

ECEY6006- Supporting Children with Additional Learning Needs

Contents.

1. Script
2. References

Introduction.

Good evening, I would like to start tonight's webinar off by welcoming all who are attending this evening. This webinar is an opportunity to develop our knowledge on additional learning needs. Many of the children we support daily may be diagnosed with Additional learning needs or on the pathway to be diagnosed so by attending these webinars it will supporting building our own toolbox of strategies used to support them while also understanding how to identify the additional learning needs.

Before each presenter makes a start of presenting and discussing their chosen area of additional learning needs, can I ask that we all introduce ourselves and the additional learning need that you will be focusing on throughout the webinar.

I am Katie Taylor and throughout this evening's webinar I will be discussing dyslexia.

Thank you all for your introductions we will now make a start.

Tonight's webinar my main focus is dyslexia. I choose the additional learning need dyslexia due to my own recent experience in getting a formal diagnosis for my 12-year-old son. When my son was younger, he struggled with his speech and was supported through intervention by a speech and language therapist. It was during this period that the speech therapist looked at his family history. Due to his father and uncles being dyslexic she stated there was a high chance that my son was also dyslexic and this why he struggled with his speech. Throughout primary school my son struggled with phonics, reading and spelling and every time I addressed this and wanted to explore dyslexia I was faced with barriers. The barriers I faced during his primary school setting was his age and staff were unable to deliver targeted intervention as they did not have the correct training. When my son went to comprehensive the comprehensive was able to complete an assessment which led to the results that he had a high probability of dyslexia. When I explored a formal diagnosis, I was informed that local authorities no longer formally diagnose school aged children with dyslexia alone and I would need to pay private for a diagnosis. I was fortunate that I was able to make the two hours round trip and pay over £400 for my son to be assessed. Following his in-depth assessment, he was diagnosed with severe dyslexia and co-occurrent learning difficulties. Due to my son having the formal diagnosis he is now able not only receive the targeted intervention, but he receives 25% extra time in exams, a scribe and also access to speech headphones

that turns his speech into text on the laptop. This report has enabled him to develop further cognitively but support the process for him to be accepted onto the ND pathway for an ADHD diagnosis as in this report it stated he had other learning difficulties.

In the United Kingdom approximately 10% of the population suffer with dyslexia that means approximately 7.5 million people in the United Kingdom alone are dyslexic. So what is dyslexia?

What is dyslexia?

The name dyslexia is formed of two Greek words. 'Dys' meaning difficulty and 'lexis' meaning words. This leads to the term dyslexia referring to a person who has difficulty with words (Fisher, 2024). Dyslexia is a neurodevelopmental disorder than is a lifelong additional learning need (Rawe, 2026). There is no medication that can support children and adults with dyslexia however there are strategies to support the barriers which will be explored throughout the webinar.

Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty that can affect a child's reading and writing skills. However, it goes beyond reading and writing skills but affects how a person processes information. As well as cognitive areas dyslexia affects it an also impact on a person's organisational skills (British Dyslexia Association, no date).

Children and adults who have dyslexia have all different intellectual abilities it is not a single dimension when analysing their academic abilities (Fisher, 2024). Unlike other additional learning disabilities, people who are dyslexic their intelligence is not impacted by this (NHS Wales, no date). According to dyslexia Ireland (no date) some of the most famous people in the world struggle with dyslexia, these include Thomas Eddison the inventory of the light bulb, scientist Albert Einstein and Author Agatha Chrisite.

How is dyslexia identified and diagnosed.

Dyslexia in children can be identified through them struggling to spell, fluency in reading, mixing up letters and miss pronouncing words (Rawe, 2026). A common

letter that children with dyslexia mix up is b and d. Children with dyslexia often mistake those letters for each other.

In school environments within the United Kingdom schools are not mandatory required to carry out a screening for dyslexia on pupils. However, some schools do have the screening programme so will use this to screen children to identify those who require targeted intervention support or who will benefit from carrying out a full diagnostic test (British Dyslexia Association, no date).

A dyslexia screen will be carried out in the education setting to see a child's probability of suffering with dyslexia (British Dyslexia Association, no date). From this screen it will then allow a diagnostic test to be carried out. However, for a child to receive a formal diagnosis the diagnostic test can only be conducted by a qualified specialist teacher or an educational psychologist (Fisher, 2026).

Throughout the time a child is carrying out a diagnostic test they will complete a number of tests to gather all the relevant information to be able diagnose them with dyslexia. Cochrane (2021) states that the diagnostic test will explore short term and working memory, phonological awareness, speed of processing through verbal and nonverbal activities to build a profile on a child's cognitive strengths and limitations.

Through my own experience of a dyslexia diagnosis, it as an in-depth diagnostic test that covers many cognitive areas. However, it is an intense assessment which as a child it is a daunting long process which can be over whelming especially as there is a focus on reading and spelling which they may already be really struggling with.

Impact of barriers

According to the Internation Dyslexia Association (no date) a child being diagnosed with dyslexia can have detrimental effects on their overall emotional wellbeing.

Hudson (2024) agrees with the impact dyslexia has by stating they may have poor short-term memory and slower processing speed which can result in them becoming frustrated. Harding et al (2023) agree with the impact dyslexia has on a child's overall self-esteem stating that dyslexia has a negative impact on their emotional wellbeing and through research that has been carried out dyslexia impacts and can cause other mental health conditions.

