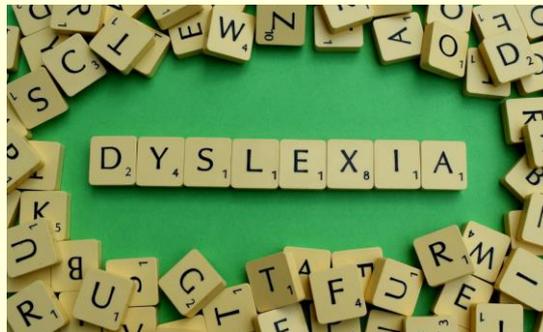


# When is the right time to carry out an assessment for dyslexia?



**Karen Mace**

**Head of Assessment, Education and Training**

# Aims of the session

- What is dyslexia and how common is it?
- What are the early indicators of dyslexia?
- Why do we assess and at what age should we carry out an assessment?
- How test results and other information are used to diagnose dyslexia.
- What can be learnt from assessment.

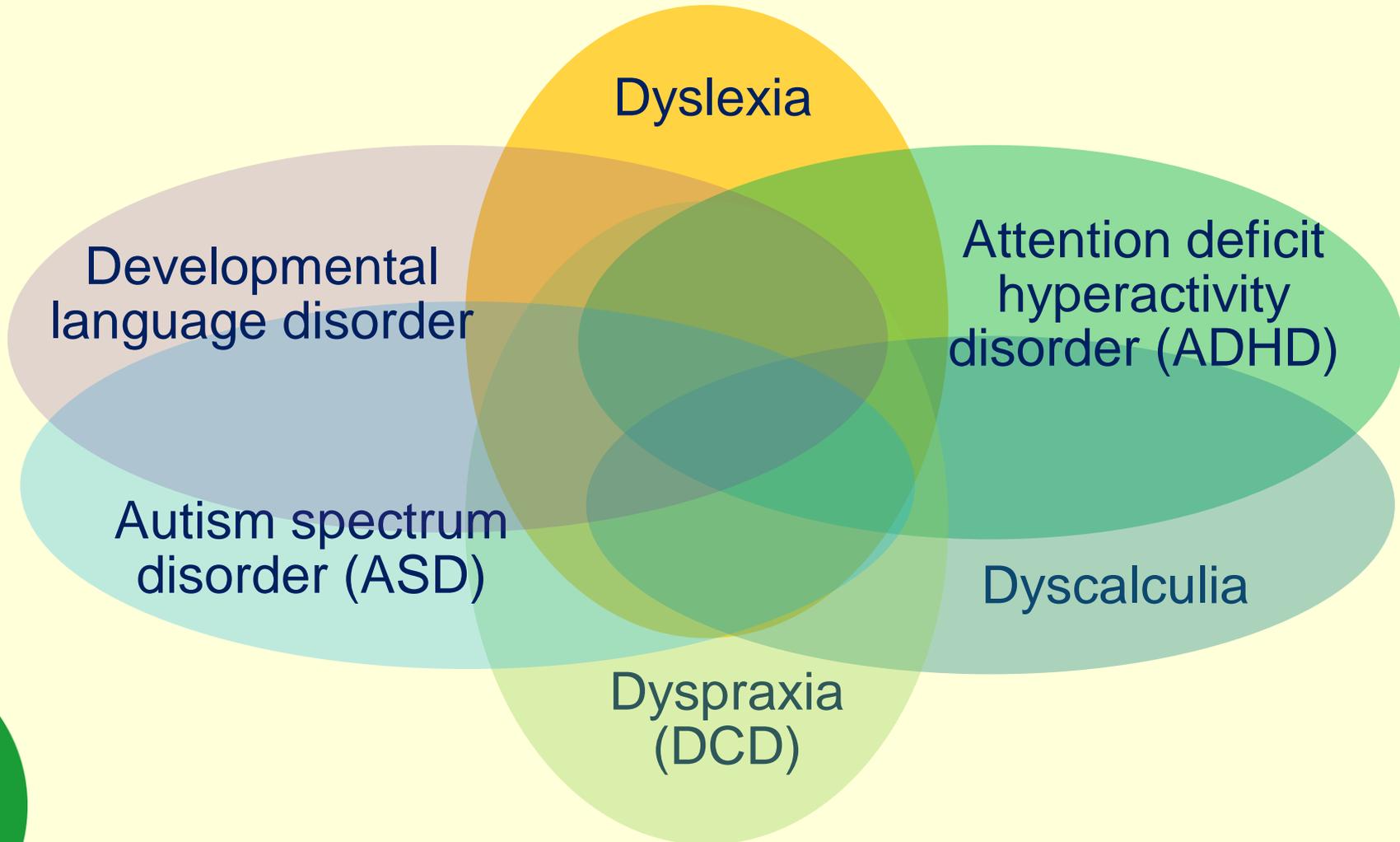
# What is dyslexia?

