



Impact of working from home during Covid 19 Survey Findings

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Why we did the survey

- Survey questions were based upon concerns highlighted to BDA helpline during pandemic – from first lockdown in March 2020 – adults asking for reasonable adjustments from their employer

Question:

- Were dyslexic adults more adversely impacted by Covid lockdowns and the directive to work from home, than their non dyslexic colleagues?

The survey

- Survey carried out between 7 April – 3 May 2021 via social media, website, newsletters and email
- Looked at the experiences of working from home for employed dyslexic adults during Covid 19 pandemic to understand any additional challenges they faced
- Survey was completed anonymously by 171 adults, normally officed based who said they had worked from home during Covid

What did we find?

- 94% of adults who took part in the survey had a Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD)
- 83% were dyslexic
- At the start of the pandemic 91% were in employment. The figure dropped to 82% by the time of the survey with some furloughed and a small increase in those not working

What did we find?

- Covid brought significant change to how and where we all work
- 59% had never worked from home prior to first Lockdown
- At the time of the survey (Apr 21) 93% were working from home
- Opinion was split between those who preferred to work at home, those who preferred the office, and those who liked a mix of both
- Working from home preferred but not virtual environment

What was good about WFH?

- More flexible approach to working hours
- Often easier to concentrate at home than in an open plan office
- More comfortable using Assistive Technology at home
- Better work/life balance
- Good not to have to travel to work
- Can access everything at home that I can in the office

What was challenging?

- Noisy neighbours –difficult for those distracted by noise
- Family distractions – difficult to maintain focus
- No access to office equipment such as printers, large monitors, assistive technology for some
- Meetings and interaction with colleagues more difficult virtually; 74% prefer to discuss things face to face
- 70% said more emails/virtual “chats” – more reading/writing
- 72% said harder to informally ask colleagues for support with explaining/proof reading

Impact on dyslexic adults

- Remote world of work puts heavy emphasis on skills which are not dyslexic strengths; new coping strategies required
- In addition, existing coping strategies did not translate into working from home and/or working virtually
 - Printing emails/documents to read and mark up by hand
 - Informally asking colleague to proof read/explain/repeat instructions
- Dyslexia often not disclosed and coping strategies may be “hidden” to employers. Strategies are often self instigated and not formally identified or agreed; difficult to ask for help

What other factors are important?

- Support
 - Over a third reported that there was no specific support in place over and above the normal HR function
 - Only 7% said employer offered a workplace needs assessment
 - Dyslexia @Work Study.eu Erasmus project interviews of employers and recruiters found further evidence of this
- Reasonable adjustments
 - Focus was on standard office equipment such as desks, chairs and monitors or on mental health and well being schemes
 - Onus on individual to request and justify any reasonable adjustments to support their dyslexic challenges

Access to Work

- DWP figures: 4,180 adults in receipt of access to work for dyslexia in 2019/20
 - BDA estimate around 3.2m working adults are dyslexic*
 - Continues to grow year on year; up 8% on 2018/19
- Government said that access to work provision increased during Covid; comments in the survey suggested:
 - it was harder to access an assessment
 - long delays in getting equipment provided (upto a year)
 - Others said they found DWP staff “disrespectful” and the process was “degrading”

Source: DWP. * BDA estimate based on ONS Employment estimates 2019: 32.9m working adults in UK

Summary

- Some dyslexic individuals had specific problems which have made working from home much more difficult
- Most have had to develop new coping strategies to adjust to this new normal.
- A remote/virtual environment is more challenging for many dyslexics
- Difficulties with accessing reasonable adjustments and workplace assessments increased challenges faced by some

Conclusion

- We have all faced challenges with the switch to WFH; greater for dyslexic individuals because virtual/remote does not play to their strengths.
- Greater awareness needed among employers of specific challenges of dyslexia in the workplace, simple adjustments to working practices could remove many challenges.
- Increasing awareness and changing the perception of dyslexia in the workplace is still needed
- Better promotion of Gov Access to Work scheme

Next Steps

- BDA Training continuing to provide awareness training and dyslexia friendly working practices
- Further BDA focus group research – supporting adults
- Promotion of Gov Access to Work scheme
- Continuing to increase awareness and perception of dyslexia so that it is understood, accepted and employees feel comfortable talking about it in the workplace.
 - Adults asked to personally share stories today; none felt comfortable talking publicly about their experience at work



Any Questions?