

SO/1/25 - Supporting employees with dyslexia

Target Audience: WT RDS NU

Owner: Equality and Diversity Manager

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1 Statement of intent

The Equality Act 2010 obliges employers to make reasonable adjustments, ensuring that those with dyslexia are not denied opportunities for employment and training. Additionally, the Equality Act 2010 requires Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service to promote equality of opportunity for people who have an impairment/disability. This means that HFRS need to think in advance about the needs of both disabled employees and potential disabled employees. It is through the Equality Act that Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service actively encourage those who have dyslexia to apply for employment with us, to ensure those employees have equal opportunity to progress their careers with us, and that as an employer we retain those employees. In recognising this we encourage people to discuss their specific needs. Their requirements must be backed up by our ability to provide good support.

The purpose of this policy is to give guidance to managers, all employees and those involved with recruitment and training about the reasonable adjustments and support Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service will put in place for a person known as having dyslexia.

2 The legal framework

The Equality Act 2010 has made it easier for a person to show that they are disabled and protected from disability discrimination. Under the Act a person is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial or long term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day duties.

The Equality Act 2010 includes a new protection against discrimination arising from a disability. It is now discrimination to treat a disabled person unfavourably because of something connected with their disability (e.g. a tendency to make spelling mistakes arising from their dyslexia).

Additionally, indirect discrimination now covers disabled people under the Equality Act. This means that a job applicant or employee could claim that a particular rule or requirement disadvantages them. Unless the rule could be justified it would be unlawful.

3 What is dyslexia?

3.1 Dyslexia is neurologically based and affects people of any age or background. The difficulties it causes can be managed with appropriate intervention and specialist support. Dyslexia affects more than just literacy – it can also cause problems with short-term memory and with tasks that involve using sequences.

3.2 Many dyslexic people experience detriment in their careers because they are perceived as having low intelligence. Dyslexia does not affect intelligence, and employees with dyslexia bring as much benefit to the workplace as any other employee – additionally people who have dyslexia often excel in lateral thinking and problem-solving skills.

4 Responsibilities

4.1 Service responsibility

- Under the Equality Act 2010, Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service are required to make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees. This means removing barriers wherever possible that get in the way of a disabled person performing well in their work.
- The Equality Act 2010 requires Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people.

4.2 Managers

- To highlight the support mechanisms available to employees and to ensure that they have access to this support.
- To carry out operational Risk Assessments arising from an employee's dyslexia, and put in place specific control measures identified to manage or mitigate against that risk.
- To identify other potential areas of risk (for both green and grey book) and ensure that control measures are in place.
- To discuss areas of concern with the Business Partner Team and/or Equality and Diversity Team.

4.3 Employees

- Will declare their dyslexia confidently and safely in order that this policy and the guidance within it can be put in place.
- Employees working with colleagues who have dyslexia will seek to understand their specific requirements.
- They will also afford their colleague dignity and respect in line with our core values and be aware that a person who has dyslexia may be particularly vulnerable to harassment from their colleagues.

4.4 Recruitment team

- To highlight applicants who identify themselves as having dyslexia and to ensure that reasonable adjustments are put in place to support that applicant throughout the recruitment process.
- To ensure that short listing for those declaring dyslexia is completed in accordance with our commitment to the Disability Two Ticks symbol.
- To monitor the progress of the application to ensure that the candidate does not experience detriment due to their disability.

4.5 Learning and Development team

- To ensure that employees with dyslexia are supported in accordance with their agreed adjustments.
- To ascertain the specific needs of individuals and to put in place support mechanisms in order that they can fully benefit from the training course.
- To put in place the agreed adjustments to enable employees to fully participate in the development process, promotions and transfers.

4.6 Health and Safety team

- To support managers and employees to identify the risks posed by a person's dyslexia and to ensure the control mechanisms are implemented.

4.7 Equality and Diversity team

- To monitor the effectiveness of the requirements of this policy.
- To liaise with the Disability Employment Adviser (Access to Work) and other agencies (e.g. Hampshire Dyslexia Association) who can support the Service in ensuring fairness and equality of opportunity for those with dyslexia.
- To ensure that all those who have a role in working/supporting a person with dyslexia have the necessary prior information that adequately enables them to fulfill their role.

4.8 Occupational Health/Welfare Support team

- The mechanisms to help an employee decide their specific requirements may lead to unintended emotional consequences (see Section 7). The Occupational Health/Welfare team can support an employee with issues relating to emotion and confidence that may result. The Employee Assistance Programme (Workplace Options) can also be a good source of support and help.

