

**LANCASHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

**Supporting People with Dyslexia**

Responsible Author	Head of Human Resources	Version	Final
Department	Human Resources	Date	12.10.2018
Implemented	Subject to consultation with SMT Nov 2018	Review	

## 1. Scope

The Supporting People with Dyslexia policy is applicable to all staff employed by the Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) and to those interested in joining the Service as an employee.

## 2. Purpose

Dyslexia refers to a specific learning difficulty that mainly affects the development of literacy and language related skills. It is recognised as a disability and therefore falls within the Equality Act 2010. The purpose of this policy is to give guidance to managers, employees and those involved with recruitment; promotion and training of staff about the reasonable adjustments and support Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service will put in place for a person known as having dyslexia.

This policy and its accompanying guidance will enable the Service to provide support to staff with dyslexia, and ensure legal obligations in terms of employment practices, are adhered to. It will raise awareness of the difficulties individuals face and will provide a consistent approach around assessment, reasonable adjustments and the difference between dyslexia symptoms and lack of capability.

## 3. Legal Framework

The Equality Act 2010 includes a new protection against discrimination arising from disability and obliges employers to make reasonable adjustments, ensuring that those with dyslexia are not denied opportunities for employment, training and promotion.

It is 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).

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.

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. Therefore LFRS should identify in advance the needs of both disabled employees and potential disabled employees, to ensure both have equal opportunity to progress their career with LFRS and to remain with LFRS as an employee.

Responsible Author	Head of Human Resources	Version	Final
Department	Human Resources	Date	12.10.2018
Implemented	Subject to consultation with SMT Nov 2018	Review	

The Service also must adhere to the public sector general and specific equality duties in terms of promoting and supporting disability equality. This places responsibility on LFRSs to ensure that when delivering a service, for example community fire safety, that it is delivered in a manner and method that does not adversely impact upon people who may have a disability, for example dyslexia.

#### **4. What is dyslexia?**

4.1 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. It is estimated that around 14% of the population has dyslexia.

4.2 The word ‘dyslexia’ comes from the Greek meaning ‘difficulty with words’. The condition goes beyond earlier perceptions of general literacy problems to include other symptoms such as difficulty with short-term memory, processing of information, perceptual, spatial or motor skills, or indeed difficulties with personal organisation or time-keeping. These difficulties arise because of issues with the way the brain processes the information it receives. Consequently, dyslexic thinkers sometimes have difficulty reading large amounts of text, or writing text; they may also find it difficult to put verbal instructions into practice. All these problems can potentially be overcome by presenting information in a different way or making adaptations where appropriate.

4.3 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, having strengths such as lateral thinking, creativity, trouble shooting and problem-solving skills.

#### **5. Recognising the Symptoms of Dyslexic thinkers and associated conditions**

5.1 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 achieve their full potential. A good start is to ask the person what their specific needs are.

5.2 Some 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. Other people have lived with dyslexia and formed their own strategies for coping and will know what adjustments will best suit them.

5.3 Others do not know they have dyslexia and have reached adulthood having experienced a range of difficulties but without having a formal diagnosis. This may

Responsible Author	Head of Human Resources	Version	Final
Department	Human Resources	Date	12.10.2018
Implemented	Subject to consultation with SMT Nov 2018	Review	

give rise to a range of negative emotions such as low self-esteem and confidence, anger anxiety and confusion.

5.4 Dyslexia can mean that learning is more challenging, depending on the severity of their condition. In addition, the following conditions may also be contributory, overlapping factors or indeed the underlying cause of the dyslexic symptoms.

- a. Dyspraxia – is a neurological condition characterised by a marked difficulty in carrying out routine tasks involving balance, fine-motor control, and kinaesthetic co-ordination (e.g. catching a ball). Problems with short term memory and organisation are typical of dyspraxics.
- b. Verbal Dyspraxia – is a neurological condition characterised by marked difficulty in the use of speech sounds, which is the result of an immaturity in the speech production area of the brain.
- c. Dysgraphia – is a disorder which expresses itself primarily during writing, or typing, although in some cases it may also affect eye-hand co-ordination in such direction, or sequence orientated processes as tying knots or carrying out a repetitive task. Dysgraphia is distinct from Dyspraxia in that the person may have the word written, or the proper order of steps clearly in mind, but carries the sequence out in the wrong order.
- d. Dyscalculia – is a neurological condition characterised by a problem with learning fundamentals and one or more of the basic numerical skills. Often people with this condition can understand very complex mathematical concepts and principles, but have difficulty processing formulas, e.g. reversal of numbers, addition and subtraction.

