



Guidelines to Support Nursing Learners with Dyslexia in Practice

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Introduction

This work is aimed at learners with dyslexia and professionals such as mentors and practice educators who support the learner in practice, with the aim to maximize the learner's experience. This document briefly explores the learner's and the mentor's roles, the reasons why support is needed, and is followed by the Guidelines as how to support the learner with dyslexia in practice.

The Learner

Dyslexia is a condition which affects people in different ways and to varying degrees. As the learner you are often the best person to outline your particular needs. Consequently, it is your responsibility to explain and discuss with your mentor what your particular needs are, to allow appropriate support to be provided.

The Mentor

You may find that your learner's performance is inconsistent. As a mentor you need to discuss with the learner their preferred learning style and needs and offer appropriate support and time to develop consistency through repeated practice.

Why Learners with Dyslexia Need Support

The nurse's workplace is a complex environment and can be located within many health care settings such as primary, secondary, independent and voluntary sectors. Added to this, the role of the qualified nurse is ever expanding and developing i.e. The NHS Plan (2000).

Nevertheless one factor commonly acknowledged within nursing practice is stress; there is also a known relationship between stress and the increased impact of dyslexia (Gooding 2005).

Higher Educational Institutions (HEI's) must recognize and support such learners, and make 'reasonable adjustments' for employees with dyslexia in practice, in response to Part IV of The Disability Discrimination Act (2005). In addition, HEI's have an obligation to promote the Disability Equality from December 2006.

Practice placements are also required to make 'reasonable adjustments' for learners with dyslexia, responding to Part II of the Disability Discrimination Act. However, reasonable

adjustments are not expected to be made if achieving core proficiencies/ competencies set by Professional Bodies would be compromised.

Guidelines

These Guidelines are divided into 3 main columns:

- Effects dyslexia may have upon nursing activities
- Coping strategies for learners
- Support strategies for mentors

The Guidelines starts with the strengths that dyslexia brings. It is followed by potential challenges that nurses face throughout their daily working pattern in:

- receiving handover,
- reading,
- retention of information,
- verbal communication,
- documentation,
- medication,
- mathematical skills
- left/right confusion
- handover

As dyslexia is a condition which affects people in different ways and to varying degrees, it is possible to develop coping strategies.

Some of the most common coping strategies have been outlined in the Guidelines (please refer to local policies and practices for possible adaptations) to help the dyslexic learner, but also to assist the mentor in supporting the learner to become a safe and effective practitioner.

One of the key issues of learners with dyslexia is low self esteem. Encouraging learners in their effort to meet the challenges, by giving them appropriate support and time, can boost their confidence and create a positive learning and working environment. In light of the demanding

environment that nurses work within, the proposed strategies could also be useful for both, learners and qualified nurses, regardless of whether they are dyslexic or not.

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The last section of the Guidelines provides a summary of the in-depth review of the challenges and coping strategies. Utilising the Guidelines would be one step towards making 'reasonable adjustments' as well as improving and enhancing all learners' experience in practice.

The Future

Work is currently being undertaken to create a handbook for learners to use the Guidelines in a more user friendly format within the practice area.

Other work in progress is to explore how to help learners with other additional learning needs in practice.

If you would be interested in any of these developments, please contact Lucy Stainer or Trisha Ware (contact details below).

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References

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH 2000 **The NHS Plan** London: DOH.

DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT 2005

www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/20050013.htm

Accessed 22/5/06

GOODING, L 2005 Stress Poses Dire Threat to NHS. **Nursing Standard**. 19, 21, 4.

NURSING & MIDWIFERY COUNCIL 2004 **Standards of Proficiencies for Pre-Registration Nursing Education**. London: NMC

Further references of interest:

Florence Nightingale School of Nursing & Midwifery – study skills information related to nursing including exercises: Academic writing; note-taking; numeracy skills; reading; time management; reading; using ICT

www.kcl.ac.uk/nmvc/studyskills/studynneeds/dyslexia/index.html

Lapham, R & Agar, H. (1995) *Drug Calculations for nurses: a step by step approach*. London: Arnold.