5 Supporting a person with dyslexia

5.1 It is important to remember that the experience of a person with dyslexia will be individual to them, therefore prejudging the way it might affect their performance is not helpful. However, some awareness of the nature of dyslexia and how it can affect people is an essential start for providing appropriate support, so that the employee can demonstrate their full potential. A good start is to ask the person what their specific needs are.

5.2 Many people with dyslexia have a special education needs statement – this means that the level of their dyslexia has been assessed and recommendations have been provided to support them. Otherwise, many people have lived with dyslexia and formed their own strategies for coping and will know what adjustments will best suit them.

5.3 Some people do not know they have dyslexia. Some people may display some of the common features of dyslexia. People with dyslexia may:

- Communicate well verbally, but reports and written communication do not reflect this.
- Be reluctant to go for training or promotion.
- They might have difficulties with listening, taking instructions and learning new tasks.
- Find it hard to remember dates, times and appointments.
- Confuse telephone numbers and messages.
- Have difficulties with note-taking and recalling the content of meetings.
- Display a tendency to panic, with difficulties becoming more acute when they are placed under time pressure, including formal evaluations, or when asked to take tests for recruitment purposes.
- Show a fear of public speaking.
- Have low confidence and high anxiety levels.

6 How Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service will support employees with dyslexia

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service are keen to support individuals who have dyslexia by making reasonable adjustments to support them to:

- Gain employment with us.
- To become successful in their career path with us.

This applies to both green and grey book employees.

Further details on supporting candidates who apply for vacancies with HFRS is contained within the HFRS Recruitment Strategy.

6.1 Supporting Employees

The following is a step by step process for employees who seek support with their dyslexia:

6.1.1 The employee may think they have dyslexia and may choose to self assess their dyslexia by using the on-line self assessment tool on the intranet pages. This will help to confirm or disconfirm that dyslexia may or may not be an issue for the employee and from this the employee must decide whether further support is to be sought.

6.1.2 Whether further support is sought is a matter for the individual but likely deciding factors are the degree to which the dyslexia is affecting the ability to cope or perform at work.

6.1.3 If the dyslexia is having some impact on the ability to cope or perform at work, the employee should discuss the matter initially with their line manager and identify jointly any immediate support needs.

6.1.4 Notwithstanding this, and in acknowledgement that the employee may be feeling vulnerable about discussing this matter, they are able to seek the confidential support of the Equality and Diversity Team. Ultimately, however the matter is likely to require some discussion with the line manager in due course.

6.1.5 The employee should be given a copy of this policy.

6.1.5 The employee, their line manager and/or the Equality Team will decide whether or not a Dyslexia Assessment is required or indeed sought by the employee.

6.1.6 If an assessment is sought, a referral to a professional service, skilled at carrying out dyslexia assessments will be made. The employee will be made aware that their personal details will be passed to an external service provider.

6.1.7 The employee will be given an assessment form to complete, which is forwarded to the external provider, followed by an appointment with that provider.

6.1.8 A report will be provided to the employee and a summary provided to the Equality and Diversity Team. This report will identify the likely reasonable adjustments required by the employee to help minimise the impact of their dyslexia.

6.1.9 Upon receipt of this report the Equality and Diversity Team will arrange a case conference involving the employee and preferably their line manager to discuss and agree the way forward. It may be necessary to include others in the case conference (eg Health and Safety for a Risk Assessment see section 8; Training Manager for training needs analysis and to ensure needs are met during the promotion process see Section 9).

6.1.10 It is the joint responsibility of the employee and their line manager to ensure that agreed adjustments are met. The action plan should feature as part of the annual PDR discussion between the manager and the employee.

7 Ongoing support

7.1 Reactions to being told you have dyslexia can vary. Some are relieved to find out, because they knew they had a problem but had been frustrated that no one understood it. Others may require support to deal with painful memories (eg, at school), frustrations about reoccurring mistakes and anxiety about disclosing their dyslexia to friends and colleagues.

7.2 Whether they have been recently diagnosed or not, dyslexic adults may feel vulnerable. They may experience a lack confidence, low self-esteem and stress.

7.3 The line manager should regularly communicate with the employee receiving support for dyslexia until such a time both feel comfortable that the adjustments are working effectively. To support the emotional welfare of the employee, the line manager can recommend the services of Workplace Options and/or Occupational Health and Welfare, although these arrangements remain a personal matter for the employee.