# DYSLEXIA

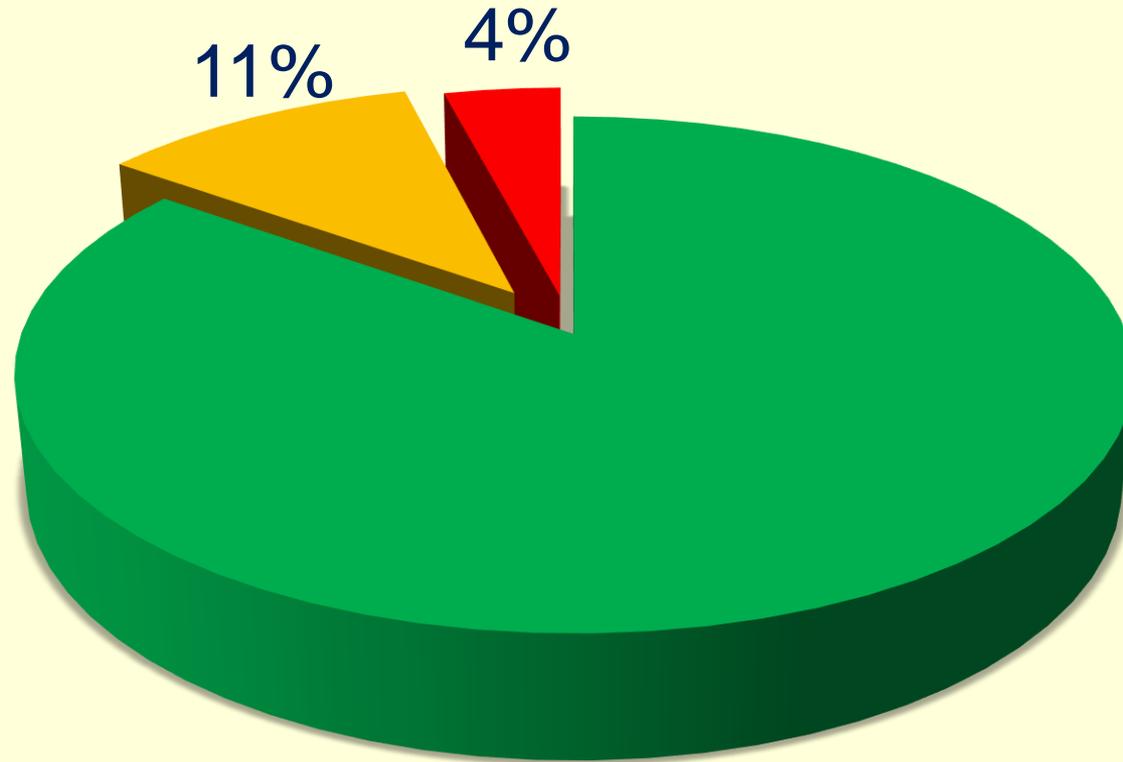
**dys** = difficult, impaired  
**lexis** = words, language

- Dyslexia is genetic and one of a series of co-occurring difficulties
- It is a specific learning difficulty (SpLD)

# The spectrum of neurodiversity



# How common is dyslexia?



■ not affected   ■ genetic disposition to SpLD   ■ seriously affected

# Definitions of dyslexia

There are many definitions of dyslexia but the most commonly used definitions used to diagnose dyslexia in the UK are:

The Rose Definition (2009)

The BDA Definition (2010)

Dyslexia occurs across a range of intellectual abilities. It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut-off points.

Rose Review 2009

Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling.

Rose Review 2009

Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed.

