



**Scotland -Wide Audit of Education Authority Early Years Policies
and Provision regarding Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) and
Dyslexia**

**A report on a research study commissioned by the Scottish Executive
Education Department (SEED).**

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Executive Summary

This report is based on research commissioned by the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED). The research was commissioned to establish the range and extent of policy and provision in the area of SpLD/ and Dyslexia. The purpose was to provide a greater understanding of the range of early years intervention strategies targeting children with specific learning difficulties and dyslexia in education authorities across Scotland. The research was conducted between January and June 2004 by a team from the University of Edinburgh. The information was gathered from a questionnaire sent to all education authorities (One hundred per cent response rate was achieved). Additional information was also obtained from a number of extended interviews with a selection of authorities and from additional materials provided by education authorities.

The responses indicated that nine education authorities in Scotland have explicit policies on dyslexia and eight authorities have policies on SpLD. It was noted however that most authorities catered for dyslexia and SpLD within a more generic policy framework – either, one involving all children, or children with special educational needs. SEN related policies had titles such as ‘SEN - Meeting the Challenge; Making Changes’ and ‘Support for Learning Framework for Learning Difficulties.’ Examples of more generic policy titles were ‘Access to Learning for All’ and ‘Inclusive Education Policy.’

Most authorities translated the policy into guidelines, twenty two examples of how this was done were noted. Again the titles of the guidelines included both generic titles, such as, ‘Authority Support Pack’ and ‘Good Practice Guide’ and dyslexia related titles, such as, ‘Council Guidance on SpLD/ Dyslexia’ and ‘Practice Guidelines for Dyslexia/SpLD.’ There were thirteen such examples of guidance documents for teachers with SpLD/ Dyslexia in the title.

In addition to issuing guidelines, policy was disseminated through Head Teachers meetings and in-house courses on the guidance provided from policy.

In relation to identification thirty six specific tests, or procedures, were mentioned, although a number of these were used by single authorities. Observation as a procedure was rated high by most authorities. Eleven authorities operated a formal staged process of intervention. Generally authorities supported a broader understanding of the role of identification

and assessment and the use of standardised tests was only part of a wider assessment process. This included: liaison with support for learning staff, P1 teacher observation, P2/3 Interim screening, home visiting service and parental discussion.

It was however noted that good practice in identification and intervention was not necessarily dependent on the existence of a dedicated policy on SpLD/ Dyslexia.

Over fifty different intervention strategies/programmes were noted in the responses. Most of these were well known programmes that are widely accepted as suitable for children with dyslexia/SpLD. A number of authorities however had initiated and developed customised, and in some cases innovatory, approaches. Multidisciplinary consultation seemed to characterise the stage process of identification as well as the introduction of specific specialised or innovatory approaches.

Just over half of the authorities stated that they had special measures in place for the transition of children, who were considered to be displaying indicators of dyslexia, from nursery to primary school. All education authorities had general transition arrangements in place that could also accommodate to the needs of children with indicators of dyslexia.

One of the purposes of this audit was to identify the existence of good/innovatory practice. Information on this was therefore requested in the audit questionnaire and followed up with individual interviews with a sample of the local authorities.

Twenty four authorities responded positively to this question indicating that they had examples of good practice. The report describes twelve of these examples in detail (see Part 5).

Although the authorities could not provide specific figures on training the responses provided a general indication of the nature of the courses offered, how they were organised, how the information on these courses was disseminated and how the participants were selected. All authorities offered some form of training in this area.

There appeared to be three main avenues of training:

- External accredited and presented courses (usually part of a university modular scheme).
- In-house courses on specific areas aimed at class teachers/ probationer teachers and often run by Support for Learning Teachers.
- Top-up events involving nationally recognised speakers.

The concept of dyslexia-friendly approaches was explicitly mentioned in two returns. Many of the approaches indicated by the authorities however could be considered to be consistent with the practice of dyslexia-friendly procedures. One of the striking features to emerge from the responses was the quantity and the diversity of projects authorities are engaged in – all with some relevance to the areas of dyslexia, SpLD and early years.

Individual variation in terms of formulating policy, assessment, intervention and training seemed to be more obvious than the similarities. That, in itself, is not necessarily a negative factor, but it may result in confusion for families moving from one geographical area of Scotland to another.

Some indicators for further investigation were identified, such as the quality and the impact of some of the identification procedures, the intervention strategies and the staff development programmes promoted by authorities.

Part 1

Background and Introduction

1.1 Background to report

This report is based on research commissioned by the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED). The research was commissioned to establish the range and extent of policy and provision in the area of SpLD and Dyslexia. It is hoped this will provide a greater understanding of the range of early years intervention strategies targeting children with specific learning difficulties and dyslexia in education authorities across Scotland.

This research is an audit – an initial investigation to report on what is presently in place across the country. The information contained in the report may, in future, form the basis of a national good practice study that would aim to share information and ideas between education authorities.

1.2 Aims

The aim of the audit therefore is to provide a comprehensive picture of the policies education authorities across the country have in place to address specific learning difficulties/dyslexia in early years settings. Early years in this context refers specifically to the first three years of

primary school, although the research also covered the arrangements for the transition into primary school.

The research study aimed to gather information in relation to SpLD/ Dyslexia focussing on the following:

- The range and nature of the policies in Education Authority in and how these are disseminated.
- The identification and assessment processes in place, and how that system operates within the authority.
- The range of intervention strategies implemented within the authority and the basis, management and evaluation of these strategies.
- The nature, range and accessibility of support that is accessed within the authority to augment the assessment and intervention strategies.
- The transitional arrangements that are in place to facilitate transfer into primary school.
- The levels of staff training and how training is managed, monitored and evaluated.
- The nature and extent of local innovations currently underway in Education Authorities.
- The extent to which SpLD/ Dyslexia is accommodated within strategic plans and areas of priority within the authority.

Essentially this research is a mapping exercise that catalogues policies and provision, used within the context of the early stages of primary education in each local authority. This report therefore provides a catalogue of this information, but additionally it provides some contextual comments based on our understanding of the field and follow-up extended interviews with a sample of education authority representatives.

1.3 Method of data collection

The data was collected in three main ways. These were:

- **Questionnaire** – a detailed and comprehensive questionnaire was developed by the research team, piloted with one Education Authority and approved by the Scottish Executive before it was submitted to all Education Authorities.

All questionnaires were sent to the same level of management within the authority - Head of Services. The questionnaire was however completed by representatives from different professional groups. For example in some authorities the questionnaire was completed by

Principal Educational Psychologists and in others by Support for Learning Managers.

After initial distribution of the questionnaire a number of follow-up phone calls was necessary until eventually 100% return rate was achieved.

- **Face to Face interviews/ Telephone follow-up/ analysis of supplementary information** – information was obtained from fourteen authorities – the sample was selected after considering a number of factors. These included the presence of an innovation, or good practice; the authorities satisfaction with current practice, or the lack of a policy on SpLD/Dyslexia. The responses from these interviews/ analysis are shown within the report (Part 5).

The data was collected between February and May 2004.

1.4 Completion of Questionnaires

The range and detail of the responses from authorities varied. Some authorities responded with vague and general comments, while others provided considerable detail on each of the sections. The questionnaire was quite lengthy and for that reason authorities were given a significant amount of time to complete it. All authorities completed the questionnaire.

Although one person within the authority had a named responsibility for completing the questionnaire, it was clear from the follow-up interviews that were conducted, that the questionnaire completion in many instances involved contributions from a number of professionals within the authority.

Part 2 Policy

2.1 Dyslexia/Specific Learning Difficulties

It is now widely accepted that the term dyslexia and specific learning difficulty (SpLD) have different meanings and can relate to different populations (Reid 2003). Dyslexia however can still be seen as a sub-set of specific learning difficulties. It was not too surprising therefore that 23 authorities covered dyslexia and specific learning difficulty in the same policy document. It is perhaps of some concern that only 9 authorities indicated that they had a distinctive policy on dyslexia and only 8

authorities declared they had a dedicated policy on specific learning difficulties. This would indicate that some authorities cater for both dyslexia and specific learning difficulties in a more generic policy document.