7.4 Additional support to consider, wherever possible, include:

- The way instructions are provided to the employee.
- How information is provided.
- That unnecessary distractions and interruptions are avoided.
- Timing of meetings to permit reflection and preparation time.
- Building planning and reflection time into each day.
- The use of special aids and equipment.
- Fully understanding how best the employee chooses to work and manage their day to day activities.

8 Health and safety risk assessments

8.1 Some duties will be recognised as presenting risks for some employees who have dyslexia, in particular those in operational roles.

8.2 As stated in section 4.1, it is important to remember that the experience of a person with dyslexia will be individual to them. For this reason a Risk Assessment will need to be completed that is unique to that individual. The manager, the employee and the health and safety team should work together in identifying the risks and control measures, using the dyslexia assessment if completed, as a source of guidance. This may form part of the case conference or carried out separately but with the involvement of the employee

8.3 Line managers and the employee have a duty to ensure these risk assessments are reviewed to meet the specific needs of the individual.

9 Attendance at training courses or promotion

9.1 The recommended reasonable adjustments will apply to the employee when attending training courses or applying for promotion (eg Development Centres). Examples of reasonable adjustments might include any of the following; the use of a dictaphone for recording presentations or providing notes in advance of the course. Briefing styles should be adapted in accordance with the specific requirements of the dyslexic employee.

9.2 To assess these needs, course outlines and joining instructions will ask specifically for the employee to disclose their dyslexia and discuss specific requirements directly with the Training School and/or the Equality and Diversity Team. Adjustments should be made in accordance with the individual's statement if this is available.

11 Glossary of terms

Statement: In the UK Statement means the person has a Special Education Needs (SEN) statement.

Reasonable Adjustment: A reasonable adjustment is a change needed to make to the Service in order to meet the duties of the DDA.. Questions arise as to what is reasonable. Whether the adjustment is reasonable will depend on the individual employee and their particular circumstances. The following should be considered:

- Cost
- Practicality
- Effectiveness
- Disruption
- Effect on others
- Health and Safety considerations
- Potential benefits to disabled customers and employees

Positive About Disabled People: The Disability Two Ticks Symbol: The five criteria we follow to ensure people who have a disability have access to and are supported in, our employment opportunities are:

- To interview all applicants with a disability who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy and to consider them on their abilities .
- To ensure there is a mechanism in place to discuss, at any time but at least once a year, with disabled employees, what both parties can do to make sure employees with a disability can develop and use their abilities.
- To make every effort when employees become disabled to make sure they stay in employment.
- To take action to ensure that all employees develop the appropriate level of disability awareness needed to make sure these commitments work .
- To review these commitments each year and assess what has been achieved, plan ways to improve on them and let employees and Job centre Plus know about progress and future plans.

Access to Work programme is a government funded scheme run by Job centre Plus. It provides financial assistance towards the extra costs of employing a person with a disability.

To be eligible:

- Clients of ATW must be disabled as defined under the Equality Act 2010.
- Be over 16 years of age. There is no upper age limit.
- Be in employment or with a date to start employment. Employment tenure can be part time, full time, temporary or permanent.
- Not in receipt of Incapacity Benefit.

Assistance available for dyslexia support is most likely to include special aids and equipment. A dyslexia assessment report must accompany the ATW application form.

The funding available to employees/potential employees of Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service are varied.

Applications to ATW must be made by the individual employee. Cost implications to meet recommended, reasonable adjustments must be discussed with the line manager in the first instance. The line manager may seek further advice and guidance from the Equality Team.

12 Supporting employees with dyslexia in summary:

- 1 Understand the indicators of dyslexia and that your employee may not have declared themselves as having dyslexia to you (or identified it to themselves).
- 2 Do not assume or generalise – consider the uniqueness of a person's dyslexia and agree to support them accordingly.
- 3 Access the support mechanisms designed to support you and your employee make the most of their performance/employment with Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service.
- 4 Use technology and other reasonable adjustments as indicated by a Dyslexia Assessment.
- 5 Ensure that recruitment, promotion and learning and development processes do not unintentionally discriminate against those who have dyslexia. Do not assume that an employee or potential employee cannot be as successful as a person who doesn't have dyslexia.
- 6 Look at your local practices and processes and permit the employee to work in a way that best suits their individual needs wherever possible.
- 7 Encourage better understanding among staff and ensure they can offer the required support.

- End -