National Bureau for Students with Disabilities <http://www.skill.org.uk>

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) <http://www.rcn.org.uk/>

Skill: the Healthcare Professionals with disabilities – information about supporting dyslexic (and disabled) students on clinical practice

www.shef.ac.uk/~md1djw/HCP-disability

Software programme available for drug calculations:

Drug calculation shareware http://www.osl.u_net.com

List of Common Medical Words with spelling tips

www.shef.ac.uk/~med1djw/HCP-disability/dyslexia/Papers/Medspelltips.pdf

Challenges and Coping Strategies *

* (please refer to local policies and practices for possible adaptations)

Nursing Skill	Effects Dyslexia may have upon Nursing Activities	Gifts/Positive influences	Support Strategies for Mentors
Positive qualities	<p>Procedures/routines require repetition for them to be internalised i.e. to know them, which allows for quick/immediate responses/actions</p> <p>Increased patience with client since they can relate to the time needed to process information</p>	<p>Ability to visualise the whole picture</p> <p>Think and perceive the client holistically</p> <p>Alter and create perceptions leading to and using creative thinking skills</p> <p>Intuitive increases an awareness of the whole environment</p> <p>Insightful and a willingness to spend more time with the client</p>	<p>Encourage use of positive skills to help overcome challenges</p> <p>Allow learners to take the time to utilise their skills i.e. when communicating with clients</p> <p>Help identify where learners can use qualities to help increase self esteem/confidence</p>
Nursing Skill	Effects Dyslexia may have upon Nursing Activities	Coping Strategies for Learner	Support Strategies for Mentors
Handover - Receiving report	<p>Weak short term (working) memory</p> <p>Slow writing speed</p> <p>Misspelling of words since written phonetically i.e. as they sound</p> <p>Both word and letter reversal, i.e. b/ d, saw/was</p> <p>Poor hand writing, esp. under pressure</p> <p>Easily distracted</p> <p>Difficulty listening and writing down information</p>	<p>Use of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - note pad - client handover sheet <p>Develop own shorthand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - check information - copy info from others <p>Develop strategies to spell words</p> <p>Create a list of common words used</p> <p>After report go through 'information' received to ensure it is accurate and complete</p>	<p>Help develop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - client handover sheet - short hand <p>Check written information</p> <p>Go through report at a slower pace</p> <p>Check info correctly received, written and understood</p> <p>Help develop word attack skills, plus use of phonics to assist in note taking.</p> <p>Allow time for student to review /understand information received</p>

Nursing Skill	Effects Dyslexia may have upon Nursing Activities	Coping Strategies for Learner	Support Strategies for Mentors
<p>Reading</p>	<p>Weak word attack & word recognition skills</p> <p>Slow reading speed</p> <p>Identify relevant information from lengthy notes</p> <p>Words 'jump' all over the page – Irlen's syndrome</p> <p>Not fully comprehended the information</p>	<p>Ask another to explain rather than read notes, or for the notes to be read to you</p> <p>Seek quiet environment free from distractions to read</p> <p>Take short breaks to aid concentration</p> <p>Use of coloured overlays</p> <p>In an emergency ask another to read information</p>	<p>Help develop word attack and reading skills to be able to find relevant information plus use of phonics to assist pronunciation.</p> <p>Check understanding of terminology used and information required</p> <p>Allow additional time and seek quiet area free from distraction</p> <p>Provide time for explanations, and/or to read information to the student</p> <p>Encourage frequent breaks</p>
<p>Retention & recall of information i.e.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MDT meeting - attending teaching sessions - clients names - name of procedures - taking telephone messages 	<p>Difficulties with information such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - listening to - writing down - retaining/recalling information - sequencing of information - pronunciation of words <p>Weak term memory combined with lack of confidence & poor self esteem</p>	<p>Note pad to write information down</p> <p>Client handover sheet</p> <p>Highlight priorities</p> <p>Use of tick boxes</p> <p>Ask instructions to be repeated to confirm understanding</p> <p>Repetition</p> <p>Demonstrations and repetition to aid the processing of information</p> <p>Use cues within practice to help memory i.e. client notice board for names</p>	<p>Help develop and discuss use of memory aids used by student.</p> <p>Show empathy and understanding of issues</p> <p>Communicate at learners pace and check understanding & retention of information</p> <p>Give concise instructions, and only a few at a time</p> <p>Check understood, and repeat as necessary</p> <p>Check over report/ information etc that is to be given</p> <p>Support to boost confidence & self esteem</p>