Examples of the titles of such documents are shown below:

- Support for learners policy
- An additional support needs policy
- Inclusive education policy
- Support for learning file
- A manual for support for learning
- Support for learning framework for learning difficulties (not for SpLD)
- Pupil support guidelines
- Support for children and young people
- Access to learning for all
- SEN- Meeting the challenge; making changes

This practice can be appropriate, but it can be deceptive and provide an impression that dyslexia/SpLD is not being given a high enough priority, because the policy does not explicitly mention dyslexia/ SpLD in the title. This, of course, may not be the case. In fact in one of the follow-up interviews (Authority A see Part 5) it was noted that although they did not have an explicit policy for dyslexia the identification and intervention procedures considered, and provided for, dyslexia.

2.2 Accessibility

The availability and accessibility of policy is important. Teachers and managers have to be aware of the existence of the policy, how to obtain it as well as understand its implications for classroom practices. Some authorities therefore translated the policy into guidelines, or provided appendices to the policy specifically on dyslexia/SpLD.

The responses on how the local authority policy can be accessed by teaching and management staff included the following:

- Dyslexia Guidelines (revised)
- Appendix on SpLD/Dyslexia in Support for Learning in Primary Schools: A Collaborative Approach
- Good Practice Guide
- Working practice guidelines, support for learning file
- Council guidance; SpLD/ Dyslexia

- Practice guidelines for Dyslexia/SpLD
- Support for Learning: Framework and service guidelines
- Guidelines within the Education for all Handbook
- Booklet Dyslexia/SpLD
- Understanding, identifying and responding to SpLD/Dyslexia
- Managing inclusion; guidelines on pupils with SpLD/Dyslexia
- Authority support pack
- Towards effective learning and teaching- addressing the issue of specific learning difficulties
- Access to learning for all
- Skills for life
- Every parent every child
- Assessment of dyslexia and SpLD (Psychological Service paper)
- In-service Training Pack and handbook for Dyslexia
- Literacy base leaflet

2.3 Awareness of policy/guidelines

The above list indicates an effort has been made to relate formal policy into practice and guidelines for authority staff. (This is dealt with later in this report). This was generally achieved through the use of appendices to policy documents or separately produced user-friendly booklets for teachers and for parents. One example of the type of appendices provided from one of the policy documents received is shown below:

(extracted from Policy on Specific Learning Difficulties – Authority F)
(see part 5)

- Appendix 1 – the stepped approach to meeting the needs of children who may be dyslexic (5 steps)
- Appendix 2 strategies to help children at the early stages
- Appendix 2A strategies to help dyslexic children in school
- Appendix 3 checklist of early observations which may point to specific learning difficulties (dyslexia).
- Appendix 3A checklist of early indicators of dyslexia/reading difficulties at the early stages of primary school
- Appendix 3B checklist of indicators of dyslexia at the later stages

It was outwith the scope of this research exercise to assess the actual impact of policy from a classroom perspective. Nevertheless the research did provide an opportunity for respondents to indicate how this can be achieved.

The most popular method of ensuring teachers have the opportunity to be informed is through translating the policy into a set of practice guidelines specifically for teachers. All schools would have a copy of these guidelines and they are made available for staff to consult. Electronic copies were also available in the majority of authorities. There was also some effort to bridge policy and practice by using staff development opportunities to disseminate policy. Head Teachers meetings were a popular source of dissemination.

Others avenues used included:

- Direct training seminars
- Workshops for management including the use of an awareness raising pack
- School psychological service
- Central and cluster based in-service programmes
- Termly briefings to head teachers and support team leaders
- Formal launch with school representation.

The assumption is that this cascade model is sufficient to inform staff within the authority and to monitor the effectiveness of policy. Some authorities are currently revising documentation and this would assume that they have embarked on a monitoring and evaluation role and have decided to revise policy in the light of current legislative developments. There are still questions and issues however on how policy can actually impact on teachers.

Some of the examples of the responses specifically to that question included:

- ‘in-service and specific support for early years teachers’
- ‘school management are expected to keep staff up to date’
- ‘by head teachers through staff development opportunities’
- ‘included in probationer training’
- ‘part of ASN teacher manual’
- ‘in-school workshops for all staff’

In the main, the responses to the questions ‘how are school management made aware of the policy?’ and ‘how are teachers made aware of policy?’ were almost identical. The thrust of the responses focussed on cascading information via the school management, although in some cases there were opportunities for teachers to enrol on ‘in-house’ staff development courses on dyslexia - developed by the authority.

2.4 Policy - Guidance for Practice

The type of guidance contained in policy consisted of the following:

- Guidance on special arrangements for national testing
- Reference to a staged intervention procedure
- Authority assessment framework
- Target setting for special needs
- Assessment criteria set by the authority
- Guidance on strategies for teaching the child with SpLD
- Joint planning with parents on appropriate intervention
- Specific guidance on teaching strategies/appropriate curriculum and resources
- Parent and pupil leaflet
- Resource packages
- Booklets on assessment and teaching strategies

Example from some of these are shown below.

“ The new support pack...on dyslexia (provides) guidance aimed at classroom teachers –both primary and secondary. There are identification checklists and guidance on assessment –with an emphasis on the cycle of contextual assessment, intervention embedded in the staged intervention system. There are specific curricular strategies outlined at both Primary and Secondary level”

“The policy is included in the ‘Inclusive Education and Support for Learning manual which contains advice, guidance and referral procedures for identification, assessment and support for children and young people with special educational needs”.

“educational psychologists advise, area support for learning teams give training to teachers,, support for learning manager give training to schools and area teams, development officer give training and support to schools, technology service (SEN) staff give support and advice to individual pupils, EPA give training to support staff. ”

“Pupil Support Guidelines are in all schools, and there was accompanying training on staged intervention, IEPs and all aspects of supporting children with additional support needs when the guidelines were launched. The new dyslexia pack will be launched as a high profile initiative”.

Some additional means of providing guidance on dyslexia included:

- In-service courses run by early intervention teams.
- In-service offered by Support for Learning teachers through staff development training.
- Dyslexia Advisor nominated by each school.
- Staff development directory,
- ASN teachers manual,
- Practitioner Networking for teachers interested in dyslexia
- Preparation of Dyslexia strategy pack
- Modules in dyslexia.

2.5 Policy Evaluation

A number of authorities have /are issuing revised guidelines and policy. This would indicate some ongoing evaluation takes place. Although only one authority indicated that their policy had been formally evaluated, a number indicated that they intend to revise policy or that the policy was undergoing revision.

Some of the specific responses to this question on evaluation included

- “Educational psychologists revised policy”
- “Early screening initiative been evaluated”
- “Dissemination process been evaluated”
- “ current evaluations indicate that 75% of primary schools continue to use (the early screening initiative approach) at P 2/3”

From these and other responses it can be noted that significant components of policy, such as screening, may be the subject to more evaluative scrutiny than the policy as a whole.

2.6 National Priorities and Strategic Plans

Virtually all authorities suggested a link between the policy and either SEED initiatives, or the authorities strategic plan.

Some of the comments included:

- “ fits in with the strategic plan for early intervention”
- “linked with recommendations made by HMI”
- “firmly based on practice emanating from the Early Intervention Strategy and the Pre-School Curriculum Framework document”.
- “Reflects councils vision statement ‘Learning to Succeed’”
- “relates to the EPSEN stages”
- “consistent with ‘First Steps in Literacy’ document”
- “part of Support for Learning Manual”

- “links in with LA Support for Learning Policy and Guidelines: Promoting Inclusion.....”
- “Fits in to the authorities Inclusive Education and Support for Learning Policy”

2.7 Is Dyslexia and SpLD a Priority Area?

Some authorities specifically suggested that dyslexia was a priority area although most viewed dyslexia within a broader framework. For example some comments included;

- “meeting the additional support needs, including those with SpLD/ Dyslexia continues to be a priority within the authorities strategic plan for educational provision.”
- “dealt with as part of the Accessibility Strategy”

2.8 What is the significance of a priority area?

One authority perhaps provides a pointer to this when it indicated that “this (dyslexia) has been a priority area for the last 8 years with extensive staff development opportunities, resources, ICT developments and ICT resourcing”.

This type of input is however present in other authorities who do not necessarily single out dyslexia as a priority area. As one authority remarked ‘responding to all additional support needs is a priority for the authority’.

