

DYSLEXIA ASSOCIATION OF BEXLEY BROMLEY GREENWICH & LEWISHAM



TRUSTEES' REPORT 1st JANUARY – 31st DECEMBER 2023



"Thanks so much for a great evening last night. People were just so lovely. That is one great group you have going there. I hope they appreciate how lucky they are."

DYSLEXIA ASSOCIATION OF BEXLEY BROMLEY GREENWICH & LEWISHAM

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Our mission is:

To help dyslexic people of all ages by providing information and support, and to promote the positive aspects of specific learning difficulties.

As ever, our two main areas of work have been:

- ❖ Direct Services to our Membership and the General Public
- ❖ Changing policy and promoting Best Practice across the whole dyslexia community

We have been delighted to be able to return to our physical meetings, as well as those online. We have received much grateful feedback from our dyslexic community this year, which has been the outcome of prolific activity by our excellent volunteers, who express their great passion for their rewarding and fulfilling work.

Our major achievements for this period have been:

Direct Services to our Membership and the General Public

- A busy and informative helpline run by volunteers, providing vital support for parents/carers, grandparents, dyslexic adults, teachers, medical professionals, employers, probation support and other voluntary and statutory agencies etc.
- Provision of virtual and face-to-face meetings to inform the public and give them an opportunity to network with each other.
- Information-giving at various events, both actual and virtual.
- A Dyslexia Screening Service for children.
- A constantly up-dated website and Facebook page.
- Published interviews with dyslexic adults.

Changing Policy and Promoting Best Practice

- Close working with Bromley Local Authority.
- Membership of the Voluntary Sector Groups in Greenwich, Bexley and Bromley.
- Participation in separate school and Local Authority events.

We have a good mix and range of skills among our committee members, including typical dyslexic creativity and problem-solving skills, and organisation and clerical skills. We have a mix of parents, teachers and individuals with business and fundraising skills. We were sad to say goodbye to Anne-Marie Butler this year, who has been a wonderful Meetings Organiser and source of knowledge over many years. We retain a large membership base and were delighted to add even more new members this year.

Direct Services to our Membership and the General Public.

Helpline and Befriending (Advocacy) Service

Our helpline continued to be very busy this year. Many parents seem to be more aware of their children's struggles post the Covid homes-schooling period, and are seeking support for screening and assessments. Others, who have received confirmation of their child's dyslexia, are looking for advice on how to work collaboratively with school to ensure support is in place to enable their child to access the curriculum and make progress. They also want to know how best to support their child at home. There seems to be a growing need for support for parents with children in secondary school. The transition into year 7 is challenging and exam pressure builds as they approach year 11. Navigating support needed and available in school, understanding exam accommodations and the process to achieve these, and on a daily basis how to study, revise and work with your child's learning difference, is difficult and daunting for most parents.

Our Adult Dyslexia helpline deals with calls from all over London and beyond. Many callers have kept their dyslexia secret in one way or another from family, friends or work and spend every day of their lives hiding it until they can no longer do so and need help. Others are beginning to realise there may be a reason for their daily struggles and understanding it better and finding ways to work with it will help them improve their situation. Along their journey they have developed extremely low self-esteem, struggles at work are an everyday occurrence and accessing support is difficult without a formal assessment and acknowledgement of their dyslexia. Many are hoping to improve their situation either in their current job, with a promotion or in a new job. Others want to find ways to improve their daily experience and some need very practical help with learning to read, form filling or discrimination. Often the callers want someone to talk to who understands them and their daily struggles and acknowledges that their difficulties are real. The helpline serves as much an outlet for someone to talk to as for practical advice given.

