

DYSLEXIA ASSOCIATION OF BEXLEY BROMLEY GREENWICH & LEWISHAM



TRUSTEES' REPORT 1st JANUARY – 31st DECEMBER 2020



“Thank you for the great talk tonight from Peter Stanton and all the invaluable support you offer! Keep it up - we need you”

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

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.

We started 2020 with great enthusiasm for the many activities we had planned. We achieved much in the first two months, and then, due to the pandemic, had to hurriedly adapt to on-line activities.

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 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 actual and virtual meetings to inform the public and give them an opportunity to network with each other.
- ★ A Children's Fun Afternoon.
- ★ Information-giving at various events, both actual and virtual.
- ★ A Dyslexia Screening Service for adults and children.

Changing Policy and Promoting Best Practice

- ★ Presentations to schools (Parents and Teachers), both actual and virtual.
- ★ Membership of the Voluntary Sector Groups in Greenwich, Bexley and Bromley.
- ★ Participation in on-line events with Voluntary Sector Groups which included participation by Education Authority personnel.

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 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 has been extra-busy this year with many home-schooling parents realising how much of a struggle their child was having with school work. This has resulted in extra-long calls and extra expertise required from us.

Debby Strobe came on board as a new helpliner, having completed the British Dyslexia Association training with flying colours. She joined Katie Harbord and Lindy Springett in taking the general calls, with Helen Buckley on the email enquiries and Catrin Cox as an enormous information resource behind the scenes. Diana Edmonds continued to handle the Adult helpline calls.

Together a wide variety of calls and emails from all our boroughs and far beyond were successfully handled. Very many thanks to all the volunteers involved. All enquiries start with a telephone call or email; we chat to telephone enquirers for up to an hour, and then email the caller with a large amount of information. The enquiries we received were broken down as follows:

- ✓ 332 Parents/carers
- ✓ 180 Adult callers
- ✓ 96 from other sources, such as employers, doctors, housing associations, teachers, other charities etc.

“Thank you so much for your call, and taking time out of your weekend; it's much appreciated. And thank you for talking to my daughter too. You really uplifted her after your conversation. You have given her renewed hope”.

Our Adult Dyslexia helpline deals with calls from all over London and beyond. Most 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 serves as much an outlet for someone to talk to as for advice given.

“Diana was incredibly helpful. She sent through contact numbers almost immediately and I included her leads in the quote to AtW. Thank you so very much” adult helpline caller

Drop-In/Resource Centre



Our Centre is invaluable for holding one-to-one surgeries, our screening service and enabling our great volunteer team to handle our very broad spectrum of work.

Immense thanks go to Helen Buckley for the lion's share of this. 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 continued to develop new IT systems and processes as part of our GDPR (Data Protection) compliancy work.

Dyslexia Screening



Mary Margaret Yates leads and co-ordinates our wonderful team of Volunteer Screeners. She and Catrin Cox screen children and Diana Edmonds screens adults. The results in both instances show the probability of dyslexia in each individual case. Our screening sessions are always combined with information-giving and advice, and due to our screeners selflessly giving of their time, we are able to charge a very low fee which merely defrays the expenses for the Association.

The year started with a plethora of screenings, and then lockdown struck. Brains were put together to investigate the possibility of remote screening. Unfortunately, it was immediately obvious that this would not work for adult screenings.

An enormous amount of time and effort was put into working out a remote process for children's screenings, but after just a handful done this way, it was reluctantly realised that this was totally unsatisfactory. Much of the success of our screenings lies in observing the child during the screening process, coupled with talking to both child and parents beforehand. The face-to-face screenings will restart immediately we can be Covid-compliant and secure.

Meetings & Events

Meetings



We started the year with an exciting diary of speakers meetings. Our "Wednesday Night Take-Away" Questions and Answers meeting in January was exceedingly well-attended. All meetings from March onwards obviously had to be cancelled, so we immediately switched to Zoom meetings. Having had a large number of requests from parents/carers for help with supporting their child through the lockdown period, we ran a Parent/Carer workshop "Strategies and Techniques for Learning". This gave invaluable strategies for both home and school learning

Continuing to listen to feedback and requests, we ran workshops on Study Skills, and "Dyslexia in the Time of Covid". After continuing to listen intently on the helpline to difficulties being encountered with home-schooling, and also surveying all our parents/carers, we put together a series of Zoom Meetings under the title of "Parents under Pressure" to be delivered in the early part of 2021.

"Great workshop Peter and team were just amazing. Thank you!!!"

Events

a) Fun Afternoons

Fortunately, we managed to get one Fun Afternoon for Key Stage 2 &3 youngsters in before lockdown. This attracted more attendees than ever before. This event was really enjoyed by the young people as they had the option to choose what activities they wanted to participate in, when they could show their creativity or let loose in dancing and giving their opinions.



In a separate room, parents chatted over tea and cake, swapping ideas and experiences, and getting support from each other and our team who were on hand too.

Sadly there has been no way we can hold these events on line, and we can't wait to get back to the actual Fun Afternoons again. There is no doubt that the volunteers running it get as much pleasure from it as the youngsters do.

"His attitude to dyslexia has changed so much since the fun day, it truly helped his confidence" Parent of 9 year-old boy

b) Study Skills Holiday Clubs

Following on the successes of our Study Skills Holiday Clubs in 2018 and 2019, we were able to run another one in February, though the August events had to be cancelled. With the help and facilities of the Tutorial Foundation, we ran concurrent separate events for those in Years 7-9, and those in Year 10+. The workshops covered a full range of study skills, and the feedback from the students was superb.

"Thanks again so much for the dyslexia Holiday Club. It has had a wonderful affect on my daughter. She talks a lot about the course and it has really given her a confidence boost" Mother of a 14 year-old girl.

c) Talks

We were receiving an increasing number of requests from schools across all our boroughs to give a talk to parents and staff about dyslexia. We were able to do this at two Coffee Morning style events before lockdown. We then joined with Bromley Parent Voice in delivering Zoom presentations to the community in general.

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 delighted that our Zoom presentations, in co-operation with Bromley Parent Voice, were attended by Local Authority personnel as well as carers/parents and teachers, which resulted in productive exchange of opinions.

Thank you so much for your time this morning, the feedback from parents has been entirely positive From Bromley Parent Voice, following a Zoom Information event

Helen Buckley fed into Ofsted inspection meetings, putting forward points of view and experiences of parents and their dyslexic children.

We have managed to keep up contacts with a whole range of other organisations and voluntary groups during this difficult year, including:

1. Parent Voice Groups
2. Local Information Advice and Support 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 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.

Anthony Yates is the London Representative on the national BDA Board for Local Associations (LAB).

Into the Future

After 46 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.**

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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.

20th May 2021