It appears that authorities see dyslexia as one of a number of priority areas. This was supported by one of the larger authorities that indicated that ‘dyslexia is one of a number of priority areas including autistic spectrum disorders, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, speech and language disorders and sensory impairment’.

A number of authorities therefore indicated that dyslexia was no more of a priority area than ‘other areas of learning needs.’

2.9. Barriers to implementing policy

More than half the authorities indicated that they had not encountered any significant barriers that could prevent the implementing of the policy. The barriers that were identified by the other authorities included:

- Concern over numbers of children requiring support
- Requests for additional training
- Reluctance to label too early
- Lack of staff awareness that results in late identification

- Dyslexia is only one of a range of ‘inclusion issues’
- Lack of clarity of views on dyslexia
- P1 teachers not fully valuing the nursery IEP
- “The ‘waiting for an assessment’ mentality among some teachers is not helpful – they should be able to use their skills and experiences to intervene appropriately even if an assessment has not been conducted”.

This latter point is extremely important and one that underlines a number of current issues on identification and intervention in relation to SpLD/dyslexia. The key point is that one of the most effective means of intervention with children with dyslexia is through interactive teaching, developing thinking and metacognitive skills, ensuring over learning and planning and presentation of materials, tasks and identifying the barriers to learning. This supports the view of the authority response above that a ‘wait for an assessment’ should not preclude the development of appropriate teaching approaches. A formal assessment may detect additional information about the child, but the intervention should not be put ‘on hold’ until that time. It can be suggested that such formal assessment may not always be necessary if the barriers to learning - examining how tasks are developed and presented and the ease of curriculum access - is the principal focus.

The type of responses from authorities in relation to overcoming the barriers to implementation of the authorities policy include:

- Implementing catch-up programmes
- Extensive and comprehensive training including early identification, special assessment arrangements, ICT, study and learning skills, compulsory input in probationer training.
- Issuing updated guidelines
- Centralised on-line version of CPD course on dyslexia that can be accessed by all schools

Comment

The policy requirements necessary to help to meet the needs of children with dyslexia/SpLD are recognised by all authorities. These requirements however may not be explicitly detailed in a discrete policy on dyslexia/SpLD, but rather catered for within a more generic policy, either on Special Educational Needs, or within an Education for All approach. Policy was disseminated to teaching staff mainly through staff development or through Head Teachers. Most authorities augmented policy with guidelines or handbooks on Dyslexia/ SpLD and the quality of those received by the research team from the authorities was high. A

multidisciplinary approach to the development of policy and guidelines was evident in most authorities involving the Psychological Service, Advisory Services and Support for Learning Staff.

The notion of priority given to Dyslexia/ SpLD was not readily accepted by all authorities and many indicated that meeting the needs of all was the priority. Nevertheless even authorities who responded in this way still catered for Dyslexia/ SpLD within their Policy/Guidelines.

Part 3

Identification

Identification is a crucial area and one that needs to be a priority in the early years. Nationally there has been a considerable interest in early identification and a number of specific dyslexia-focussed assessment procedures have been commercially available for some time now, particularly the Dyslexia Early Screening Test (Fawcett and Nicolson 1996) and the CoPs computerised assessment procedures (Singleton 1996). Some authorities indicated that they were currently looking at the recently published Special Needs Assessment Profile (SNAP) Weedon and Reid 2003) as it involves parents and incorporates for a wider range of SpLD's. The responses indicated that the DEST/DST were the most popular tests to be used showing equal popularity with the, now rather dated, Aston Index.

3.1 Observation

As a procedure, observation rated very high. This included systematic teacher observation as well as more informal observation and 'dynamic assessment' – describing the pupil's strengths and weaknesses and suggesting the type of supports that would be most useful.

3.2 Range of Tests Used

It is interesting to note the range of tests used.

Thirty six specific tests or procedures were mentioned although a number of these were used by single authorities.

Identification is however more than referring to a test, particularly in the early years. This was noted by eleven authorities who indicated that they used a staged intervention process that involved more than reference to tests alone. These included: liaison with support for learning staff, P1 teacher observation, P2/3 Interim screening, home visiting service and parental discussion.

Some authorities referred to checklists and an example of one such checklist offered by an authority is shown in the appendix to his report. Part 5 of this report also details a number of identification procedures used by authorities.

Comment

The most popular method mentioned in the responses was a stage process of identification involving input from a range of individuals within the authority and this process also included input from parents. Some of the customised screening and checklists used were quite sophisticated and often tied in with early years screening (see Part 5). Although a great amount of individual tests were mentioned these were not used in all cases and represented part of the authorities battery of tests that could be accessed as, and when necessary. The key identification processes seemed to revolve round early screening, observation and multidisciplinary discussion involving the class teacher and /or specialist teacher.

Part 4

Teaching/ Intervention /Strategies

4.1 Addressing dyslexia

i) Intervention strategies/resources

It is widely accepted that there is a considerable amount of resources and strategies that can be used to address dyslexia in the classroom. The responses from the Local Authorities provided in total a list of over fifty different resources and strategies. What are of course of interest are why those particular resources were selected, and the extent to which the authority has evaluated the use of these resources.

Some information on these points was obtained from the selected interviews held with individuals and teams representing the local authority and these will be discussed later in this report.

The research team was familiar with most of the resources used, they are used nationally and include those recommended by Dyslexia Associations throughout the U.K. Some authorities provided an additional resource catalogue for teachers.

Table 1 below illustrates the range of strategies/resources identified by the authorities. The research team have divided these into the following three categories;

- Individualised/small group approaches

- Curriculum focussed approaches
- Whole class activities

Table 1*

*(note some of these can be placed into more than one of the categories but only one category has been selected for each resource)

Individualised/ Small group approaches	Curriculum Focussed- approaches	Whole class/school activities
Units of Sound	differentiated curriculum	multisensory methods
Onset and rime	differentiated teaching	movement programmes/rocker and wobble boards
specialised technology	differentiated outcomes	brain gym as a whole class activity
Toe by Toe	Informed assessments/evidence based	access to bottled water on a daily basis
Word wasp	Target setting	synthetic phonics
Phonological Awareness training	IEP/IAP (as required)	addressing Learning styles
Paired reading		Thinking skills
		Dyslexia–friendly schools award (1 authority)
Phonic codecracker		Launch into reading success
Ann Arbour tracking		Phonological approaches to teaching (PAT)
Write from the start		Jolly Phonics
Beat Dyslexia		Range of ICT
Alpha to Omega		Mindmapping
Stile Dyslexia		Study skills
Dyslexia Games Pack		Development of whole class multi-sensory approaches
Reading Reflex		Development of meta-cognitive skills
Sound Linkage		Derbyshire file for

		dyslexia-friendly schools
Support through literacy base		Alpha Smart
Simultaneous Oral Spelling		Phonological awareness procedures
Indirect learning system for dyslexic pupils		Co-writer
Earobics		Pen friend
Alphabet Arc		Wellington Square
Teaching Reading and Spelling to the Dyslexic Child		Oxford Reading Tree
Spellwell		Fuzzbuzz
		'Thinking about it' (authority scheme that uses metacognitive and phonological awareness approaches)
		Work on self-esteem

ii) Referral for Specialist Assistance

It is important that specialist provision /assistance, if available, should be easily accessed. There is a range of methods /procedures currently being utilised in the authorities and these are detailed below.

- 4 Staged referral process:
 1. school based personnel consult and plan strategies
 2. consultation with outside agencies
 3. Agencies undertake work agreed and report to parents and school
 4. Individualised plan drawn up
- Agreed protocols between Educational Psychologist and schools
- Direct referral to Principal Officer (Support for Learning)
- Stepped process involving EP specialist and school specialist in dyslexia
- Schools can request support from area support co-ordinators or referral to visiting teacher support services
- Base-line assessment follow-up
- Summary of Intervention

- Cluster support
- Collaborative approach involving parents, pupils and support services
- Referrals to learning centres
- Children services referral form
- Head teacher referral to pupil support/EP

Generally most authorities indicated a structured and clearly defined referral process to access specialist and outside agencies. This was either direct referral from school head teacher or a stepped/stage process beginning with internal consultation.

