

# DYSLEXIA ASSOCIATION OF BEXLEY BROMLEY GREENWICH & LEWISHAM



## TRUSTEES' REPORT 1<sup>st</sup> JANUARY – 31<sup>st</sup> DECEMBER 2017



*“Thank you for the detailed, thoughtful advice on the phone earlier today regarding my daughter. You have been such a great help to me.”*

DYSLEXIA ASSOCIATION OF BEXLEY BROMLEY GREENWICH &  
LEWISHAM

# ANNUAL REPORT 2017

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 2017 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 General Group and revamping our Adult Group
- 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
- Input into policy and documentation for Police, Probation Service, Training Companies, Retailers etc.

Eight 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. Towards the end of the year, we regretfully said farewell to Amanda Sutton who has so magnificently handled much of our admin, bid-writing and event organisation over many years, but were delighted to welcome Helen Buckley in her place.

***“The whole committee are so friendly and supportive”*** *new committee member*

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 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. The enquiries we received were broken down as follows:

- 682 Parents/carers
- 483 Adult callers
- 184 from other sources, such as employers, doctors, housing associations, teachers etc.

***"I feel so much better now someone seems to understand"*** Single parent



*A young man we helped, with his winning team at World F1 in Schools Racing event*

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.

***"I could have cried. I can't explain how grateful I am to you. It's such a relief"***  
*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 and latterly Helen Buckley for the lion's share of this. We also use the Centre for Screening, which is so ably done by Mary Margaret Yates and Diana Edmonds, with the support of other committee members. Our very grateful thanks go to all our other superb volunteers too, including Julie Dennis for our newsletter, and Kim Davie who not only operates our database so well, but has now also rebuilt our website and now keeps it up-to-date.

## Dyslexia Screening

Mary Margaret Yates and Diana Edmonds, with the help of 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. So many thanks to Mary Margaret who willingly gives so much of her time to this.

***“Just looking to say again very big thanks for the assessments which you made for our daughter. And also for such long informal talk and advices. Thank you very much!”*** Mother of 9-year-old girl

## Meetings & Events

Our very well-attended Open meetings this year covered topics such as: “Is your school dyslexia friendly?” “Children’s well-being and stress”, “The Puzzling World of Maths”, “Let’s talk about assessments” and “What I think about Learning” run by dyslexic teenagers. 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.



*Our popular book stall*



*A lively meeting*

***“I attended the presentation last night and found it very informative indeed”***  
*Parent*

## Adult Group Meetings

Our Adult Group is the longest running adult group in the Country, and has been extremely successful, attracting an eclectic mix of people from all walks of life and a wide geographical area. However, we felt that, in spite of this, it was time to give it a revamp this year. It is now run by Anthony Yates and Charlotte Stanton, two vibrant and enthusiastic younger adults, with an exciting refocused forward-thinking approach. They are supported by Peter Stanton, Catrin Cox and Michael E. Corrigan.

The Group meetings offer its many attendees opportunities to exchange positive experiences, as well as seek practical advice from guest speakers and others within the group who share a collective understanding of what it’s like to be a neurodiverse person with dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties

***“I’ve often noticed how people initially arrive at the group very quiet and downcast and end up really quite chirpy after a couple of months.”*** Adult Group participant



*Creative adults having fun at a group meeting*

## **Events**

a) Following the great success of the Activity Day at the Downe Scout Centre last year, we organised a further event this year. The day again 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 again next year and are planning more regular activities for children.



*Activity Day*

***“I would like to say a very big thank you to everyone involved. Saturday went down extremely well with my two, the boys were full of it.”***

b) In August a highly successful 5 day Holiday Club was run for pupils in years 7,8 & 9. The teaching and coaching was very much activity and multi-sensory based, making it enjoyable and fun. It covered skills and strategies for making learning at school much easier. Initially, of course, participants were very reluctant to come to ‘work’ in their school holidays, but all very quickly enjoyed it and couldn’t wait to attend each day, being really sorry when it was all over.

The aim was to increase participants’ self-understanding of how they learn and to equip them with skills that support the learning process. The assumption was that each participant would select the content they were ready to apply at this point in time. It follows the coaching mantra that each participant is a capable and resourceful individual rather than someone who needs fixing.

***“The exposure to other dyslexics, and realising as a collective that they are not stupid/thick etc has been priceless. It has really helped her to experience that environment where she feels like she belongs and isn’t ‘different’.”***

***“It’s been so useful for her to learn the different ways of approaching activities so that they become manageable. She is now using the tools you taught in her everyday schooling and particularly homework.”***

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.

***“Your talk was brilliant, and the parents are so grateful for all the information you gave them” Local Primary School Teacher***

d) We also participated in a very successful Equality and Diversity Day at a local secondary school, and an annual secondary school Dyslexia showcase event.

## **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 Education Authorities, Academy Trusts and individual schools to change them into better places for all dyslexic pupils. 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.

### **Liaison with Statutory, Non-Statutory and Voluntary Groups**

Adult Group representatives have continued to work with organisations to produce a dyslexia-friendly society. During 2017 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 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).

### **Into the Future**

After 43 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. 5<sup>th</sup> May 2018**