



CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMISSION

Report of the Head of Service and Principal Educational Psychologist
Specialist Teaching and Psychology Service (STEPS)

Dyslexia and the role of Educational Psychologists and other professionals – briefing paper

RECOMMENDATION

1. To consider and comment on current situation regarding the assessment and support of pupils with dyslexia and its implications for educational psychologists' practice.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 Educational Psychologists form only one part of the response to children with dyslexia and literacy problems and need to be seen in the context of the full range of activity in this area.
- 2.2 The National Literacy Strategy provides for extra support for children with literacy problems in 'waves.' Wave 1 support is teaching provided through the literacy hour. Wave 2 support is additional support provided for groups of children experiencing literacy difficulties. Wave 3 is support for children with more serious difficulties and it is at this point that the child's progress may be monitored through the SEN Code of Practice. The various types of response are summarised in the following table.

Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3
Inclusion Development Programme IDP	Early Literacy Support ELS for children in Y1	1:1 Tuition
Differentiation within class		
IDP Primary/Secondary	Further Literacy Support for children in Y3	Learn to Read Funnix
Differentiation	Further Literacy Support for children in Y5	Learn to Spell
Assessment for Learning	Yr 6 Boosters for Literacy	Precision Teaching
Every Child a Reader Every Child a Writer	Springboard 3/4/5	Reading Recovery

- 2.3 The Educational Psychology Service makes a major contribution to Wave 3 interventions through the provision of training in the Learn to Read, Learn to Spell, Funnix programmes and Precision Teaching. All of these approaches are 'well founded interventions,' as defined by an independent report from Sir Jim Rose to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families on Identifying and Teaching Children and Young People with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties.
- 2.4 Educational psychologists would only assess pupils with dyslexia or other literacy difficulties if they have not responded to the range of provision outlined above or if their needs are particularly severe.
- 2.5 Dyslexia is and will remain a contentious issue. The Rose Report was published in the summer of 2009 with the intention being that this would provide definitive guidance on Dyslexia. It produced the following definition of dyslexia.
- *Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling*
 - *Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed*
 - *Dyslexia occurs across the range of intellectual abilities*
 - *It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut-off points*
 - *Co-occurring difficulties may be seen in aspects of language, motor co-ordination, mental calculation, concentration and personal organisation, but these are not, by themselves, markers of dyslexia*
 - *A good indication of the severity and persistence of dyslexic difficulties can be gained by examining how the individual responds or has responded to well founded intervention (page 29).*
- 2.6 The Rose Report goes on to conclude that the best approach to identifying pupils with Dyslexia contains three stages (1) *monitoring of progress (in response to well founded interventions)*, (2) *skills assessment*, and (3) *comprehensive assessment*(page 45). It is only at this third stage that the involvement of an educational psychologist is indicated as being necessary. This is the approach that Derby City EPS follows and is contained in the current policy on Dyslexia.
- 2.7 Unfortunately elements of the Rose Review were severely criticised by the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee Evidence Check which found that, *The Rose Report's definition of dyslexia is exceedingly broad and says that dyslexia is a continuum with no clear cut-off points. The definition is so broad and blurred at the edges that it is difficult to see how it could be useful in any diagnostic sense* (paragraph 71).
- 2.8 Parents can be forgiven for being confused about the present state of affairs, in particular that

- best practice involves an assessment over time to determine how the child responds to well founded interventions rather than one off assessments that do not monitor the pupil's progress over time
- the diagnostic criteria are so broad that almost any child can be diagnosed as dyslexic if too much reliance is placed on tests rather than monitoring progress
- irrespective of whether a child receives a diagnosis of dyslexia or not the response in terms of instruction will be broadly speaking the same, that is a well founded intervention.

- 2.9 The EPS is one of three teams that comprise the Specialist Teaching and Psychology Service (STePS). It presently comprises 8.7fte. This represents a reduction of 21% from the level of service in 2002 which stood at 11.1fte. This reduction has been due to increases in salary costs and reductions in budget. It has coincided with the introduction of the Early Years SEN Code of Practice which increased the statutory role of EPs by extending the Code of Practice for SEN to include private, voluntary and independent providers of services to pre-school children.
- 2.10 The main role of the EPS is to assist the Authority meet its statutory duty to identify and make provision for children with SEN aged 0-19. More information can be found regarding the EPS and STEPS in their service handbook. This is available by following the link below.
<http://www.derby.gov.uk/ChildrenSchoolsFamilies/ChildrenLearningDifficulties/SpecialistServicesLearning/specialist+teaching+and+psychology+service+%28STePS%29.htm>
- 2.11 Whether or not a youngster has been diagnosed with a condition of any type (e.g. ASD, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia) of necessity the EPS has to target its resources on those children with the highest levels of need. It does this collaboratively with schools within the framework provided by the SEN Code of Practice giving particular priority to those pupils
- whose SEN or behaviour, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) place them at risk of permanent exclusion or frequent fixed term exclusion
 - who are Children Looked After or children from other vulnerable groups who have SEN or BESD
 - who have particularly severe SEN
 - who have poorly understood SEN that would benefit from psychological assessment
 - whose SEN are poorly understood because they have not responded to relevant and purposeful action at School Action
 - The EPS supports children with lower levels of need through providing advice and training to schools and parents.
- 2.12 To conclude in the present circumstances, given the lack of clarity regarding what constitutes dyslexia and the pressure on scarce resources it is recommended that the EPS continue to:

- respond to dyslexia within the framework provided by the SEN Code of Practice
- target resources at those with the severest level of need in consultation with schools
- continue to provide training in 'well founded interventions' that can be used to both prevent, identify and where necessary respond to dyslexia.

For more information contact: Background papers: List of appendices:	Mick Pitchford 01332 641394 e-mail mick.pitchford@derby.gov.uk None Appendix 1 – Implications
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Appendix 1

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

1. None arising from this report.

Legal

2. None arising from this report.

Personnel

3. None arising from this report.

Equalities impact

4. Continuation of the present EPS policy on Dyslexia will safeguard against the diversion of scarce resources from children with higher levels of need to those with lower levels of need.

Corporate Priorities

5. This report links with Council's priorities of supporting everyone in learning and achieving and helping us all to be healthy, active and independent.