4.2 Nursery/Primary Transition

The responses indicated that early intervention is widely recognised as being crucial and that indicators of dyslexia can be noted in children in the pre-school and early years stages.

This contrasts with the previous tendency of a ‘wait and see,’ approach. This approach meant that often the child had become entrenched in the cycle of failure before any specific intervention was implemented. As a result the discrepancy between the chronological and the reading age became wider and consequently more difficult to bridge. Self-esteem and subsequent behaviour difficulties then became major issues and these factors exacerbated the literacy difficulties experienced by the child.

4.3 The Authorities Responses

All authorities recognised the importance of transition to primary school and most education authorities, in this study, considered that the information contained within their nursery transition document was sufficient, or at least helpful, in identifying children who may be at risk of dyslexia in primary one. Some of the authorities that were not completely happy with the arrangements are shown below:

- Two authorities thought their document was not sufficient at present,
- two commented on the fact that the helpfulness of the information was only as good as the ability of the primary school to interpret it and
- two authorities considered the terminology ‘at risk’ to be unhelpful and stated that any child who had not achieved appropriate pre-literacy skills would be offered additional support and that the idea of a ‘risk assessment’ was not appropriate.

Examples of comments from authorities who felt the transition document was helpful are given below.

“There has been considerable work done to develop early reading phonological awareness in young children – though not focussed on identifying dyslexia, it is used to highlight those struggling with letter sounds, rhymes and patterns. There is scope to include this in the nursery profile, which does not make specific reference to dyslexia but does identify difficulties with language and communication.”

“From the point of view that it would provide the initial alert system. Thereafter school systems would be monitored and review progress drawing on further assessment as and when indicated”.

4.4 General Transition Arrangements

Every Education Authority had policies in place for the transition from an education authority nursery to an authority school. All authorities made provision for the transfer of the ‘transition document’ from pre-school to school. Other procedures/activities used by authorities to supplement the ‘transition document’ included the following:

- the provision of learning packs before transfer,
- visits for children and their parents/carers from nursery to receiving school,
- liaison between nursery/primary staff,
- information leaflets/copies of school handbook for parents/carers and
- nursery staff working in the primary one class for the first few weeks of the school term.

The above activities are designed for all pupils transferring from nursery to primary and not only those identified ‘at risk.’

Additionally some authorities mentioned the following:

- home-link teacher visits,
- multi-agency discussions,
- extra support from nursery nurse in first few weeks of primary.

It can be assumed that these activities are prioritised for children with a learning need that has already been identified.

Primary schools receiving children from private nurseries in almost all cases operated on a partnership basis with the private providers and similar procedures were in place for the education authority nurseries.

The responses indicated that transfer procedures are in place for the vast majority of children entering primary one from an authority, or a partnership nursery. Some children however do not have nursery

experience and in such cases most authorities offered parental interviews and visits.

Other forms of information passed to the receiving schools from the education authority included:

- verbal information,
- information from review meetings,
- information from pre-school education visitor / early years advisor,
- nursery IEP and
- reports from specialist services, eg Speech and Language Therapist, Educational Psychologist.

4.5 Transition and Dyslexia

Just over half of the authorities stated that they had special measures in place for the transition of children considered to be displaying indicators of dyslexia. These measures included:

- careful monitoring in Primary One,
- extra contact with parents/carers,
- specific interventions for identified difficulties,
- referral to external agencies – Speech & Language Therapist /Educational Psychologist,
- immediate support from support for learning teacher,
 - learning assistants,
- visits from Support for Learning team and
- individualised curriculum.

Just under half of the authorities however had no specific measures in place.

Comment

It was clear from the responses that authorities recognised a range of approaches for dealing with Dyslexia/SpLD and these approaches focussed on the task, through differentiation, as well as through using specific child-focussed dyslexia resources. Some authorities were willing to engage with newer less known resources, but most utilised established resources that are widely recognised as appropriate for children with dyslexia.

Although only two authorities mentioned the phrase dyslexia-friendly, most, through our understanding of the responses, were operating within the principles and practices of what is normally accepted as dyslexia-friendly. The crucial question that could not be answered in this research

exercise is to what extent do these strategies/ resources impact on the daily practice of schools and in the teaching and learning programmes for children with dyslexia.

Transitional arrangements between nursery and primary appear to be well established and in more than half the authorities special measures were in place to cater for those children identified as high risk of dyslexia/SpLD.

Part 5

Examples of Practice

One of the purposes of this audit was to identify the existence of good/innovatory practice. Information on this was therefore requested in the audit questionnaire and followed up with individual interviews with a sample of the local authorities.

Twenty four authorities responded positively to this question indicating they had in place a procedure/resource that they considered to be good practice. A selection of the responses are shown below.

- A Framework for Intervention Package
- Quality in-service and training
- The production of a CD-ROM involving children with Dyslexia and their parents
- Intensive Support for Reading Programme
- Voice recognition software initiatives
- InDirect Learning computer programme (IDL) (only authority in UK to provide this system in all mainstream primary and secondary schools. It is specifically designed for pupils with dyslexic type difficulties. The system is now available in all primary schools and three secondary schools in the authority.
- ‘Closing the Gap’ project in conjunction with University of Glasgow and Early Intervention. Positive reported in the Times Educational Supplement (January 2004).
- Dyslexia advisors in all schools
- Summer school
- Educational Psychologist Network for SpLD/Dyslexia
- ICT assessment team with dyslexia focus
- Development of outreach programmes and collaborative initiatives with cluster schools
- Pilot of nursery screening
- Parent and professional support group partnership

- Multi- agency training on language and literacy
- Literacy support serviced
- Clicker 4 training
- Early Screening project (p2-3) in use in over 75% of schools
- Authority-developed baseline assessment materials to evaluate Early Intervention Language Strategy also used in schools to screen and track entrants at P1-P3
- Early Intervention project
- Assessment framework including P1 and P2 screening packs
- Initiatives with PE staff
- Systematic use of paired reading
- Dyslexia Support Pack (staff development tool that can accommodate new good practice as it develops)
- Phonological awareness screening pilot
- Dyslexia network of teachers/EP's that meet termly to exchange views with the aim of developing a curricular dyslexia resource to be accessed via the intranet
- Pupil Assessment Profile –a holistic representation of the child/young person involving a wide variety of professionals and personnel. This is a dynamic model of assessment that is tabled through staged intervention meetings
- Investigating Fast Forward Phonics ICT programme
- Dyslexia Support packs
- ASPECTS training programme on hard and software for pupils with SpLD
- Elklan courses run with speech and language therapists for class teachers and assistants

This appears an impressive and quite varied list. Some of these initiatives have been internally and externally evaluated and others are currently undergoing evaluation. These represent a useful focus for further investigation in future studies.

Within the scope of this research project it was decided to visit a sample of authorities to obtain more details on some of these initiatives. The results of these visits and the supplementary materials sent by authorities are shown below.

5.1 Authority A

Pupil Assessment Profile

This profile involves a four staged process that has the potential to gather information from 18 attainment/curriculum related areas. The processes is

co-ordinated by the Support for Learning Area Network Team all of whom is highly experienced and trained and have a responsibility for staff development within the authority. This process seems to be highly effective and the senior representatives of the authority interviewed reported a very low level of parent dissatisfaction within the area of dyslexia/ SpLD. Parents are involved at all four stages of the process.

The process is seen as dynamic and flexible and the authority is confident that it is flexible enough to accommodate to the implications of legislative changes resulting from the Additional Support Needs Bill.

What is particularly interesting about the use of this is that the authority in question does not have a discrete policy for dyslexia. Dyslexia and SpLD is subsumed within more generic policies such as:

- Access to Learning for All
- Support for Children and Young People
- Skills for Life
- Every Parent, Every Child

During the interview it was also revealed that the authority is investigating and piloting the concept of dyslexia-friendly schools. It is likely this approach will be adopted in at least one primary school.

5.2 Authority B

This authority indicated in the questionnaire that they were using an approach that was not used elsewhere in Scotland. This programme called the inDirect Learning Computer programme is a highly structured, daily programme that aims to boost reading and spelling levels, keyboard skills and self-esteem.