Those with Dyslexia have a tendency towards Scotopic sensitivity syndrome, which is also known as Meares-Irlen Syndrome. It is a term used to describe sensitivity to certain wavelengths of light which interfere with visual processing.

Common symptoms of dyslexia:

- 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

Responsible Author	Head of Human Resources	Version	Final
Department	Human Resources	Date	12.10.2018
Implemented	Subject to consultation with SMT Nov 2018	Review	

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.

See guidance document for further explanation of associated conditions and suggestions on reasonable adjustments- **HRDYS 1**

## 6. Responsibilities

### 6.1 Managers

- To provide and highlight 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 implement departmental written material using the principles recommended style guide and best practise to make communication easier. **HRDYS2**
- To discuss areas of concern with the Business Partner.

### 6.2 Employees

- Will declare their dyslexia 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.

### 6.3 Human Resources Department

- 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 monitor the progress of applications to ensure that candidates are not experiencing detriment due to their disability.
- To ensure that the disclosure form is actioned in order for the relevant people are informed of this e.g. training centre for recruit course.

Responsible Author	Head of Human Resources	Version	Final
Department	Human Resources	Date	12.10.2018
Implemented	Subject to consultation with SMT Nov 2018	Review	

## 6.4 Training and Operational Review Department

- 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 any training courses.
- To put in place the agreed adjustments to enable employees to fully participate in the development process, promotions and transfers.
- To ensure where possible training material and delivery is prepared to meet the needs of dyslexic thinkers by using the principles recommended style guide and best practise to make communication easier. **HRDYS2**

## 6.5 Health and Safety Department

- To support managers is the development of risk assessments where there are any risks posed by a person's dyslexia.

## 6.6 Occupational Health Team and Employee Assistance

- The process of identifying additional support may lead to unintended emotional consequences. The Occupational Health team and the Employee Assistance Service can support employees with issues relating to emotion and confidence that may result.

## 7. Declaration of Dyslexia

### 7.1 Declaration made at recruitment

In the case of individuals seeking to enter the service (particularly those applying for firefighter roles), applicants will be encouraged to declare a previous diagnosis and assessment to identify reasonable adjustments within the application form. This declaration would usually be made to Human Resources.

Where an individual has been formally diagnosed with dyslexia and provided with an statement of educational need, or specialist assessment, consideration should be given to making reasonable adjustments to this process (e.g. modifying time limits, providing a reader, offering the opportunity to take notes or adjusting exercise presentation style, cream paper) to ensure the process is fair and takes into account the impact of their Learning style. This adjustment where possible will be informed by recommendations provided following a formal diagnosis and any adjustment must be based on a consultation with the individual.

The Service will ensure that selection processes are developed around criteria

Responsible Author	Head of Human Resources	Version	Final
Department	Human Resources	Date	12.10.2018
Implemented	Subject to consultation with SMT Nov 2018	Review	

specifically relevant to the job role and implemented according to best practise. The assessment should not seek to identify dyslexia or other learning difficulties if that condition has no clear relevance to the role.

7.2 A declaration made to the Training Department (Disclosure consent form should also be completed and sent to Human Resources).

This could be a declaration made on a training course (new recruits course, management development programme, promotion board or one off individual courses). The declaration would usually be made to the training department and it is helpful if the employee notifies TOR in advance so that appropriate reasonable adjustments and appropriate support can be provided.

The Training Department should ensure all training material is developed with dyslexia friendly format in mind, e.g. not justified to the right, aerial/Calibri 11/12, minimal abbreviations, plain English, more pictures/diagrams to break up the amount of words and on cream paper.

There is also an option to use coloured overlays, and the use of audio or speech to text software, 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.

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 Centre and/or the Human Resources Business Partner. Adjustments should be made in accordance with the individual's statement if this is available.

### 7.3 Declaration made whilst employed by LFRS

For a number of reasons an existing employee may come to believe that they have dyslexia (or perhaps another learning difficulty). This may arise because of a long standing difficulty with carrying out some task at work and their capability to do the job role is under scrutiny, or whether they perceive they share symptoms with colleagues/relatives/friends that have been diagnosed with dyslexia.

