and has a brochure with specific details available at: www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/common/ckeditor/filemanager/userfiles/Services/Training/BDA_Employers_Services_Brochure_JUN2018.pdf

For more information visit our website: www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

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