The authority aims to increase the number of schools using the programme as they have recorded impressive results for the children on this programme. Most children are on the programme for around one year, it can be customised for the individual child, each child has a daily lesson sheet and progress graphs are produced for different aspects of the programme.

The programme has been used in the authority for around three years and most of the children utilising the programme are around the primary three stage. The programme is implemented in schools by teaching assistants. The programme consists of 200 lessons and children usually undertake six, thirty minute lesson each week. It is currently used in nineteen primary and three secondary schools in the authority.

The same authority also use Fast Phonic First, a multisensory synthetic phonics programme. This programme is used from nursery school to the early stages at secondary. There have been published evaluations of the programme.

The authority also promotes a movement programme in nursery school based on the well known Brain Gym® programme. They have also been involved in the Count Me In Project, which was formally launched in April 2004, (University of Strathclyde) and the authority will be instigating courses for teachers in using these materials.

Although the authority use a stage process for identification they do not recommend any one particular type of screening for SpLD/Dyslexia although they are currently looking at the Special Needs Assessment Profile (SNAP) (Weedon and Reid 2003) with a view to implementing it in the authority's schools.

5.3 Authority C

This authority's current priority is to ensure adequate provision for autistic pupils and they are working on a policy for autism that is due for completion in autumn 2004. The Support for Learning Manager hopes to begin work with a multi-agency development team to lay the foundations for a dyslexia policy when the autism policy is complete.

It was highly unlikely that class teachers would be able to participate in this policy development at its initial stages as the geography of the area makes supply cover problematic.

It was speculated during the interview that the Additional Support Needs Bill would fundamentally change policy and practice. In particular, the co-ordinated support plans would not be used for dyslexic pupils unless they had more global needs. This could conflict with parental hopes for increased dyslexia provision of this nature.

The rural geography of the authority had in the past made training, communication of new initiatives and best practice difficult. Modern technology however, such as CD Roms, have been employed recently to remedy the situation.

In the authority's questionnaire response there was some dissatisfaction with the current training available for SpLD/dyslexia. In the interview it was revealed that this was not in terms of quality, but that there was a need and the potential to develop the training further within the authority.

5.4 Authority D

There are no current plans in this authority to produce a policy for SpLD/dyslexia. The current Support for Learning Policy and an additional document addressing accessibility for all is considered sufficient.

Pupils within this authority are withdrawn from classes for additional support, regardless of age. It is considered by the authority as the most beneficial method of ensuring that they are included in whole class activities, with an appropriate complement of one to one/ small group support.

The authority were unsure how the Additional Support Needs Bill would impact upon current policy and practice. The position of development officer was at the time of interview, being advertised to increase the authority's knowledge and understanding of the bill.

The authority did not liaise with adjacent local authorities to discuss best policy and teaching practice with regard to SpLD/dyslexia. They do, however, liaise with one particular authority all of the time.

The issue most referred to during the interview was the lack of suitably qualified staff available to train others and disseminate good practice. This was linked to the downsizing of the education department of the authority's nearest university and the geographical and financial implications of trying to source training from elsewhere.

5.5 Authority E

This authority described its activities in the area of identification as 'proactive rather than reactive intervention'. There has been a considerable investment in awareness raising for all class teachers in a range of specific difficulties including dyslexia. A major awareness programme in relation to phonological awareness took place in September 2003 for nursery and P1 staff. The pilot phonological awareness screening programme was extensively piloted in May 2003 and is being re-piloted in May 2004 for children entering Primary 1 in August 2004. The intention is to use this to screen all children during session 2004-2005.

The key elements included in the screening format are:

- Listening to and repeating a sentence
- identifying errors in a nursery rhyme
- recognition of rhyming words
- generating rhyming words
- recognising alliteration

- generating alliteration
- recognising syllables
- blending syllables
- alphabetic knowledge

The pilot took place in ten pre-5 establishments and a total of 123 children were screened in the initial piloting. These children moved on to 20 different primary schools and their progress is being tracked through informal contact with the class teacher, together with the transition record.

The authority expect to modify the screening tasks in the light of the results of the pilot possibly reducing the length of the tasks and ensuring a 'more even spread of difficulty across tasks'. The authority expect the revised format to be made widely available across the authority for screening and diagnostic use.

This authority have two other initiatives currently in place. These are the 'Dyslexia Support Pack' –a folder containing a range of pick up and use' leaflets for teachers, parents and pupils.

The other major initiative is the creation of a dyslexia network of teachers/educational psychologists that meets termly to exchange news and views. This group aims to create a curricular dyslexia resource that can be accessed on the authority intranet by all teaching staff.

5.6 Authority F

This authority distributed a formal and comprehensive policy on dyslexia in 1999. The policy clearly outlines details on the following:

- Terminology
- Incidence
- Identification and assessment
- Range of support
- Early intervention
- Dealing with dyslexia
- Primary/secondary transfer
- Supporting pupils across the curriculum
- Technology
- Staff development
- Psychological services
- Parents

The policy also contains a number of appendices on approaches to meeting the needs of children who may be dyslexic, strategies to help children at the early stages and in school, checklist of early observation, checklist of early indicators of dyslexia in the early and the later stages of primary school.

This authority has also produced a 'brief guide for parents' on dyslexia. This leaflet outlines the signs of dyslexia, the action parents may take if they think their son/daughter may be dyslexic, what might happen then in relation to the action the authority will take and how parents can help.

The authority has also produced an innovative Dyslexia Friendly Schools Award – Criteria for Primary Schools. There are two sets of criteria – level A which represents compulsory criteria and level B which indicates that 90% of this criteria needs to be met as well as all of criteria A. Criteria A consists of criteria relating to identification of difficulties such as 'parents with ongoing concerns about their child would be offered an assessment. This is part of the staged process.' 'A log should be kept in each school of dates and details of concerns raised by parents.' 'If the assessment is not to be a full psychological assessment this should be clearly stated to the parent and confirmed in writing'. In relation to screening the criteria states that 'an early screening process should be in place for all pupils with any difficulties in P1'. 'A "fast track" procedure through the steps of assessment should be set in place for pupils whose difficulties are identified at a later stage in their school career'. In relation to training the criteria states that 'there should be a teacher trained in dyslexia to certificate level within the school' and that all other school staff – office staff, classroom assistants, janitorial staff and catering staff – should be given a basic awareness presentation on dyslexia'. The criteria also states that 'all staff who wish to extend expertise in the dyslexia field should be encouraged through review and development backed with the appropriate financial support to do so'.

The compulsory criteria also makes provision for classroom practices such as 'the learning style of a dyslexic pupil should be assessed and taken into consideration when developing strategies for learning' and 'when giving verbal instructions teaching staff should take into account the needs of any dyslexic children in the class'.

Homework can be an issue for children with dyslexia and represents a potentially stressful situation. This is catered for in the criteria with comments such as 'homework should be used to re-inforce work already done in class' and 'time spent on homework should be monitored by

parents and reported back to teachers if the child is spending too much time on homework tasks.’

There are also criteria on school ethos - ‘dyslexic pupils should be encouraged to be as independent as possible’ and all staff should endeavour to ensure dyslexic pupils have a sense of identity and confidence in school personnel’.

Most of the level B criteria relates to information that should be in the school handbook.

5.7 Authority G

This authority has produced a number of initiatives for dyslexia. These include a set of Guidelines for Parents and Carers. These guidelines provide some practical tips for parents and carers in a very easy to read manner.

The authority have also produced some guidelines for class teachers an extract from these is shown below:

(From Authority G)

General Strategies for class teachers

Differentiation of the curriculum using: -

- materials
- resources (including appropriate IT software, background screen colour – pale cream often preferred)
- varied teaching approach
- varied teaching methods

Teaching materials which: -

- have reasonable text size and spacing
- use clear language
- include explanation of technical terms used
- require minimum written output - sentence completion, cloze passages, etc

Staff to teach organisation skills, eg:-

- provide a framework for extended written answers
- identify main points to be learned
- set-self checks and teacher-checks of pupil progress

- split complex tasks into component parts

end of extract

The guidelines for class teachers also contain sections on reading, spelling, writing, homework, study skills and the use of ICT. There are also guidelines for support for learning teachers that contain strategies for supporting a child who struggles with literacy. These guidelines emphasise that they are a reference point for Support for Learning Teachers in the authority. The guideline emphasises that 'it expresses some of what they (learning support teachers) know and agree about dyslexia, and sharing what is done to provide support for dyslexic pupils and to enable them to access the curriculum. It is hoped that it will continue to grow and develop beyond this starting point as our understanding of dyslexia develops and new methods to mitigate its negative effects are invented and discovered, and its users contribute their ideas to it for later versions'. These leaflets were distributed in autumn 2003 following a presentation to education managers, Head teachers and Support for Learning staff of the results of an internal survey of children with dyslexia in secondary schools, and of educational provision arrangements for them. This was accompanied by dissemination of leaflets for class teachers, support for learning teachers and for parents. Schools have charge of these leaflets for issuing to staff and parents as appropriate.

