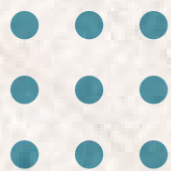


Is Dyslexia a Disability in the UK?

What should you know about dyslexia to support people who have it? And are dyslexic people disabled? This post aims to review some of these questions and define some classifications.



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Introduction

With a better understanding of dyslexia and its terminology, you should feel more confident to support anyone you know who has it.

Dyslexia is an innate condition with far-reaching impacts. As a learning difference, it affects how people understand and process language, including verbal, reading, and writing. For some people, it can also impact short-term memory, concentration levels, and organisation abilities.

But is being dyslexic a disability? Well, while there are some people who don't like to think of themselves as disabled, many people with dyslexia do have difficulties at school, work, or in other situations. And this can leave them exposed to discrimination and stigma.



Is Dyslexia Classed as a Disability in the UK?

Dyslexia is a learning difference experienced by around 10% of the UK population, according to the [British Dyslexia Association \(BDA\)](#). It affects people across the full spectrum of intellectual capabilities and is a lifelong condition.

Because of its complex and hidden nature, parents and teachers can overlook the condition in children. Reports suggest [over two-thirds of people with dyslexia leave school without a diagnosis](#). So, gaining a better awareness of the effects of dyslexia is important to ensure everyone receives the support they need as early as possible.

People with dyslexia often lack phonological awareness. And they may have difficulties with sounding out, blending, and rhyming words. Yet, despite these challenges, there are positives too. These can often include exceptional creativity, problem-solving, and design skills.



Is Dyslexia a Disability Under the Equality Act 2010?

So if you are dyslexic, are you disabled? It's a complicated answer. Because, while dyslexia is a neurodivergent condition and an innate difference in thinking, it's also classed as a disability under the Equality Act 2010. It is a listed protected characteristic in the British anti-discrimination Act to help keep individuals with dyslexia safe from harassment, victimisation, and any other forms of discrimination.

Despite its formal classification as a disability, many people with dyslexia don't think of themselves as disabled. Many prefer to say they're neurodivergent or have a different way of thinking.



Is Dyslexia a Disability in Scotland?

Dyslexia is a disability under British law, which includes Scotland. However, the [Scottish Union Learning](#) classifies dyslexia as a learning difference. And that's because many people with dyslexia don't like to consider themselves disabled.

Whichever phrase they use, the Equality Act 2010 protects people with dyslexia living in England, Wales, and Scotland from all forms of discrimination.



When Was Dyslexia First Recognised as a Disability?

Rudolf Berlin, a German ophthalmologist, coined the term 'dyslexia' in 1883. He had noticed many of his clients would struggle with reading words and formalised the medical term of dyslexia as a clinical diagnosis.



Does Dyslexia Count as a Disability When Applying for Jobs?

Because the Equality Act 2010 classifies dyslexia as a disability, all [employers are duty-bound to make reasonable adjustments](#) for candidates and employees. The types of reasonable adjustments may include giving extra time for tasks and providing assistive technology like captioning and note-taking software.

Since disability is a protected characteristic in the Discrimination Act, applicants and successful hires should be safe from the threat of discrimination. Of course, applicants must disclose their condition to prospective recruiters first. However, it is common for neurodivergent people to not disclose their condition for fear of stigma.



Is Dyslexia a Learning Disability or Learning Difficulty?

So what type of disability is dyslexia? The UK considers dyslexia to be a learning difficulty. This is different from the US where they accept dyslexia as a learning disability.

Sir Jim Rose first defined dyslexia as a learning difficulty in his 'Rose Review', published in the UK in 2009. Since then, the BDA has adapted his definition to the following:

“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.”

Contrary to the term 'learning difficulty', US-based charity IDA (International Dyslexia Association) classifies dyslexia as a language-based learning disability. And they explain why on their website:



“Dyslexia affects individuals throughout their lives; however, its impact can change at different stages in a person’s life. It is referred to as a learning disability because dyslexia can make it very difficult for a student to succeed academically in the typical instructional environment.”



Is Dyslexia a Cognitive Disability?

Dyslexia isn't usually considered a cognitive disability. [Neurological research](#) from Germany indicates that dyslexia “is not equivalent to a general cognitive impairment”.

Further evidence in a 2023 literature review entitled “[The Use of Cognitive Tests in the Assessment of Dyslexia](#)” suggests the process of diagnosing dyslexia involves the discovery of unexpected or unanticipated difficulties that contradict the individual's abilities and experiences. But for intellectual disabilities, clinicians would expect to find cognitive difficulties in the individual.

It's important to note that a person's level of intelligence is not affected by dyslexia. The condition is a learning difficulty and should not hold anyone back from achieving their full potential – when they receive the correct interventions.



Is Dyslexia a Hidden Disability?

Dyslexia is a specific learning difference that is also a hidden disability. This is because many people with the condition do not disclose it to their employers, colleagues, and sometimes friends and family. Since the condition also exists on a spectrum, the impact of having dyslexia can show up in different ways. Some of the types of dyslexia can include:

- **Phonological Dyslexia:** This is the classic presentation of dyslexia relating to phonics, i.e. how a word sounds and reads on a page. Individuals must learn to decode words to understand how to pronounce them.
- **Surface Dyslexia:** This tends to be more of a surface presentation of dyslexia, where people display problems pronouncing the same sounding words that read differently, e.g. threw and through.
- **Rapid Naming Dyslexia:** Identified as having difficulties with word retrieval and processing speed.



- Double Deficit Dyslexia: Double deficit dyslexia suggests individuals have problems with two areas which are often reading naming and phonological dyslexias.
- Visual Dyslexia: Text on a page can appear blurred on the page and people may have problems keeping place within the text.

Dyslexia affects around 1 in 10 people. So while it's a common condition, it still isn't well understood. People with dyslexia continue to face stigmas and judgements that not only lead to low self-esteem but increase the chances they'll conceal the condition.



Is Dyslexia a Disability for PIP?

PIP stands for Personal Independent Payment. It's a form of extra money to support people who have a long-term physical or mental illness or disability. People with dyslexia do fall into the category of having a disability, by law, and can apply for a PIP to receive extra money.

According to sources, in 2022 there were [34,745 people in Scotland, England and Wales](#) with dyslexia, dyspraxia, specific learning disorders and a speech or language disorder who received weekly support of up to £156.90 through PIP.



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