



All Party Parliamentary Group on Dyslexia and Other Specific Learning Difficulties

Monday 19th November Committee Room 6 4.00 pm to 5.30 pm

Present: Members Sharon Hodgson MP, Chair, Lord Addington, Sue Flohr, BDA

Presenters: Peter Phillips, Margaret Malpas, Clare Hussey, Deborah Bradford, Ian Minton

Observers: Alex McMillan, Cheshire Police, Prof Angela Fawcett, Callum Heckstall-Smith, BDA, Charles Freeman, Dan Baynes DYT, Darren Clark, David Fawcett, David McLoughlin, David Munro, Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey, Diane Sempare, Fay Dutton, Enrico Riva, Judith Sanson, Kate Pound, NHS, Katherine Hewlett, Katherine Kindersley, Margaret Heath, Waltham Forest Dyslexia Association, Mark Sherin, Manager Lyndhurst Dyslexia Centre, Mario Galluzzo, BBC, Matt Davies, TFL, Paul Song, TFL, Rachael McMullen, BDA, Richard Todd, Ronald Barnett, UCL, Sam Rapp, Stephen, Simon Woodfield V & A, Sue Hadden, Northumbria Police, William Ford

Apologies:

None

Welcome

Sharon Hodgson MP, welcomed everyone and introduced the session on Dyslexia in the Workplace and Reasonable Adjustments. She apologised for the delay in the queue to enter parliament.

Before formally starting the proceedings, she, praised the work of the BDA and in particular the work of Helen Boden, BDA CEO and Lord Addington in bringing the concerns of Warwickshire LEA to Government. Lord Addington pointed out that they had not taken regard of the Equality Act in failing to recognise dyslexia as a disability. However, the good news was that the Minister took the line to agree with the BDA. He asked that any further instances of this occurring should be highlighted. This was reiterated by Sharon Hodgson, who pointed out that there had been a long, hard fight for dyslexia to be recognised under the Equality Act and this sort of narrative should not get any foothold within local authorities or society in general'.

Presentations

Inspector Peter Phillips - Hampshire Police – Dyslexia in Policing

Margaret Malpas MBE How to Release talent from your ND Workforce

Debbie Bradford – Department for Work and Pensions – update on Access to Work

Ian Milton – Department for Work and Pensions

Clare Hussey – HMRC setting up a support network for employees

Sharon Hodgson MP referred to the Agenda and as a result of the delay in the first speakers arriving, she reordered items 1 and 2 and introduced Margaret Malpas to speak about Self-fulfilment

Margaret Malpas MBE is former Chair of BDA Trustee and Member of DAN (Dyslexia Adult Network).

Margaret Malpas MBE How to Release talent from your ND Workforce

Margaret spoke about how common Neurodiversity is in the workplace in the UK with approximately 5 million out of a workforce of 31.5 m (2015 NAT Stats office), and yet there is a very low disclosure rate. She highlighted the talents of ND employees and her research that showed 72% of respondents listed strengths arising from dyslexia, determination being the biggest factor. Margaret pointed out that for very little investment on reasonable adjustments (e.g. £4k) a huge saving could be made (e.g. £20k). She highlighted that BDA has worked with many organisations to improve awareness but that there is a need to create awareness nationally to achieve this. She emphasised the part everyone can play in raising awareness within their own organisation.

Questions included:

It was suggested that the equality act should be tightened to name dyslexia.

Response:

Margaret responded that dyslexia was covered adequately and this was endorsed by Lord Addington.

Inspector Peter Phillips - Hampshire Police – Dyslexia in Policing

Inspector Peter Phillips thanked the APPG for the opportunity to speak about the support, advice and guidance for dyslexia that he has been able to instigate for staff. This has been due to the Chief Officer Team which recognises the benefits that it brings. He described how a generic response is not enough. It needs to be one to one, by someone who can understand the difficulties and feeling of the individual, the intervention needs to be bespoke to that individual. He pointed out that they have trained assessors in all ranks and roles up to Inspector and a variety of Police Staff roles allowing an appropriate assessor for the individual. He explained that if they can get the social wellbeing aspect working, the impact on service delivery can be significant. He went on to explain that improved organisational culture and acceptance is possibly the most important thing. He explained that improved organisation cultural learning promotes improved understanding of victims, witnesses and suspects who may be dyslexic. In addition, there are significant cost savings to be made.

He described how forces up and down the country have begun changing the way they support their staff with dyslexia. He pointed out that this wasn't done alone and mentioned and thanked the significant support and encouragement that Sharon and her team, Jack and Jessica, have given. He went on to point out that Northumbria was also instrumental at looking to collaborate with Tyne and Wear Fire Service and the North East Ambulance service. He explained that the developed process could be overlaid onto any organisation e.g. Fire and Rescue, Ambulance, Prison, Border Force, Home Office, HMRC, Foreign Office, Local Authorities.....With relatively minimal funding, identification and support could be put in place for the potential 500,000 public sector workers with dyslexia.

Questions included:

Whether this might be rolled out externally.

If there were problems with staff being reluctant to disclose.

Response:

Insp Phillips responded that it was just for the force at present but in looking after their staff it would make them more aware with dealing with the public.

With the right support disclosure was improving.

Sharon Hodgson MP commented how they hoped to roll this out across the police forces and through blue light services, e.g. Fire Service.

Debbie Bradford and Ian Milton - DWP

Debbie gave an update of the current situation with Access to Work. She reported that the highest number of people ever are now receiving support from AtW.

Numbers for dyslexia are recorded within Learning Difficulties. They are trying to widen the scope to reach other categories for helping severely disabled and alcohol and drug users and also proposing that employees should be able to take recommendations to a new employer on a 'Passport' to make the transfer smooth.

Questions included:

Whether information from support provided previously through DSA or EHCP for example could be used towards gaining support quickly;

Whether there would be more awareness amongst AtW staff and assessors on dyslexia and co-occurring difficulties;

Whether the Job Centres could be better informed, and information provided from there on how to access AtW;

How bespoke support could be generic from one job to another on a passport as the needs would be different;

What measures are shown to show the value of money spent;

How the Tech Fund was working.

Responses

Debbie Bradford declared a personal interest in dyslexia

Debbie advised that assessors took a holistic approach to assessment;

Job Centre Plus has access to a tool kit which covers SpLD needs and information on AtW but accepts more needs to be done;

AtW are looking into how applicants who had previous support (e.g. apprenticeships/DSA) can be signposted better;

Ian Milton stated that they are conscious that the Tech fund is not being used sufficiently

Claire Hussey – HMRC

Claire gave a personal account of being diagnosed as an adult and how this and the work of Insp Phillips and the BDA had encouraged her to set up a network for Neurodiverse colleagues within HMRC.

Sharon Hodgson MP, Chair, thanked the speakers for their presentations and asked for questions.

A.O.B

None raised.

Date of next meeting: to be agreed later by BDA/APPG

Meeting closed at 5.30 pm