This authority also stressed the following: 'there is a clear commitment to identifying children with specific learning difficulties as early as possible. The Pre - School Home Visiting Service is a valued resource that can be available to families from the start of child's life. This service provides support to parents and practical advice about pre-school services best suited to their child's needs. In addition this service supports children in transition from home to pre-school setting and across services by providing advice and guidance for staff about the child's learning needs and preferences and about strategies which will work well with that child. The Pre - School Home Visiting Service works closely with Educational Psychologists and a range of health professionals in order to establish a shared all round assessment of children's learning needs.

Pre-school placements of children with known specific learning difficulties are then carefully planned to ensure effective support and intervention. We now have in addition to a specialist pre-school provision for children with additional support needs, three pre-school early intervention services which provide a range of supports to children. A key aspect of these services is to promote children's language and

communication development and to identify emerging factors that may cause ongoing concern.’

5.8 Authority H

This authority issued revised guidelines for dyslexia in March 2004. These also contain guidance for parents. The stage process of assessment is highlighted and the authority issues a ‘record of intervention’ specifically for that purpose. The criteria used by the authority follows that suggested by the BPS and the guidance highlights to away form a discrepancy model of dyslexia. The guidelines indicate that ‘(the discrepancy) model meant that some learners whose cognitive abilities did not show a discrepancy were not considered as dyslexic. The validity of identifying dyslexia on the basis of unexpected contrasts alone is now questioned on numerous grounds.’

The record of intervention has a number of steps –these are:

- dyslexia diplomate teacher refers to educational psychologist and obtains verbal descriptions and copies of any reports,
- visits to school by dyslexia diplomate teacher at head teacher’s request,
- discussion with class teacher to include work samples,
- discussion with support for learning teacher to include work samples,
- formative assessment to enable programme to be planned, parental links,
- resources to be accessed,
- planning the IEP (incorporating SMART targets),
- shared agreement about roles, responsibilities and timescale,
- teaching the IEP,
- review and progress within the IEP.

The guidance indicates that the responsibility for implementing the IEP lies with the school.

The guidelines also identify a number of key points in relation to putting policy into practice. These are:

- ‘provision is made in the local mainstream setting’
- ‘early identification of learning difficulties is made’
- ‘advice and resources are made available’
- there is ongoing staff development’
- staff awareness of relevant research and current developments is maintained’
- ‘staff participate in partnership with parents and pupil’

- collaboration with appropriate professionals and agencies is undertaken?

Further study would be necessary to obtain insights and evaluations on how these key points effectively being put into practice.

5.9 Authority I

This authority has two interesting documents. One is the Specialist Teachers – Specific Learning Difficulties: Working Practice Guidelines and the other the Levels of Intervention Grid.

The Specialist Teachers –Specific Learning Difficulties: Working Practice Guidelines clearly indicates what the specialist teacher can offer at various levels. This includes: school support, consultancy, assessment, partnership with parents and staff development. The document also contains specific information on how the specialist teacher can work in a primary school. This includes:

- supporting a new pupil,
- consultancy,
- assessment,
- tutoring/ support,
- involvement with IEP process,
- reviewing of pupils,
- liaison with learning support teachers, inclusion support team and other agencies.

In relation to assessment the document indicates that specialist teachers will:

- observe pupils in class,
- use a range of assessment techniques,
- interpret the results using expertise and specialist knowledge,
- provide a framework relating to strengths, difficulties, discrepancies and differences.

The authority's Levels of Intervention Grid provides for four levels of intervention. Each of these levels has information on how the child is to be identified, the personnel involved, the strategies that are to be used and how the monitoring and evaluation is to be carried out.

As an example the level 1 identification consists of:

- knowledge of the child,
- examples of written work,

- assessment of reading/ number based activities,
- observation of classroom learning strategies and
- the evidence available from initial identification.

The strengths of this document are that the identification and intervention involves a range of personnel and that many of the strategies suggested are curriculum/differentiation focused. There is also a comprehensive list of useful strategies for IEP targets.

5.10 Authority J

This authority has comprehensive policy guidance on Specific Learning Difficulties – Dyslexia, with partnership as the key theme. The partnership involves pupils, parents and professionals. The authority also has user-friendly leaflets on dyslexia for parents, and for pupils. The pupils’ one is particularly worthy of commendation. It is clear, colourful and appropriately illustrated. Written and presented in a dyslexia-friendly style it provides information to pupils on:

- what dyslexia is,
- what causes dyslexia,
- ‘how you can help yourself’,
- ‘how your school can help you’,
- ‘how your family and friends might help you’,
- homework, tests and exams,
- ‘what jobs I can do’ and
- organisations that can provide information.

The policy guidelines are clear and comprehensive. There are sections on the background to dyslexia, policy and practice within the authority, resources and monitoring and evaluation. There are also notes of guidance for teachers on:

- Identification
- Information gathering
- Intervention
- Management and
- Recommended reading

The identification section stresses the importance of early identification and provides a number of characteristics that teachers should look out for. One of the strengths of the document is the emphasis on information gathering that focuses on the curriculum, learning styles and classroom adaptations as well as the learners individual strengths and weaknesses.

The document suggests that an assessment should:

- Include observation within the classroom,
- Include curriculum based measures,
- Be ongoing and part of a cycle of teaching and learning,
- Be diagnostic (including planning for educational provision and
- Use school based information as the core and consult with support services such as the psychological service.

The intervention section contains a descriptive list of the type of differentiation that can be used for pupils with dyslexia as well as information on other teaching and learning strategies.

5.11 Authority K

This authority has a systematic approach to baseline assessment that is linked to an early intervention language project. They aimed to establish a baseline assessment of individual children at the start of P1 and to track their progress in literacy through P2 and P3. The materials that were developed focussed on:

- Key aspects of language and early literacy skills,
- An instrument that was child-friendly but reliable,
- combined elements of staff observation as well as simple test items.

The actual materials consisted of:

- An observation schedule looking at aspects of language development such as expressive language, listening comprehension and concepts of print,
- Individually administered test items – such as knowledge of letters, phonological awareness and visual matching.

The project was evaluated and reported on in April 2002. The results indicated that the best predictors at P1 baseline of reading success in P2 were:

- knowledge of letters,
- concepts of print,
- word-word matching,
- beginning and end sounds,
- auditory discrimination,
- expressive language.

The authority suggested that the statistical analysis they carried out on the screening provided considerable justification to the approach to baseline assessment being carried out in the authority.

5.12 Authority L

This authority produced a detailed booklet in Autumn 2002 on Support for Learning, Understanding, Identifying and Responding to Specific Learning Difficulties/Dyslexia. The document states that it should be used in conjunction with the British Dyslexia Association (BDA) document ‘Achieving Dyslexia Friendly Schools’. The documentation has sections on understanding dyslexia, emotional demands of dyslexia, indicators of dyslexia, assessment and support, role of educational psychologist, learning styles, additional support strategies, transfer of information and further and higher education. This is a very comprehensive document that contains extended appendices on early observations, and indicators of dyslexia at pre-school, early primary, primary and secondary as well as appendices on shared responsibility, effective teaching, learning styles, and additional support needs such as ICT, special exam arrangements, intensive early literacy support and supported study. There is also an appendix on Further and Higher education. In total there are fifteen useful and informative appendices included in the document. It is highly commendable that the document incorporates the emotional demands of dyslexia, as this is an aspect that can often be overlooked.

