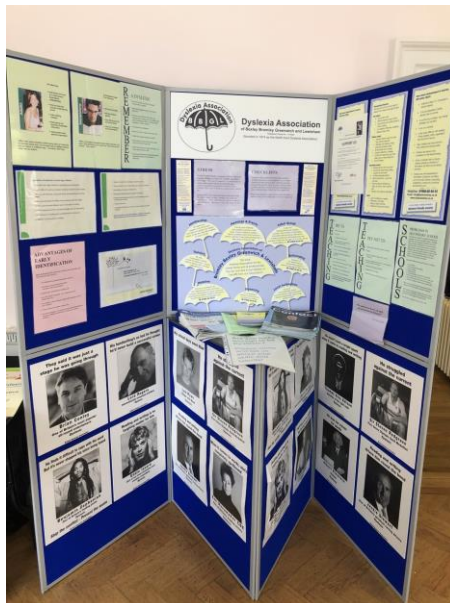


# DYSLEXIA ASSOCIATION OF BEXLEY BROMLEY GREENWICH & LEWISHAM



## TRUSTEES' REPORT 1<sup>st</sup> JANUARY – 31<sup>st</sup> DECEMBER 2021



*“I've heard that you are all volunteers. You're all so fantastic and help so much”*

# DYSLEXIA ASSOCIATION OF BEXLEY BROMLEY GREENWICH & LEWISHAM

## ANNUAL REPORT 2021

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

Another rather frustrating year, with activities curbed due to lockdown. However, 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 adults and 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 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 continued to be extra-busy this year with many home-schooling parents having realised 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 Strode proved to be an excellent new helpliner, and later in the year we were joined by Sue Netscher too, who completed the British Dyslexia Association training with flying colours. They both 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. The enquiries we received were broken down as follows:

- 884 Parents/carers
- 221 Adult callers
- 197 from other sources, such as employers, doctors, housing associations, teachers, other charities etc.

We were able to give specialist help and advice to parents looking for greater support for their children in the school setting, and to accompany some parents to meetings at their schools.

***“I really cannot thank you enough for not only this incredible information & advice - but also your kindness”*** *Mother of a 9 year old boy*

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 serves as much an outlet for someone to talk to as for advice given.

***“I’m very fortunate to be awarded funds for a support worker. I would not have been awarded this had I been unable to supply quotes by the deadline. Please thank Diana for me and thank you again”*** *An Adult caller*

## **Drop-In/Resource Centre**

Our Centre is invaluable for holding one-to-one surgeries, our screening service, interview potential volunteers, 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 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.

## **Dyslexia Screening**

Mary Margaret Yates led and co-ordinated our wonderful team of Volunteer Screeners. She and Catrin Cox screened children and Diana Edmonds screened 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. This year screenings were initially done remotely because of Covid, but unfortunately we found this was a less than satisfactory way of working and had to suspend them until face-to-face screening could be resumed.

Mary Margaret Yates resigned her duties, having been the most incredible resource to the Association for a great number of years, with different positions at varying times including Helpliner/Befriender, Membership Secretary and Screening Co-ordinator. We all owe her a tremendous debt, and our enormous thanks go out to her for all she has done.

## Technology

Our constantly up-dated and informative website received over 5,000 hits during the year, whilst our FaceBook page proved a useful resource for many people and now has over 600 members. A new initiative by Holly Royal has been to post on both our website and FaceBook page interviews with local dyslexic adults.

## Meetings & Events

### Meetings

Most of our meetings this year were by Zoom. 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", which were very well-received.

Following further requests our next meeting was "What questions should we be asking school after diagnosis? It seems like a whole new world".

We managed to return to a physical meeting in September – "How to help Dyslexic Children believe in themselves and continue to build Resilience". We found that people were delighted to be able to come out again and meet each other.

Our audience at meetings are a mix of school teachers, specialist dyslexia tutors, parent/carers and older children.

***"Thanks so much for your support for pupils with SpLD and us teachers, it's really appreciated."*** A local school teacher

***"I have attended many of your wonderful meetings which have given us so much information and helped the whole family so much."*** Father of two dyslexic children



*One of our meetings*

### Events

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.



*Bell House Dyslexia Fair*

Catrin Cox gave a talk about dyslexia for parents at a Bexley Voice meeting, and has been asked to give more talks in 2022.

We attended the Annual Sidcup Rotary meeting for approximately 50 local voluntary organisations, which was on Zoom this year.

***“We will miss working with you and you were definitely a star turn at our events so thanks for your time and energy getting the word out on dyslexia support and helping parents to understand it better. We think you do a completely brilliant job, and you know how to make something that seems complex and intimidating and make it not only easy to get to grips with but interesting too ! And many parents felt so reassured and optimistic after your talks. A very big cheer for you from us !”*** From the retiring leaders of a Greenwich Parent Organisation

## **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 established an SpLD strategy group who had a small bit of booster funding to expand resourcing and training. We had a zoom meeting with them, when we exchanged ideas and they told us of their plans. They went on to start dyslexia awareness training for Bromley schools, develop up-to-date practical resources for schools to use and issue a most comprehensive SpLD twice-terminly newsletter. They now also attend all our meetings.

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. 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 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.

We also constantly feed information into the national BDA Board for Local Associations (LAB).

### **Into the Future**

After 47 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.

A final heart warming quote from a student's final dissertation:

***Thank you to Professor Peter Hill, Dr Nahrina Dewan, Denise Cox, The Dyslexia Association (BBGL), Falcon Spartak Gymnastic Club and everyone else who has believed in me, teaching me to never underestimate my abilities and find strength in what made me different***

**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**

**Lindy Springett, Chair.**

**30th May 2022**