

# Understanding dyspraxia

Dyspraxia falls under the umbrella of neurodivergence. This factsheet looks at some common facts about dyspraxia, how it affects people and how to support colleagues with dyspraxia.

Dyspraxia is a learning difficulty characterised by challenges in movement, co-ordination and balance. This can affect daily living skills, social skills, as well as time management, planning and personal organisation skills.

## **Information about dyspraxia**

It is estimated that 5% of the population worldwide have dyspraxia and it is thought to affect up to 10% of the UK population and up to 2% severely. Dyspraxic employees are creative problem solvers with a variety of skillsets. Understanding ways to support colleagues with dyspraxia will have a lasting influence on the impact they could have on the organisation. Supporting colleagues through reasonable adjustments is a legal requirement and will help ensure their skillsets are maximised.

## **Knowing that dyspraxia is a difference and not a deficiency is important to understand**

Managing dyspraxia in the workplace can be difficult for dyspraxic employees due to low levels of public awareness about dyspraxia. Ensuring dyspraxic employees are fully supported is important and any form of discrimination against employees with dyspraxia must be dealt with appropriately.

As a result, understanding the difference that dyspraxic employees have with motor skills, organisational skills and short-term memory challenges is essential in providing full support. It is also important to understand that dyspraxia has a differing impact on each individual and this of course will impact engagement and inclusion throughout the entire organisation.

### **What are some facts surrounding dyspraxia?**

- The word dyspraxia is derived from the Greek word ‘duspraxi’. Dys; which means difficulty, and Praxis; which means ‘doing’, ‘acting’, and ‘practice’
- It is also known as developmental coordination disorder (DCD)
- Dyspraxia is a lifelong difference in the way in which the brain functions
- It does not affect intelligence and it is not a Learning Disability
- Employees with dyspraxia are known to be creative, highly motivated and empathetic individuals who think differently when it comes to problem solving
- There is a genetic element to dyspraxia, so it can be heredity and common in families
- It is more common in males (3 to 4 times more common) than females
- Although dyspraxia may occur in isolation, the condition frequently coexists with other conditions such as autism, attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD) and dyslexia
- Employees who have been diagnosed with dyspraxia are most likely to satisfy the definition of disability under The Equality Act 2010.

### **What affect does dyspraxia have on people?**

- Dyspraxia has a list of common symptoms, but each person will experience dyspraxia differently and each symptom has a differing degree of severity
- Dyspraxia can affect posture, balance, and movement, as well as hand-eye coordination
- It can impact daily living skills, such as dressing, riding a bicycle or preparing meals
- It can impact social skills such as processing and regulating emotions
- Some also have associated symptoms such as sensitivity to noise, light or touch

- Dyspraxic employees may have difficulty with short-term memory and learning new skills
- It can affect time management, planning and personal organisation skills
- It can also have an affect on ability to write, type, draw and grasp small objects
- It can be difficult to structure written work or produce work legibly and quickly by hand
- Difficulties with laboratory work or practical tasks, particularly those that require accuracy, precision and working with tools or machinery
- Dyspraxia can impact mental health and increase anxiety, depression and social withdrawal
- It can cause low self-esteem and/or impact stress levels

### **What support can be offered for dyspraxic colleagues?**

- Audit the recruitment process to reduce barriers
- Improve understanding and research – it's not a deficiency but a difference
- Create a safe space within the working environment for people to share experiences
- Advertise staff networks and other internal/external support that is available
- Audit training and development to ensure it is accessible
- Consider and possibly adapt performance management system measures
- Actively promote needs assessments and workplace adjustments
- Provide assistive technology
- Use speech-to-text or other computer software, or a smartphone
- Giving adequate time for completion of tasks and avoid handwritten tasks
- Give adequate time for learning new tasks
- Break down tasks into small steps and demonstrate them
- Encourage accuracy of a task first, speed will increase over time once task is accomplished
- Adaptation or avoidance of tasks requiring very good fine motor skills

- Provide guidance for planning where several tasks need to be completed to a deadline
- Provide optional quiet spaces to work or flexibility to work from home
- Be patient
- Provide training to line managers to increase understanding of dyspraxia
- Focus conversations on strengths and ways to develop dyspraxic employees
- Encourage managers to talk openly and support dyspraxia (using the Inclusion Passport)

### Resources:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/developmental-coordination-disorder-dyspraxia-in-adults/>

[https://dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/what\\_is\\_dyspraxia/dyspraxia-at-a-glance/](https://dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/what_is_dyspraxia/dyspraxia-at-a-glance/)

<https://dds.qmul.ac.uk/dyslexia/whatisdyspraxia/>

<https://exceptionalindividuals.com/about-us/blog/is-dyspraxia-a-disability/>

<https://www.gmb.org.uk/sites/default/files/neurodiversity-dyspraxia-guide.pdf>

<http://www.movementmattersuk.org/>

<http://www.movementmattersuk.org/dcd-dyspraxia-adhd-spld/developmental-disordersdocumentation/dcd-and-employment.aspx>

<https://www.dyspraxicadults.org.uk/forums/>

[https://dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2016/06/Employer\\_guide\\_to\\_dyspraxia\\_1.0.pdf](https://dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2016/06/Employer_guide_to_dyspraxia_1.0.pdf)

<https://www.remploy.co.uk/employers/resources/a-z-disabilities/dyspraxia/>

<https://exceptionalindividuals.com/employers/neurodiverse-employee-support/dyspraxia/>