Rose Review 2009

In addition to these characteristics, the British Dyslexia Association (BDA) acknowledges the visual and auditory processing difficulties that some individuals with dyslexia can experience and points out that dyslexic readers can show a combination of abilities and difficulties that affect the learning process.

Some also have strengths in other areas, such as design, problem solving, creative skills, interactive skills and oral skills.

BDA (2010)

# What is phonological awareness?



# What is verbal memory and verbal processing?



# What are the early indicators of dyslexia?

# Pre-school

- Persistent difficulty in learning nursery rhymes or the name for things, like “table” or “chair”
- Enjoyment in being read to but no interest in letters or words
- Signs of apparently not paying attention
- Continuing difficulties in getting dressed efficiently and putting shoes on the correct feet

# Pre-school cont'd

- Problems with catching, kicking or throwing a ball or with hopping or skipping
- Difficulty with clapping a simple rhythm
- Delayed speech development

# Primary

- A poor sense of direction and will confuse left and right
- Difficulty tying shoe laces and dressing
- A discrepancy between receptive and expressive language
- Short-term memory limitations, for instance, finding it hard to remember times tables, the alphabet or classroom instructions
- Pronounced reading difficulties.

# Primary cont'd

- Omitting lines when reading or repetition of the same line, loses place in the text
- Difficulties with comprehension when reading
- Muddling words that look alike, e.g. “no” and “on” and “was” and “saw”
- Difficulties in saying multi-syllabic words

# Primary cont'd

Errors with writing and spelling might include:

- A disparity between written and spoken language
- Messy work, for example, curled pages, crossings out and work poorly set out
- Handwriting that looks heavy and laborious

# Primary cont'd

- Confusion of similar letters, like “b” and “d”, “p” and “q” and “w” and “m” – resulting in some bizarre spelling
- The same word spelt differently in the same piece of work such as “more”, “mor” and “mro” – confusion between upper and lower case letters, and the concept of letter name and sound

# Secondary

Continue to experience the same problems as at primary school plus other difficulties:

- Still read and spell inaccurately
- Have difficulty remembering maths, tables and formulae
- Confuse places, times and dates

# Secondary cont'd

- Need to have instructions repeated
- Get “tied up” using long words, such as “preliminary” or “philosophical”
- Have difficulty planning and writing essays
- Confidence issues and low self-esteem

# Secondary cont'd

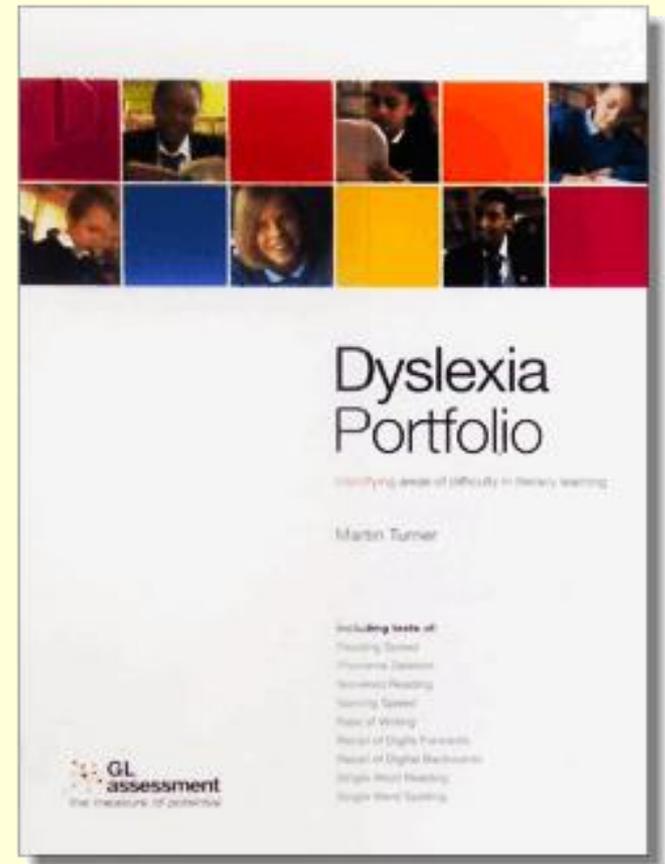
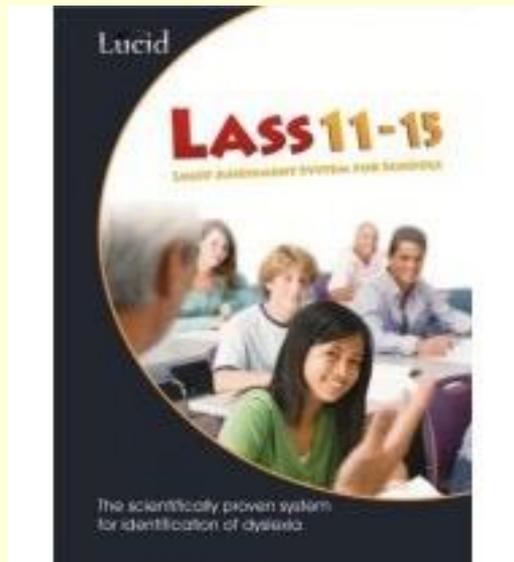
- Forgetting which books to bring to class
- Difficulty organising life around a timetable
- Misunderstanding complex instructions
- Problems trying to write down notes at speed, and completing work on time
- Memory difficulties will affect the recall of learned facts effectively in exams