Nursing Skill	Effects Dyslexia may have upon Nursing Activities	Coping Strategies for Learner	Support Strategies for Mentors
Speech	<p>Difficulty reading aloud i.e. from client records</p> <p>Mispronounce or unable to pronounce words</p> <p>Employs the wrong word</p>	<p>Provide extra time for articulation</p> <p>Spell word aloud for mentor to pronounce</p> <p>Show 'word' to mentor for them to pronounce</p> <p>Recite word</p>	<p>Encourage & support student to try to pronounce 'word'</p> <p>Allow additional time</p> <p>Support to boost confidence</p> <p>Ask to view 'word' or for 'word' to be spelt aloud to pronounce allowing student to then repeat</p>
<p>Documentation</p> <p>i.e.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - filling in forms - charts - writing clients notes 	<p>Weak short term memory results in poor or inaccurate documentation</p> <p>Difficulty writing concisely</p> <p>Please refer to 'Handover - Receiving Report' for more relevant information</p>	<p>Double check work & ask someone to check your work</p> <p>Write notes early/as you go along</p> <p>Minimise punctuation</p> <p>Copy word/terminology from another source i.e. dictionary, client notes</p> <p>Use alternative word</p> <p>Create a list of phrases to refer too</p> <p>Ask someone to spell word</p> <p>Seek a quiet environment free from distraction</p> <p>Please refer to 'Handover - Receiving Report' for more relevant information</p>	<p>Provide time for student to ask questions</p> <p>Check documentation prior to and once written</p> <p>Allow adequate time and seek quiet area free from distraction</p> <p>Please refer to 'Handover - Receiving Report' for more relevant information</p>

Nursing Skill	Effects Dyslexia may have upon Nursing Activities	Coping Strategies for Learner	Support Strategies for Mentors
Medication	<p>Weak:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - word attack/reading skills - phonics and /or erratic spelling - ability to find relevant information <p>affect the ability to correctly identify, read, pronounce and write drug names and doses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - recall and/or sequencing <p>affects drug administration and drug routines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - handwriting, spelling <p>affects the documentation of medication given</p> <p>Please refer to 'Mathematical skills' for more relevant information</p>	<p>Use of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - note pad to write & calculate medication - create crib sheet for medication - memory aids i.e. dictionary, colour coding - BNF - drug chart to check spelling <p>Check information & ask for information to be checked</p> <p>Repetition esp. of names</p> <p>Demonstrations and repetition to aid retention of routines</p> <p>Collect medication information leaflets to 'learn' medication commonly used within practice setting</p>	<p>Help develop and discuss use of memory aids and word attack skills</p> <p>Create a list of medications used within own particular practice setting</p> <p>Provide time to discuss medication</p> <p>Communicate point by point, checking information and retention of information, use repetition if needed</p> <p>Give concise instructions, and only a few at a time</p> <p>Provide support and empathy</p>
Mathematic skills	<p>Weak:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mathematical calculations affects drug doses and calculations - recall and using learning formulas i.e. IV drip rate - follow sequences - word and letter reversal i.e. +/x or 3/E <p>Please refer to 'Medication' for more relevant information</p>	<p>Check information and calculations methodically, & ask for information to be checked</p> <p>Use of note pad, fingers to calculate medication</p> <p>Use of calculator & drug calculation formulae</p>	<p>Allow extra time</p> <p>Provide time to discuss drug calculation etc.</p> <p>Communicate point by point, checking information and retention of information, use repetition if needed</p> <p>Give concise instructions, and only a few at a time</p> <p>Provide support and empathy</p>