In addition, individuals may have previously been diagnosed, perhaps many years before and wish to have an updated review of their condition.

7.4 Where a line manager (or other) considers an individual's workplace performance is being affected by dyslexia:

Observations of relevant symptoms, perhaps identified through management performance system, or during development interventions, may suggest an individual's workplace performance is being affected by dyslexia.

Responsible Author	Head of Human Resources	Version	Final
Department	Human Resources	Date	12.10.2018
Implemented	Subject to consultation with SMT Nov 2018	Review	

- The individual should be consulted regarding these observations. Sensitivity and confidentiality regarding the discussion of these points is paramount.
- The option of a formal assessment for dyslexia may be considered, with an action plan developed where this is appropriate.
- The nature of the adjustments should be agreed and reviewed periodically, where there is a significant change within work tasks or where the individual is undertaking a different role.

Please see guidance document for further information for the process for supporting employees **HRDYS1** and British dyslexia association style guide **HRDYS2**.

## 8. Ongoing Support

8.1 There are a number of assessments which an employee can take:

- Completing an adult checklist questionnaire **HRDYS3**. This is not a diagnostic assessment; however it is a useful tool to promote a better self-understanding and can be a pointer towards future assessment need - there is no cost with this.
- Individuals can complete 'Quickscan' an online self-assessment - again not a full assessment - but it will flag up dyslexic traits and give an indication of difficulties and adjustments - cost £10. NB: The FBU can offer the 'Quickscan' assessment at no cost to their members.
- Individuals can arrange themselves to have a full diagnostic assessment for formal confirmation which can cost the employee in the region of £395. An assessment would normally include a diagnostic interview, cognitive capacity review and other relevant testing where indicated. This will be conducted by a trained diagnostic assessor, e.g. BDA, Dyslexia Centre North West, and from the results of this appropriate support and adjustments will be determined with the individual, if necessary.

8.2 Reactions to being told you have dyslexia can vary. Some people 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 (e.g. at school), frustrations about reoccurring mistakes and anxiety about disclosing their dyslexia to friends and colleagues.

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

8.4 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

Responsible Author	Head of Human Resources	Version	Final
Department	Human Resources	Date	12.10.2018
Implemented	Subject to consultation with SMT Nov 2018	Review	

manager can recommend the services of Occupational Health or Health Assured, although these arrangements remain a personal matter for the employee.

8.5 Additional support to consider, wherever possible, may 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.

8.6 External Support

### **ACAS**

The following link contains some useful information which assists and offers guidance to Managers on what tools can be used when performance issues present themselves with dyslexic thinkers, autism, ADHD, dyspraxia and other neurological conditions.

[Neurodiversity at work | Acas](#)

**Access to work-** this is a government funded scheme run by Job centre plus. It provides financial assistance towards the extra costs of employing someone with a disability.

Assistance available for dyslexia support is most likely to include special aids and equipment.

## **9. Health and Safety Risk Assessments**

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

9.2 It is important to remember that the experience of a person with dyslexia will be individual to them. For this reason a reasonable adjustment review (**HRDYS 4**) will need to be considered that is unique to that individual. The manager, the employee supported by Health and Safety should work together in identifying the risks and control measures, using the dyslexia assessment if completed, as a source of guidance.

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

Responsible Author	Head of Human Resources	Version	Final
Department	Human Resources	Date	12.10.2018
Implemented	Subject to consultation with SMT Nov 2018	Review	

## 10. Disclosure of information relating to dyslexia and Destruction

Data relating to dyslexia is personal and sensitive data and should only be disclosed to those who need to know and with written consent of the individual. Employees can be assured that any information regarding their disability, including the content of any assessment reports, will be retained by Human Resources confidentially. However, in order to consider and implement any reasonable adjustments, there is a need to share the information with the appropriate members of staff who can provide support, which may include the training department, line manager or colleagues. On this basis, any employee disclosing information relating to the disability and submitting evidence will be required to provide written consent to share this information with relevant individuals within the Service who can provide support (**HRDYS5** – disclosure form).

Responsible Author	Head of Human Resources	Version	Final
Department	Human Resources	Date	12.10.2018
Implemented	Subject to consultation with SMT Nov 2018	Review	