# Why do we assess?

# Why do we assess?

- To find an explanation of lack of progress i.e. prove a hypothesis
- Identify strengths and weaknesses
- To be able to put together a programme of intervention
- To put in place reasonable adjustments such as Exam Access Arrangements
- Following screening

# What is the difference between screening and assessment?



**What age/  
stage should you assess?**

# What age/stage should you assess?

- Never before the age of 7 years
- After support/intervention has been tried and not proved successful
- Year one phonics screener is a good indicator especially if children do not pass on their second attempt (at the end of year 2)
- When self-esteem is being affected and can't be attributed to other factors

# Age/Stage cont'd

- Progress has slowed or plateaued altogether particularly in written work
- The child is working harder than their peers and not getting the same results
- When verbal skills are significantly better than written skills
- To support the case for exam access arrangements (although the assessment outcome doesn't assume AAE)

**How test results and other information are used to diagnose dyslexia.**

“Tests don’t assess, people do.”

# Assessors will consider:

- Background information
- Quantitative information
- Qualitative information

# Background information

- Health and Developmental history
- Familiar History of SpLD or other Developmental Conditions
- Familial Linguistic History
- Educational History

# Quantitative information

- Underlying Ability – verbal and visual
- Reading, writing and spelling
- Phonological processing
- Short term and working memory
- Visual processing
- Maths (if relevant)

# Qualitative information

- Observation of strategies used during the assessment
  - Visualisation techniques
  - Using fingers to remember sequences
- Analysis of errors
  - Spelling and reading

# Synthesis of all information to draw a conclusion/diagnosis



Parents described early reading difficulties **‘Zoe found phonics challenging.’** ↔ School say, **‘Zoe does not like reading aloud in class.’** ↔ **Zoe scored 82 in word reading and 75 in the phonological awareness composite** ↔ Assessor noted **‘Zoe’s reading was laboured and she frequently replaced visually similar words reflecting a lack of confidence in using phonics.’**

= Evidence of phonological weaknesses and appropriate recommendations made.

# What can be learnt from an assessment?

- Strengths
- Areas of difficulty
- Severity of difficulties
- Recommendations for support
  - Timed tests and exams
  - School – interventions, whole class adjustments, equipment and ICT
  - Home – resources, ICT
  - Personal recommendations

# Further information

- For more information or to arrange a full assessment with the BDA:

[www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/services/assessments](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/services/assessments)

# Free BDA resources

- Neurodiversity profiler & Guide to SpLD  
[www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/educator/additional-resources-for-educators](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/educator/additional-resources-for-educators)
- Free eLearning modules  
[www.bdaelearning.org.uk/course/index.php?categoryid=29](http://www.bdaelearning.org.uk/course/index.php?categoryid=29)
- Understanding and supporting neurodiversity: Support strategies for parents and carers  
[www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/parent/resources-of-parents](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/parent/resources-of-parents)
- BDA videos & webinars  
[www.youtube.com/user/bdadyslexia/videos](http://www.youtube.com/user/bdadyslexia/videos)



# British **Dyslex!a** Association