The calls received on both helplines and outside events covered a wide range of enquiries, covering Assessments, Screening, Tutoring, Education support post assessment in both Primary and Secondary schools, Support for Educational Tribunal Appeals, University and College diagnosis and support available, Employment, Mental Health difficulties and links to other Neurodiverse Conditions

The team continues to support all who contact us using their knowledge and local expertise to try to help callers navigate through their own specific issues. Some call us once and are then armed with the knowledge they need, others call us back at various stages of their journey and it's lovely to hear of progress made. Our team include Sue Netscher, Nadani Chandramohan and Lindy Springett answering calls to the general helpline, Diana Edmonds managing calls to the adult helpline, Helen Buckley managing email enquiries and Catrin Cox as invaluable expert resource behind the scenes.

The over 300 enquiries we received were broken down as follows:

- 49% from Parents/carers
- 28% from Adult callers
- 20% from Professionals
- 3% from Employers

The methods of communication were:

- 48% by phone
- 35% by email
- 17% face-to-face at meetings and outside events.

The enquiries fell into the following categories:

- 30% general education enquiries, including EHCPs
- 27% seeking assessment
- 16% needing screening
- 13% wanting a tutor
- 5% work related issues
- 9% other enquiries

“So impressed and grateful to you that you’re on the other end of the phone and prepared to chat and share your knowledge.” Mother of a 10 year old boy.

“Please let me tell you that I cannot thank you enough for your support, as this has helped me to see a path going forward, whereas I was currently not seeing the wood for the trees” An Adult caller



School Coffee Morning

Essential Administration

Immense thanks go to Helen Buckley for the lion’s share of our general administration. Also, to Kim Davie who not only operates our database so well and keeps our website up-to-date, but has continued to develop new state-of-the-art IT systems and processes as part of our GDPR (Data Protection) compliancy work; and to Fatima Conteh for her sterling work as our Treasurer. Indeed our very grateful thanks go to all our superb volunteers who work so very hard for the benefit of all our community.

As virtual tenants of Community House, we maintain our valuable links with the other charities there.

Dyslexia Screening

Catrin Cox screened over 50 children for dyslexia this year. The results of these screenings give an indication of dyslexia tendencies in each individual case. Our screening sessions are always combined with information-giving and advice, and due to Catrin selflessly giving of her time, we are able to charge a very low fee which merely defrays the expenses for the Association.

*“You were so helpful and patient and we really wanted to thank you so very much”
parents of 9 year-old girl*

Technology

Our constantly up-dated and informative website received over 3,500 hits during the year, whilst our General group FaceBook page proved a useful resource for many people and now has over 700 members. We also have a smaller dedicated private FaceBook page for adults with dyslexia. Our website highlights Holly Royal’s fascinating and inspiring interviews with local adults with dyslexia.

Meetings & Events

Meetings

Our determination to hold physical meetings, rather than resort to Zoom, was very welcomed by our community and attendance at the meetings was high. People commented how wonderful it was to be in a room of like-minded, sympathetic people which gave them courage to ask questions. There is always a tremendously positive buzz at the meetings as people chat to each other and gain ideas and strength from each other. Many thanks to Holly and Otis for baking the lovely cakes too!

Meeting topics this year covered: Navigating the SEND system, Effective and Fun Strategies to Support Struggling Spellers, What Technology is there to help Parents and Teachers support Children, Ask the Panel, and Exam Techniques.

"Thank you for last night's meeting. Diana is just amazing it would be great to clone her and put her in every school" Father of two dyslexic children



One of our lively meetings



Our refreshments

Adult Group

Our re-opened Adult Group went from strength to strength, with a rising number of enthusiastic participants.. People say how wonderful it is to be in a room of people with similar difficulties and how relaxed and confident it makes them feel. Many thanks to the tireless efforts of Peter Stanton, Catrin Cox, Anthony Yates, Fatima Conteh, Nadani Chandramohan, Lindy Springgett with admin help from Sue Netscher and Helen Buckley.

"It's wonderful. I've found people who are just like me and understand me" Adult Group participant

Events

We have again been asked to attend many events in our 4 boroughs this year, and our information table is always crowded with people needing our help.

