

DYSLEXIA ASSOCIATION OF BEXLEY BROMLEY GREENWICH & LEWISHAM



TRUSTEES' REPORT 1st JANUARY – 31st DECEMBER 2016



“Thank you SO much. You’ve really opened my eyes and changed my life.”

DYSLEXIA ASSOCIATION OF BEXLEY BROMLEY GREENWICH & LEWISHAM

ANNUAL REPORT 2016

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.

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

The praise from our target groups and the general public for our achievements in these areas in 2016 is the result of prolific activity by our excellent volunteers, who express their 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 support for parents/carers, grandparents, dyslexic adults, teachers, medical professionals, employers, probation support and other voluntary and statutory agencies etc.
- Successful outcomes to Befriending/Advocacy cases, including mediation
- A well-run Drop-In/Resource Centre, staffed by volunteers
- Provision of networking opportunities for parents and adult dyslexics to give support to each other, enabling and empowering them, with open meetings for the main group and a strong Adult Group with a combination of open meetings and social evenings
- An over-subscribed activity day for dyslexic children
- Information-giving at various events
- A constantly up-dated selection of books and materials available for sale
- A Dyslexia Screening Service for adults and children

Changing Policy and Promoting Best Practice

- Continuing success in the Dyslexia Friendly Schools initiatives in Greenwich, and Bromley
- Presentations to schools and specialist courses
- Membership of Parent Partnership steering groups
- Membership of the Voluntary Sector Groups in Greenwich, Bexley and Bromley
- Training for statutory and voluntary sectors
- Input into policy and documentation for Police, Probation Service, Training Companies, Retailers etc.

Nine of our hard-working committee members are dyslexic themselves, giving us their typically dyslexic creativity and problem-solving skills. We have a mix of parents, teachers and individuals with business and fundraising skills. We regretfully

said farewell to 3 of our long-standing, superb committee members – Sam Fletcher, Margaret Cooper and our wonderful treasurer Charles Yates. But we were exceedingly fortunate to be able to welcome in new members – Nicky Heaney as Treasurer (who had been shadowing Charles for nearly a year), Diana Edmonds (Adult Helpline and Children’s activities), Anne-Marie Butler as Meetings Organiser and a young recruit, Hannah Stanton who will also be helping out with Children’s activities.

“I’m so very pleased I agreed to be a committee member and that I am part of such a fantastic group” new committee member, after the first few months

We retain a large membership base and were delighted to add 23 new members this year.

Direct Services to our Membership and the General Public.

Helpline and Befriending (Advocacy) Service

Our helpline team of Linda Harvey, Mary Margaret Yates, Amanda Sutton, Linda Essam, Diana Edmonds and Lindy Springett successfully handled a wide variety of calls and emails from all our boroughs and far beyond. Very many thanks to them all. Our new 0300 helpline number, which is free to the vast majority of callers, has proved to be a great success. The enquiries we received were broken down as follows:

- 732 Parents/carers
- 504 Adult callers
- 220 from other sources, such as employers, doctors, housing associations, teachers etc.

“I am indebted to you for all your support during the very difficult period of time when M’s needs were clearly not being met. I am so glad that is all in the past” Single parent

Our Adult Dyslexia helpline deals with calls from all over London and beyond. All callers have kept their dyslexia secret in one way or another from family, friends or work and spend everyday of their lives hiding it until they can no longer do so and need help. They also suffer from extremely low self-esteem and struggle to survive in the everyday world of work - whether that be getting a job in the first place, keeping their job or working towards a promotion.

Often the callers want someone to talk to, to air their fears and daily struggles; the helpline is as much a need for someone to talk to as it is for advice.

“Thank you so very much. You’re the first person I have ever spoken to about my dyslexia who understood me and my worries.” adult helpline caller

Our befriender/advocacy service led by Lindy Springett has been very active again. There is a limit to the advice that we can give over the phone and the more complex cases need the expertise of our trained befrienders, who have attended many meetings at schools to support children and their parents/carers. Tribunal Hearings have again all been avoided, due to our intervention and negotiation.

Drop-In/Resource Centre

Our Centre is invaluable for holding one-to-one surgeries and enabling our great volunteer team to handle our very broad spectrum of work. Many thanks go to Amanda Sutton for the lion’s share of this. We also use the Centre for Screening. Our very grateful thanks go to all our other superb volunteers too, including Julie Dennis for our newsletter, Rob Dubery for our website and Kim Davie for operating our membership database so efficiently.

Dyslexia Screening

Mary Margaret Yates, Malcolm Parker and other volunteers have successfully continued to screen both adults and children, the results showing the probability of dyslexia in each individual case. The screening session is always combined with information-giving and advice. We renewed our licence this year, receiving the latest screening materials, and also purchased a new laptop to make the system even more efficient. Many thanks to Mary Margaret who willingly gives so much of her time to this.

“The results of the screening that Mary Margaret did for us have made a massive difference with the school, who are taking it very seriously and seeing what they can do for him. We are enormously grateful to your association for this” Parent of an 8 year old boy

Meetings & Events

Our very well-attended Open meetings this year covered topics such as: “How do you tell if a child may be dyslexic?” and “Supporting children with tests and exams. We were delighted to have the award-winning children’s author, Jane Elson, speak at a meeting and bring along her latest books. A wonderful inspiration to dyslexic children and their parents alike. During Dyslexia Awareness Week, we had an innovative Chat show, discussing aspects of dyslexia throughout different age groups. Meetings always include time for participants to relax with a hot drink and a chance to swap experiences with other parents/carers/teachers and get expert advice from committee members. We were pleased to have attendance by some older children at these meetings, with most beneficial contributions from some of them.