Nursing skill	Effects Dyslexia may have upon Nursing Activities	Coping Strategies for Learner	Support Strategies for Mentors
Left/right confusion	Left/right confusion & short term memory causes disorientation within practice setting i.e. moving clients into different locations, locating equipment, co-ordinating a restraining procedure	Identify your own strategy to manage i.e. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - use of observational cues to provide pathway to location - practice and use of repetition - right is the hand you write with, crossing of hands to identify clients left & right side 	Take the time to orientate learners to practice setting Learner sets up own pathways with own sets of reference and mentor supports by following, only correcting as needed Highlight important and frequently used equipment To work with learners identified strategy or to identify a workable strategy, if needed
Handover - Giving report	Weak: Sequencing of information Pronunciation of words Word attack skills Short-term memory combined with lack of confidence & poor self-esteem. Leads to:- Problems reading aloud Passing on information Receiving information and passing information on to others	Take your time and practice Use of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - note pad - crib sheet - client handover sheet - phonics to help with pronunciation Word attack skills for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reading reports - pronunciation of words 	Help develop and discuss <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - handover/ crib sheets - word attack skills - phonetic spellings Check over <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sequence of info - pronunciation of words - information being given Support to boost confidence Pre-run through report

Summary of Challenges and Coping Strategies (1)

Nursing Skill	Effects Dyslexia may have upon Nursing Activities	Coping Strategies for Learner	Support Strategies for Mentors
Listening & Writing Skills	Weak short term/working memory Slow writing Speed Weak spelling Weak hand writing Difficulty multi-tasking e.g. listening and writing notes	Use of: note pads, client handover sheets, ward specific keywords Develop: own shorthand, checking information, copying from others	Help develop use of note pads etc. Help develop client handover sheets Provide list of ward specific key words Support development of shorthand etc. Check information for accuracy
Reading Skills	Weak word attack skills Slow reading speed Difficulty with comprehending: - information in general - identifying relevant information from notes Words jump – Irlens syndrome	Work on word attack skills Have a practice setting specific word list Ask other to read for you, and then go through and explain information Work in a quiet area Use coloured overlays Take breaks regularly	Help develop: - word attack skills - practice setting specific word list Allow extra time in a quiet area Provide additional time for reading and checking accuracy with student
Retention & Recall Skills	Weak short term/working memory leading to problems retaining and recalling information	Develop strategies: - use of memory aids - writing everything down Highlight priorities Ask for instructions to be repeated and Practical skills to be demonstrated	Help develop memory aids/strategies Communicate at students pace, repeating if necessary, and check understanding Pass on only a few instructions at a time Demonstrate practical skills
Verbal Communication Skills	Difficulty reading out loud Mis-pronunciates words Can employ the wrong word Weak sequencing skills	Practice word pronunciation Allow extra time Get work/report etc checked for accuracy	Help develop strategies to pronunciation words, especially those that are ward specific

Summary of Challenges and Coping Strategies (2)

Nursing Skill	Effects Dyslexia may have upon Nursing Activities	Coping Strategies for Learner	Support Strategies for Mentors
Medication	Difficulty in reading skills, pronouncing and /or erratic spelling Weak sequencing and recall skills Weak handwriting and/or spelling	Develop strategies: - note pad to write & calculate medication - create crib sheet for medication - BNF - use of memory aids i.e. dictionary, colour coding Check spelling with drug chart, asking others Repeat names Demonstrations and repetition to aid retention of routines Collect medication information	Allow extra time for repetition and discuss point by point Help develop and discuss use of memory aids Provide support and empathy
Mathematic skills	Difficultly with: Calculations Recall and using learning formulas Following sequences Word and letter reversal	Methodical checking Ask for information to be checked Use of note pad, fingers Use of calculator & drug calculation formulae	Allow extra time for repetition and discuss point by point Help develop and discuss use of memory aids i.e. dictionary, colour coding Provide support and empathy
Left/Right Confusion	Left/right confusion & short term memory causes disorientation within practice	Identify strategies: - observational cues - repetition - right is the hand you write with - crossing of hands to identify clients left and right side	Orientate learners to practice setting Learner sets up own pathways with own sets of reference, mentor supports by following, only correcting as needed Highlight important and frequently used equipment Work with learners identified strategy or identify a workable strategy