There is also a separate leaflet for parents – specific learning difficulties/dyslexia – A Brief Guide for Parents. The leaflet is very user friendly, with good use of colour, font and style. It also contains a useful diagram indicating the different factors and syndromes that can be associated with specific learning difficulties. The leaflet also contains information on what dyslexia is, signs of dyslexia, how it feels to be involved with dyslexia, support in schools and what to do if you think your son or daughter may have a specific learning difficulty.

5.13 Authority M

This authority has two very informative and user friendly booklets – a Teachers Guide to Dyslexia and a Parents Guide to Dyslexia. The Teachers Guide contains fourteen indicators of dyslexia that teachers can look for. Following these indicators there is a comment that is very justified and very appropriate in this context. That is “Some of these difficulties are likely to be displayed by most pupils on some occasions. When they appear in combinations in a child, this may suggest the need to be watchful”.

There are also eighteen clearly expressed one line suggestions that will help make the ‘dyslexic pupils life easier in the classroom’. The guide also contains short sections on exam arrangements and provision.

The parents guide also contains helpful and clearly expressed information in a one-line bulleted style. There is information on the type of concerns parents may have about their child, how they can help and the support the authority education resources offer.

This authority also has a Pre-School-Primary 1 Transition Record. This record has the scope to record a vast amount of relevant information that can ensure that the children at risk of dyslexia are identified and tracked in Primary 1. The record contains information on personal, emotional and social development, physical co-ordination, expressive communication, listening and talking, reading, writing, mathematics, understanding the environment and a summary record of achievements at pre-school and primary school.

5.14 Authority N

This authority has produced a CD-ROM called ‘Opening the Door on Dyslexia’ which was launched in May 2004. The CD-ROM is the product of a working group within the Authority’s Education Service, chaired by the Educational Psychology Service, comprising teachers as well as representatives from Community Education, the Educational Development Service and the Support for Learning section.

It was developed in response to an identified need for information about dyslexia designed specifically for young people. While there is a vast array of products and publications aimed at supporting the adults in the child’s life, there is little available information to help pupils understand the nature and implications of their literacy difficulties.

Pupils with dyslexia and their parents were consulted through focus groups about what they would wish to be communicated and how best to do this. The overwhelming preference was for a CD-ROM. Some of the young people from the focus groups volunteered to be part of the production of the CD, expressing their views in video and audio clips and piloting the product.

“Opening the Door on Dyslexia” is an interactive and fun approach to enable children and young people access information to help them understand dyslexia. The pupils who feature in the CD-ROM talk honestly about their experiences, including what it feels like to have dyslexia, what helps them to cope with the demands of school, and the transition from primary to secondary school. The product aims to give information and advice and to emphasise that there are many other young people in the same situation.

Often young people experiencing dyslexia want their peers to understand their difficulties and the CD-ROM may be a useful resource in supporting this process. The CD-ROM can fit into a school's social education programme or part of circle time discussions. The activity may be in relation to a specific pupil, or part of a more general awareness-raising exercise.

All schools are to receive copies of the CD-ROM, which can be used in a variety of different ways – support for individual young people, awareness raising at a whole class or group level, staff development for teachers, and information for parents. It can also be placed on the school network.

Comment on Part 5

This part of the report has provided examples of additional responses from a sample of fourteen education authorities in Scotland. Twelve of these authorities were selected because they had documentation that in our opinion represents good practice in the area. That is not to say that the other authorities in Scotland do not have evidence of good practice, but it was outwith the scope and the time scale of this research exercise to gather, and report on, this type of information from every authority. Certainly the examples cited above do show that some authorities recognise the importance of policy, guidelines and disseminating this type of information to staff and parents in a user friendly format. The guidelines studied again show the use of a stage model of identification and intervention by most authorities placing a key role on observation, communication, collaboration and having access to a range of standardised and diagnostic assessment strategies.

Part 6 Training

It can be suggested that the key to successful implementation of both identification and intervention procedures for Dyslexia/SpLD is training. In Scotland there has been a major focus on training courses on dyslexia for at least ten years now (Reid 2001). This was in fact reflected in many of the responses collected in his research and a number of authorities indicated that training in dyslexia, at least, had been well established.

Although the authorities could not provide specific figures many provided a general indication of the nature of the courses offered, how they were organised, how the information on these courses was disseminated and the participants selected. All authorities offered some form of training in this area.

Some of the responses included the following:

- All teaching staff are offered accredited training in SpLD/ Dyslexia through the modular programme in Support for Learning and SEN. A non-accredited training course is offered in the authority course calendar
- Courses offered in a rolling programme of SEN and Inclusion
- Programme developed by EP service in Partnership with the Pre-School Home Visiting Service
- Additional Support Needs Training
- In house five week twilight course
- Training by Support for Learning Team
- External university validated training for all Support for Learning Assistants
- Year long training programme for staff to deliver Intensive support for Early Literacy.

The above can be summarised by reference to three main avenues of training.

1. External accredited and presented courses (usually part of a university modular scheme).
2. In-house courses on specific areas aimed at class teachers/ probationer teachers and often run by Support for Learning Teachers.
3. Top-up events involving nationally recognised speakers.

Further research could investigate the quality and the extent of uptake and the feedback from participants on these courses.

The authorities were asked how satisfied they were with the current training. Despite the positive comments on the returns and the range of courses offered only eight authorities were satisfied/very satisfied with the level and extent of the current training by the authority. The indication was that they wished to do more training but a number of constraints clearly prevented this. This particular area can be explored further in a future study.

Additional Comments

Respondents were invited to submit additional comments on any aspect of the questionnaire. Some of the additional comments received commented on ongoing changes and the current reviews of policy that were taking place with the expectation that ‘authority policy would change in line with developing inclusive practices in schools’.

Also mentioned was the need for a ‘contextual assessment approach where children’s development across skill areas is monitored, recorded

and planned for through shared observations between home and schools'. The importance of transition periods was also mentioned.

One authority mentioned that the notion of early screening for SpLD is new to the authority and would take time to develop. Another authority commented on the need for a rigorous cycle of training in this area so that new staff were guaranteed training within two years of working.

Comment on Part 6

Training courses in dyslexia have been well established now in Scotland for a number of years. The impetus provided by the Scottish Dyslexia Trust (SDT) and later the joint funding partnership between the SDT and the Scottish Executive, has ensured that quality courses have been available for educational authorities throughout Scotland. Many authorities commented that they had taken up these courses. The uptake was also geographical wide from Shetland to the Scottish Borders.

It seems however that the group of teachers engaged in the nationally produced modular courses were learning support teachers. Considerably less class teachers had been involved in these initiatives. Most authorities however seemed to develop in house courses designed specifically for classroom teachers. There are obvious constraints to this but after school courses seemed to be the most popular mode of organisation of training.

The responses seemed to indicate that authorities did not readily have figures available to indicate the uptake of courses, by whom and when. This information would be important to help with strategic planning and further training.

Part 7 Conclusions and Considerations

Conclusions

In summary the responses highlight that all authorities seem to be engaged in some way in the area of dyslexia/SpLD. This can be through more generic projects on aspects of teaching and learning and meeting the wide ranging needs of children; identification procedures; a range of intervention strategies; various forms of monitoring and recording of pupils progress; and through a variety of training programmes. Although not all authorities had a specific policy on dyslexia this did not seem to deter the authority from embarking on sensitive procedures to identify children who were at risk in relation to dyslexia/SpLD. A wide variety of assessment strategies, including tests, were utilised.

One of the important considerations for the purpose of his research is the contextual components of the identification procedures utilised in the

various authorities. Those procedures emphasise multidisciplinary collaboration, parent participation, high levels of training, and monitoring and recording of pupil progress.

One of the striking features to emerge from the responses was the quantity and the diversity of projects authorities are engaged in – all with some relevance to the areas of dyslexia, SpLD and early years. Looking at the thirty two authorities as a whole there were certainly some common elements of practice – such as a stage process of assessment and arrangements for transition from nursery to primary, but there were also considerable differences in the policy, the procedures and the practices in different authorities. Individual variation in terms of formulating policy, assessment, intervention and training seemed to be more obvious than the similarities. That in itself is not necessarily a negative factor but it can be confusing for parents moving from one geographical area of Scotland to another (Davidson - Petch 2004, Reid 2004).

