

DYSLEXIA ASSOCIATION OF BEXLEY BROMLEY GREENWICH & LEWISHAM



TRUSTEES' REPORT 1st JANUARY – 31st DECEMBER 2018



“Many, many thanks for all this info. It is so helpful to feel supported and that people not only understand the difficulties but are willing to take the time and trouble to offer advice”

ANNUAL REPORT 2018

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 2018 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 Activity Day for dyslexic children and a Children's Fun Morning
- Information-giving at various events
- 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 (Parents and Teachers)
- 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.

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. Towards the end of the year, we had to say farewell to Nicky Heaney who had so ably handled our accounts, but were exceedingly fortunate to gain Fatima Amoi in her place.

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

Mary Margaret Yates and Diana Edmonds have magnificently handled the majority of our helpline calls this year, helped by Helen Buckley and Lindy Springett. They 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:

- 563 Parents/carers
- 472 Adult callers
- 202 from other sources, such as employers, doctors, housing associations, teachers etc.

"Thanks so much. You're amazing, and you just don't know how helpful you have been." 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 much. You've really opened my eyes and changed my life." 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 Helen Buckley for the lion's share of this. The Centre is also well-used for our Screening Service too. Our very grateful thanks go to all our superb volunteers, including Julie Dennis for our newsletter, Karen Papa for her delicious home-made cakes for our meetings, and Kim Davie who not only operates our database so well and keeps our website up-to-date, but has helped us develop new IT systems and processes as part of our GDPR (Data Protection) compliancy work.

Dyslexia Screening

Mary Margaret Yates and Diana Edmonds, with the help of other volunteers, selflessly give of their time 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 are pleased to say that appointments can now be booked directly through our website. It should be noted that the fee charged only defrays the expenses for the Association.

You've been brilliant today. Thank you so very much" mother of 10 year old boy

Meetings & Events

Our very well-attended Open meetings this year covered topics such as: "The many faces of SpLD", "Effective and fun strategies to support struggling spellers", "Being dyslexic and coming to terms with who you are", "Everyday classroom strategies and

stuff that works” and “How to survive at Secondary School”. 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.

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



Enjoying the cakes



Youngster participation at an Open 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. We felt that it needed a revamp in 2017, and handed the reigns over to 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, and the meetings are proving very successful and very well received.

The Group greatly benefits from being user-led and really reflects the community with a range of backgrounds and ages. The very welcoming atmosphere successfully encourages the confidence of the attendees, who share a collective understanding of what it’s like to be a neurodiverse person with dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties.

“I’m so grateful I found this Group. It is proving a life-line to me” *Adult Group participant*



Adult Group meeting

Events

- a) Following the great success of the Activity Day at the Downe Scout Centre for the last 2 years, 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!



“They come in the morning as strangers and go away at the end of the day as friends”. Father of 9 year old boy

- b) After listening to members' requests, we ran a Children's Fun Morning with various arts, crafts and activities available. This again was a great success with the children, who so enjoyed being able to show off their skills, and bonding with other children. In particular the young people produced some fantastic models, first planning their designs and then building them using the bricks



“Thank you for today - we loved it, Emma was fantastic and made us feel very positive.” 11 year old girl

- c) We were able to satisfy requests from many schools across all our boroughs to 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.

“Our parents got so much from your talk. Please do come again!” Local Primary School Teacher

- d) We were again asked to participate in the annual Dyslexia showcase event at a local secondary school. This is always a delight as being dyslexic is celebrated throughout the school.

e) We worked closely with local Parent Voice groups, including participating in the Bromley Parent Voice Conference with an audience of 200. We were delighted to be able to give much help and information to our many enquirers on that day.

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.



Our informative display boards

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 with organisations such as Transport and the Police, and giving input into methods of 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. Parent Voice Groups
20. Local Councils for Voluntary Services
21. Other Dyslexia Groups around the country
22. 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 training courses with the Educational Law Association during the year. We have also participated in several webinars and the “Dyslexia, inclusion and multilingualism in secondary school and at university” conference and “A European Perspective” Conference.

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 44 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: 020-8315 2526 (admin) 0300 999 1800 (helpline) 07762 265 827 (Adult 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. 7th May 2019**