Strategy to support.

When exploring and analysing strategies that are available to support children with dyslexia there are many strategies available. While there are many resources available such as coloured over-lays and speech to text headphones the resource I will be focusing on is adult support, this is due to my own personal experience. Adult's supporting primary aged children who have either been diagnosed with dyslexia or showing signs of dyslexia goes beyond developing and building their cognitive skills it supports shaping their experiences while also developing their emotional wellbeing and self-esteem (Barber, 2025). By adults providing the correct intervention and strategies to support children with dyslexia they are able to identify the additional learning need early and provide targeted intervention, this will allow for the correct physical resource to be used and they are then also able to provide guidance and support to the child's primary caregivers (Addressing dyslexia, no date)

Within my own experience my son has benefited from adult support more than a physical resource as the teaching assistants have been able to identify further the cognitive areas

Conclusion

Dyslexia is a learning disability that will affect children beyond their school age experience but into later life. Throughout the webinar I hope that it has been able to raise awareness of the gaps within the education system and local authorities that are seeing thousands of children not receiving the support they need until they get to college or university age. While it is clear to see that there are strategies and resources available to support primary aged children it is evident that a parent's support outweighs these as without a parent supporting and fighting for the screening and paying privately for the diagnostic report they would not be able to receive the resources and intervention. Thank you for listening to my webinar on dyslexia and my own personal experience as a parent.

Kelly if you can now present, thank you Kelly. Lyndsey it's over to you. Thank you for that interesting presentation. Molly if you can now present. Thank you Molly and finally Jack. Thank you Jack.

Questions

Following the presentations throughout tonight's webinar I have a couple of questions for each of the presenters tonight.

Kelly can I please start with you.

Why is ADHD more common in boys than girls?

Final question Kelly

Because of the waiting lists for a diagnosis for ADHD, can children be assessed and diagnosed privately?

Thank you Kelly, this will support our knowledge with ADHD and help us develop our strategies to support.

Lyndsey the question I would like to start with is

To what extent can communication- rich environments fully meet the needs of children with DLD?

Can I ask Lyndsey **why might children with DLD still experience barriers despite increased awareness and inclusive practice?**

Thank you for the detailed answer, Lyndsey. Molly the first question I have for yourself following your presentation is **Why is early identification important for children with speech, language and communication needs?**

Finally Molly can I ask **how can school reduce barriers for children with SLCN?**

Thank you for answering them two questions Molly, throughout the webinar if you have supported our knowledge on the barriers of Speech and Language difficulties.

Jack thank you for your presentation during tonight's webinar can I ask yourself what challenges might professionals face when diagnosing selective mutism accurately?

Thank you Jack and finally to what extent does the social model of disability apply to children with selective mutism?

Thank you Jack for your detailed answer to support developing our understanding of mutism.

Katie Questions.

As a parent who have been through the process of a dyslexia diagnosis do you feel this is an area that needs to be developed?

With my own personal experience that I have discussed in getting my son diagnosed with dyslexia to ensure he receives the correct targeted and tailored support and intervention in school I strongly feel that this is an area that needs to be developed. Currently in the United Kingdom there is a cost-of-living crisis and day to day living is substantially rising, so for parents to pay hundreds of pounds for their child to receive a diagnosis to be able to receive more support is unfair. There are gaps within the education system and local authorities which are seeing thousands of children undiagnosed with dyslexia. According to the British Dyslexia Association (2026) in England alone approximately 900,000 children are affected by dyslexia in a classroom environment this would be at least three pupils across every class. Whereas in Wales it is reported 1 in 5 pupils are dyslexic and around 80% of school aged children are undiagnosed with dyslexia (Dyslexia Wales, no date). Unless this area is developed and the gaps within the education system and local authorities are filled with support and funding to diagnose school aged children with dyslexia without the parents needing to pay privately the system will continue to fail thousands as they will not receive the correct support and intervention they need.

What advice would you give to a parent to support the challenges they face with a child who has dyslexia?

Parents need to gain an understanding of dyslexia and how this additional learning need as not only impacted their child but has been the root of their difficulties (Glazzard and Stone, 2021). When I look back at my experience with my son especially during covid where schools were closed its extremely frustrating. He would struggle with phonics, and his memory processing was slower. As a parent you want the best for your children in order for them to be able to achieve their full potential, advice I would give a parent who has a child that they believe is dyslexic is to keep challenging the school for further targeted intervention. While I understand that it is a costly process in the long run the benefits outweigh when you see your child receiving the support they need in order to thrive holistically. Supporting a child with dyslexia goes beyond their academic needs as it is an invisible learning disability. To everyone else you look like there are no struggles, but that child may

dread to read, feel self-conscious and have low self-esteem. As parents it is our responsibility to keep challenging schools and fighting for more recognition of dyslexia to fill the gaps in education systems and local authorities.

Conclusion.

Can I thank you all again for attending tonight's webinar and to the presenters for their in-depth detail presentations of their chosen additional learning need. We hope that you have found these beneficial and are leaving tonight with a deeper understanding of how additional learning needs are identified and strategies to support. Thank you all.

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