A great attraction at all our meetings and events is our Book and Resources stall, offering books, games and equipment too. It has been expanded to include more on other Specific Learning Differences such as Dyspraxia and ADHD as these often occur with Dyslexia. This stall offers particular value for money as the purchases often result from a specific enquiry and come with free advice!

An enormous thank you to Karen Papa who bakes wonderful cakes for all our events, giving them a much more friendly and relaxed atmosphere.

“Really enjoyed the talk on Thursday. Lovely to be able to hear other people's experiences and look at all the books etc available” Parents



families at our meeting



Our bookstall

Adult Group Meetings

Michael Corrigan, who has brilliantly led the Adult Group for nearly 14 years, stepped down during the year. We were delighted that he has remained on our Committee to continue helping with all our other activities. The other leaders, Malcolm Parker, Sam Fletcher, Peter Stanton and Helen Freeman, continued his work. Our Adult group is a great success, attracting an eclectic mix of people from all walks of life and

a wide geographical area. It is the longest running adult group in the country and is still much needed. It acts as a model for others, and we are asked for our help and advice for setting up Adult Dyslexia groups around the country

Our friendly meetings support people with dyslexia, as well as their family and friends. We take dyslexia to the highest level. This includes strengths, everyone's ability, learning styles, skills and so much more. We show what we can do as adults and turn our weaknesses into strengths.

Open forum meetings are led by a panel which draws the audience into discussion, bringing out individual concerns which are usually relevant to many others in the group. Speaker meetings are much-valued for their information. There are also monthly social meetings and outings

"It's a lifeline coming to your events. I feel I can breathe being with people who know what I am talking about and who can give me the information I need."

Mother and adult dyslexic

Events

a) After listening carefully to what our members wanted most, we organised a Day at Downe Scout Activity Centre for dyslexic children aged 8 to 11. The day proved a great success with activities such as 'Crate Stack', zip wire, archery and 'Leap of Faith'. The participants worked in teams and formed bonds with other dyslexic children as they learnt tangible skills, worked collaboratively, developed responsibility and broke down barriers. They were also able to show typical dyslexic skills that didn't involve reading and writing! We will repeat the experience next year and plan to have more regular children's activities.



"Brilliant day out at Downe Activity centre. Thank you! to the organisers. Boys loved it."

b) We were delighted to hear that our grant application to the Lottery Fund for a 2017 Holiday Club for secondary school pupils had been accepted.

c) We were able to satisfy requests from several schools across all our boroughs to go and give a talk to parents and staff about dyslexia. These were very well received by both staff and parents alike, and there was much informal chat and information given out afterwards.

"A huge thanks again for coming in. The response from the parents was that it was brilliant and they will be using your services. So thanks again for your time." Local Primary School Teacher

d) We also participated in a very successful Equality and Diversity Day at a local secondary school, an annual secondary school Dyslexia showcase event, and a Secondary Transfer Information event run by the local authority.

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.

Local Authorities and Schools

We continue to work hard and effectively with Local Authorities to change schools into better places for dyslexic pupils and now, with finance being devolved to schools, we are increasingly working with individual schools too. With our support, Bromley Academies and Greenwich Local Authority continued their dyslexia-friendly schools policy this year.

We were invited by several schools to give a talk to parents and teachers; these were a great success.

Mary Margaret Yates sits on the Parent Partnership Steering Group in Bromley, alongside many other voluntary organisations, and is instrumental in jointly developing new policy and practice. Lindy Springett does the same in Greenwich with the Voluntary Sector Liaison Group (planning strategy and events) and also attends the Bexley Voluntary Sector Network meetings, establishing links and co-working with many other voluntary groups.



Our Display Boards

Liaison with Statutory, Non-Statutory and Voluntary Groups

Adult Group representatives have continued to work with organisations to produce a dyslexia-friendly society. During 2016 this covered Transport, the Police, Media layout, Presentation, Signage and retail customer treatment. In summary, the statutory, non-statutory and voluntary groups the Association has worked with are:

1. Local authorities in Bexley, Bromley, Greenwich & Lewisham
2. National Autistic Society (Bromley and Greenwich branches)
3. Mencap
4. Greenwich Toy Library
5. Parent Partnership Officers
6. Professional Association of Teachers of Students with SpLD
7. Local Colleges and Universities
8. School Governors
9. Employers and Retailers
10. Police and Probation Services
11. Employment and Training Companies
12. Transport for London
13. Housing Associations
14. Educational Psychologists
15. Support teachers and Classroom Assistants
16. Speech and Language Therapy Service
17. Employment Services

18. Greenwich Support and Training in Primary Schools (STEPS)
19. Bexley Specialist Teachers
20. Local Councils for Voluntary Services
21. Other Dyslexia Groups around the country
22. British Dyslexia Association

Training and Support

We gave several presentations to trainees on the OCR courses, which train future dyslexia specialist tutors.

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 training courses with the Educational Law Association during the year. We have also participated in several webinars.

National Involvement

Our involvement with the British Dyslexia Association (BDA) remains high. We are often consulted by them, and in turn helped them in giving information and advice on BDA stands at two exhibitions. We are also very active on the national BDA internet forum. A group of people from our Committee attended the BDA AGM.

Anthony Yates is the London Representative on the national BDA Board for Local Associations (LAB). Lindy Springett is a member of the national Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal users' group on behalf of the BDA.

Into the Future

After 42 years, 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: 020-8315 2526 (admin) 0300 999 1800 (helpline)

Bankers: Lloyds TSB, 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, Chair. 5th May 2017**