At these events, apart from parents, we have had enquiries from Sencos, EPs, Speech and Language therapists and Local Authority officials too. Quite a few had not known of our existence, and many valuable chats were held and contacts established.

By invitation, we visited several schools and voluntary organisations during the year, giving a presentation and information to parents, teachers and group leaders. These were very appreciatively received by both parents and teachers.

"The inspiration and support you gave us all has proved absolutely invaluable. Thank you so much!" Bexley voluntary Organisation

Fun Afternoon

A very successful Fun Afternoon was held in March, where we accommodated both children and parents. We did find a big difference post-covid as there was anxiety from both children and parents at children being left. So the parents were able to start out with their child, and the children then felt free to drift into the parents' room if they needed reassurance. This worked really well.

The children enjoyed a myriad of activities in one room, whilst their parents in another room benefitted from help and advice from our helpliners, with discussion flowing freely amongst all the participants as they swapped stories and experiences. We were delighted to have some of the older children helping out at this event.

“Thanks for all you do to help us – and for organising the parent session. We both had a great afternoon” Mum and daughter



T-shirt decoration



Parents' chat

In September we were invited by Bell House in Dulwich to exhibit at their impressive Dyslexia Fair. We were able to exhibit a large number of resources, and were incredibly busy all day long giving out information to a high number of visitors, both parents, children and adult dyslexic people.



Bell House Dyslexia Fair



Changing Policy and Promoting Best Practice

We consider the changing of policy and promoting best practice to be of overwhelming importance in our work. We are acutely aware that only a small proportion of dyslexic people and parents/carers will have the benefit of contacting us and getting our help and advice. By far the most effective way forward is to endeavour to ensure that society at large (and especially in schools) is a productive and understanding place for dyslexic people.

We were particularly delighted that Bromley Local Authority continued training for classroom teachers was a great success for the second year. Greenwich retain their central assessment, training and advice service (STEPS), which makes a great difference to the level of support for and understanding of dyslexia and other SpLDs in their schools.

We have kept up our contacts with a whole range of other organisations and voluntary groups this year, including:

1. Parent Voice Groups
2. Independent Information and Advice Services

3. Local Councils for Voluntary Services
4. Support Teachers and Classroom Assistants
5. Other Dyslexia Groups around the country
6. Bell House, Dulwich
7. British Dyslexia Association

Training and Support

Training for our Volunteers

As an advice-giving organisation, it is vital that our skills and knowledge are kept updated. Helpliners and Befrienders have attended high-powered webinars with the Educational Law Association, PATTOSS (Professional Association of Teachers of students with Specific Learning Difficulties) and had multiple zoom training sessions and nation-wide discussions through the British Dyslexia Association during the year.

National Involvement

Our involvement with the British Dyslexia Association (BDA) remains high. We are often consulted by them, and in turn helped them by feeding back local information. We are also very active on the national BDA internet forum. Our committee members attended the on-line BDA AGM.

Into the Future

After 49 years, we are proud that we remain a vibrant and enthusiastic group, consistently attracting new members and volunteers. The Association will continue to support dyslexics of all ages to the best of its ability, while it continues to secure funding for invaluable events for the whole community.

**Dyslexia Association of Bexley Bromley Greenwich & Lewisham,
Charity No: 1114382, Company Registration No: 5725573.**

Registered Office: Community House, South Street, Bromley, Kent. BR1 1RH

Tel. Nos: 0300 999 1800 (helpline) 07762 265 827 (Adult helpline)

Bankers: Lloyds Bank PLC, 9 Market Square, Bromley, Kent BR1 1ND

The Objects of the Charity are to help children and adults to overcome the problems of dyslexia and associated learning difficulties by such means as the Charity shall decide and will, whether directly or indirectly, promote those ends: provided that any activity carried on shall be charitable.

The Trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees Report.

Signed on the Trustees' behalf: Lindy Springett

**Lindy Springett, Chair.
24th April 2024**