Some other areas of concern to emerge from the responses in our view are:

- The ‘piecemeal’ developments in practice, particularly in identification and intervention. These practices could be co-ordinated and enhanced through collaboration between different authorities.
- The ad-hoc process of developing innovation and ‘good practices’. Much of this seems to be left to one individual /group who have a particular interest in a specific aspect of work.
- The ad-hoc and ‘voluntary’ basis of training may not be sufficient to develop the skills of all teaching staff in this area. Several authorities did mention a training audit but there was no evidence that the results of these formed a component of the authorities strategic plan – rather they seemed to be used to gauge the demand for certain type of courses.

Suggestions for Consideration

Policy

- School management could report on precisely how they are disseminating, monitoring and evaluating the impact of policy in relation to classroom practice.
- Those authorities that do not have a discrete policy on dyslexia/SpLD should ensure that it is explicitly covered in a sub-section of a more generic policy.

Identification

- Dissemination and details of specific tests and procedures used in each authority be compiled in an expanded document and made available to all authorities and updated annually.
- Authorities could be encouraged to publish/disseminate within Scotland the results of any piloting of relevant in-house or commercially produced instruments used.

Intervention

- A catalogue of useful resources/strategies be compiled with evaluative comments from users to be disseminated nationally
- Innovations such as dyslexia-friendly schools made more widely known to all within and out with the authority. Co-ordinated evaluations and sharing of expertise could result.

Training

- A clear rationale, uptake and guidance on uptake of courses should be made available to all teachers. Information on this and the figures on uptake and by whom should be readily accessible.

General Comment

This audit provided an overview of how authorities in Scotland are dealing with policy and provision issues relating to Dyslexia/ SpLD. Some can consider this to be a controversial area. Dyslexia, and the associated specific learning difficulties, is usually seen within a continuum, and this continuum can sometimes be difficult to pinpoint accurately with conventional standardised tests. Authorities are therefore reluctant to label a child unnecessarily or prematurely. To this end most authorities seem to have a range of more subjective strategies in place and usually adopt a stage process for identification and assessment. This is satisfactory, but authorities need to be cautious that the stage process does not become a version of the 'wait and see' approach that can be counter-productive in terms of the known benefits of early identification. It was noted however by a number of authorities that identification, or lack of formal labelling, did not mean that appropriate intervention would not be in place. The stage process approach, and the use of frameworks and checklists, can ensure that authorities focus on the pattern of strengths and weaknesses in the individual child, as well as the curricula and the cognitive barriers to learning.

The audit also focussed on policy and it was noted that while many authorities did have specific policies for dyslexia/ SpLD this was not necessarily a prerequisite for good practice in the area.

The variations between authorities were also noted in the tests they used for identification and the considerable range of intervention approaches mentioned. It was commendable to note that some authorities were embarking on innovative programmes and were customising these for use within their authority. There were also at least two examples of explicit reference to the development of dyslexia-friendly procedures. How these might be transferred to all authorities is an appropriate future area of investigation. But if this were to happen recognition would need to be made of the established screening and identification procedures already in place in many authorities.

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Appendix

Example of Checklist from one authority

Where over 50% of boxes are ticked, this is likely to indicate children with significant dyslexic difficulties, if alternative explanations have been ruled out

Early Primary Dyslexia Checklist	Name : DOB: Date :	Completed by :
Observed Difficulty in relation to age and stage		Tick Box
Reading	Substantial reading delay	
	Enthusiastic reading solely from memory and picture cues	
	Reading reluctance/ no interest	
	Can't finger point with familiar text	
	Loses place in text	
	High dependence on phonics	
Phonological awareness	Finds it hard to clap simple rhythm	
	Hard to say which sound starts a word, or finishes it	
	Can't count syllables	
	Can't hear or generate rhymes	
Phonics	Delay with linking sounds and letters which persists despite intervention	
	Doesn't use decoding strategies	
Writing	Avoids pencil work	
	Difficulty writing name	
	Writes from right to left	
	Reverses letters and numbers frequently and persists P2/3	
	Difficulty copying letters and shapes, especially from board	
	Stuck at underwriting stage P2/3	
Language	Delayed language development	
	Poor articulation	
	Muddles sentences or syllables	
Number	Finds sequences hard e.g. counting backwards	
	Vague about time	
Motor	Delay in hopping, skipping, throwing, catching, shoe laces	
	Awkward pencil grip	
	Struggles with mazes or dot to dot	
Learning	Relies on others for cues	
	Uses diversionary tactics	
	Appears confused	
Affective	Gets upset or agitated readily	
	Reluctant to come to school	
	Quiet, withdrawn and avoids reading and written work	

Upper Primary Dyslexia Checklist	Name : D.O.B.: Date :	Completed by :
	Observed Difficulty in relation to age and stage	Tick Box
Reading	Avoids reading whenever possible	
	Reading is slow and hesitant with familiar text	
	Misses or repeats words or lines	
	Confuses similar words e.g. won – now; why – who; of -for	
	Inserts alternative words which mean the same	
	Poor visual tracking	
	Complains of blurring., glare, or “jumping about” of text	
Spelling	Struggles with alphabetic order	
	Bizarre spelling (not as word sounds)	
	Spelling at CVC level only e.g. dog, pet, sad	
	Syllables are reversed or omitted	
	Learns homework spelling but does not retain words learned	
Writing	Copying is slow and inaccurate	
	Letters or numbers are reversed	
	Writing is untidy and words poorly spaced	
	Writing is very tiny	
	Small and tall letters are the same size	
	Upper / lower case confusion	
Language	Finds it difficult to repeat complex words	
	Forgets names of things	
	Has speech articulation difficulty	
	Planning and recalling content of oral presentation is difficult	
Learning	Finds it difficult to transfer skills	
	Makes unusual connections	
	Confuses left and right	
	Difficulties organising and planning work	
	Is more motivated when learning is not text based	
	Copies others’ work	
Maths	Struggles with tables or adds to get 4x 7	
	Struggles with mathematical language	
Time	Forgets the days of the week; what day comes after...; what day comes before.....	
	Confuses yesterday, tomorrow, last week, next week	
	Has difficulty telling the time	
Affective	Low self esteem	
	Easily distracted, withdrawn, or appears dreamy or lazy	
	Seeks inappropriate peer attention or uses avoidance activities	
	Is frustrated or embarrassed by difficulties	
Motor	Clumsy, awkward or uncoordinated	
	Poor spatial awareness	
	Confuses left and right	

Where over 50% of boxes are ticked, this is likely to indicate children with significant dyslexic difficulties, if alternative explanations have been ruled out

Secondary School Dyslexia Checklist	Name : D.O.B. Date:	Completed by :
	Observed Difficulty	Tick Box
Reading	Poor reading : high level of guess work	
	Slow and painstaking reading	
	Avoids reading	
	Uncertain of alphabetical order	
	Needs to read passage several times to get sense	
	Finds difficulty following text	
	Limited stamina for fluent reading	
	Experiences distortion while reading	
Spelling	Bizarre spelling	
	Difficulty in using dictionary	
	Poor alphabetic awareness	
Language	Word finding / labelling difficulty	
	Difficulty pronouncing complex words	
	Finds spoonerisms difficult	
Writing	Reluctance to write	
	Difficulties planning written work	
	Poor page layout and presentation	
	Immature writing style compared with oral performance	
	Inaccurate proof reading	
Maths	Forgets rules and formulae	
	Uncertainty with tables	
	Confuses left and right	
Organising	Poor organisation of time on tasks	
	Has difficulty following complex instructions	
	Generally disorganised with materials, timetables etc	
	Struggles with information sequences	
Behaviour	Uncertain of place in "pecking order" within class	
	High anxiety especially over exams	
	High level of acting out behaviour	
	Appears dreamy or lazy	
	Sensitive about accepting help -embarrassed	
	Repertoire of avoidance strategies when reading and writing	
	Truancy / school refusal	
	Disappointment	
	Low self esteem	
Marked difference between performance and apparent ability		

Learning Style	Uses idiosyncratic learning strategies	
	Needs a high level of repetition to learn	
	May need additional visual cues	
	Lacks persistence without support	

Where over 50% of boxes are ticked, this is likely to indicate children with significant dyslexic difficulties, if alternative explanations have been ruled out