

Dyslexia | Information for youth workers

The earlier on in life that children and young people are identified with dyslexia, the better their long-term outcomes.

Dyslexia is a learning difference that affects one in ten people, causing difficulties with learning to read, write and spell; problems with short-term and working memory; and social and emotional challenges.

By its inclusive and empowering approach, youth work can help children and young people with dyslexia to realise their full potential.

Research by Dyslexia Scotland reveals some issues that affect young people with dyslexia. Here are the key issues that youth workers should be aware of and ways you can support young people you engage.

What is in this guide?

This guide has three key sections to support youth workers:

- Recognising and identifying dyslexia – background and context information
- What you can do as a youth worker – how to support young people you work with
- FAQs and useful links – common questions and further resources.

Recognising and supporting dyslexia early on in life

Scottish advice suggests that children can be identified as dyslexic from as early on as primary 2. The research found that a lot of children and young people are not identified until they are in high school. This delay can prevent them reaching their full learning potential, which can lead to feelings of frustration and inadequacy, and difficulty taking part in some aspects of their learning and development.

Children and young people may be less able to advocate for themselves, which can limit their ability to take part in many aspects of life.

The research also found that girls and young women in Scotland are being identified as dyslexic on average 2 years later than boys and young men. This is thought to be because girls and young women may mask their difficulties and internalise their worries.

An identification of dyslexia early on in life can lead to:

- greater self-understanding
- better mental health
- more confidence
- enhanced personal development
- improved education and career potential.

The identification process

Young people in primary or secondary education in Scotland are identified as dyslexic through a holistic and collaborative process, as guided by the National Dyslexia Identification Pathway.

Young people in Further Education or Higher Education can access assessment through their college or university. However, for young people not in education or work, there is a cost for dyslexia assessment. If they can't afford an assessment, they may not be able to access to the support they need for learning, work or even a driving test. This is a significant barrier to reaching their potential in life, learning and work.

What can I do as a youth worker?

Learn about dyslexia and how it affects young people and ways you can be dyslexia aware in your practice. This can help you to be inclusive of learners with dyslexia and help them to fulfil the National Youth Work Outcomes.

Ways you can support young people:

- take part in dyslexia awareness training
- become a Dyslexia Scotland member
- visit Dyslexia Scotland's website for information and resources
- signpost young people and their families to Dyslexia Scotland for information and guidance
- make sure the youth space and activities allow young people with dyslexia to participate fully. For example, demonstrate an activity rather than giving written or verbal instructions; allow young people to present their learning in ways that work for them
- have supportive conversations: if a young person discloses that they are, or think they are dyslexic, ask them what they need to help them take part
- add dyslexia awareness activities to your programme
- get involved in Dyslexia Awareness Week Scotland or encourage young people in the group to share their experiences.



FAQs



I think there might be a dyslexic learner in my group who has not been identified in school - how do I initiate the identification process?

Speak with your line manager about your observations. They will be able to contact the child or young person's Named Person to share any relevant information. All agencies working with the child or young person can contribute to the holistic assessment process.



A young person I work with who is not in education, employment or training thinks that they're dyslexic. How do they access an assessment to get the support they need with any next steps?

Contact Dyslexia Scotland's Helpline to ask about options for assessment: 0344 800 8484 Monday to Thursday 10am to 4.30pm and Fridays 10am to 4pm or helpline@dyslexiascotland.org.uk

Useful links

Link to a collection of useful resources

