Specific Learning Difficulties Network

SLDN Newsletter

The latest news, updates and announcements

Focus groups with people with SLDs help prioritise research

In October, SLDN colleagues at the University of Edinburgh conducted workshops with people with a diagnosis of a specific learning difficulty to help prioritise areas of study and research.

Specialist educators, parents, community leaders and people with SLDs attended workshops and interviews to provide their insights and feedback on key research themes. This was developed into feasible research questions the SLDN can use to develop research plans and funding grants.

The two-phase, co-produced study collected stakeholders' initial views and lived experience across four established themes, shared that with SLDN researchers who translated the prioritised themes into research questions. Stakeholders' feedback on these questions was used to embed the co-productive and iterative approach.

Stakeholders' top research priority is to assess what knowledge, skills and training educational professionals require to identify early signs of learning difficulties and provide optimal support for people affected to help them achieve the best possible outcomes. Work to understand and optimise educational interventions and environments at each age and stage is a facet of the research required. **[…]**

[...]Dyscalculia is significantly less recognised and accommodated than dyslexia despite it affecting around one in fifteen people (6%). Dyscalculics and others said work was needed to examine the daily difficulties dyscalculics face and the impacts on life skills and concerns like financial literacy and exposure to financial abuse.

The effectiveness/efficacy of technologies and apps for dyslexia or dyscalculia and how technologies can best be designed and applied to help people overcome their difficulties is another area that stakeholders feel merits urgent study. For example, what makes the MONZO app easier to use than the HSBC app for dyscalculics?

An interesting view from consultees was that examining non-academic interests and hobbies that children with SLD tend to like could aid understanding of the conditions and, in turn, how to mitigate and overcome their negative impacts.

Lastly, Investigating the types of employment people with SLDs go into and the barriers that exist across the spectrum of types of work and role could yield insight into the impacts, strengths and areas of potential or of difficulty associated with the conditions.
This project has yielded a genuinely co-produced list of research questions can be used to guide research plans and funding grant developments over the next few years.

Independent Chair and advisory roles appointed to steering group

Dr Vin Arthey

We are delighted to announce that Prof Jill Morrison has taken on the role of Chair of SLDN's Steering Group.

A practicing and academic GP, Prof Morrison retired as Clerk of Senate and Vice Principal of the University of Glasgow. She also works with the Scottish Learning Disabilities Observatory (SLDO) Steering Group and will bring insights and inputs from there to SLDN's activities and impact.

The role of Chair is a key part of SLDN's governance and requires independence of the network as well as understanding of its context and oversight of its work, on behalf of its funders. We look forward to working with Jill to optimise the Network's activities and outputs.
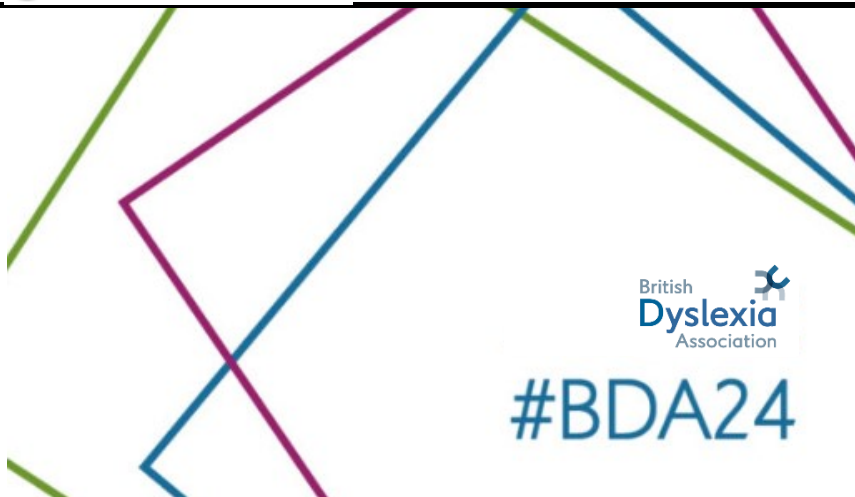
Two other key advisory roles in the Steering Group have also been appointed.

Caroline Holden

Caroline Holden brings substantial professional experience in assessment and represents practitioners. She is a member of the SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC).

Dr Vin Arthey will provide lived experience of learning difficulties. He is a retired TV producer and researcher and an author.

British
Dyslexia
Association

#BDA24

NETWORKING EVENT FOR SLD NETWORK MEMBERS AT BDA CONFERENCE

The SLDN is planning its next in-person meet-up for its members to coincide with the BDA International Conference on 20 and 21 June 2024 in Guildford.

The format, timing and duration are all still to be decided but most likely we will meet on 19 June. We'd like to get a tentative marker for this event into members' calendars as early as possible. As soon as we have more information on timing, we will make this known.

Meantime, we would welcome any ideas, suggestions or expressions of preference as to type of format, elements or subjects for inclusion (or exclusion!) while things are still in the earliest stage of planning.

Calling all teachers seeking improvement in literacy!
Colleagues at Dundee and Glasgow Universities are surveying teachers' literacy practice with regard to dyslexia. Please circulate your relevant networks to help their recruitment.

If you are a teacher of any stage or subject yourself, please complete the survey:
https://uofg.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3BGSSMA24NQtiMC

New short video: June public event
This short feature gives a flavour of the focus group, lecture and networking event hosted at the RSE in June.
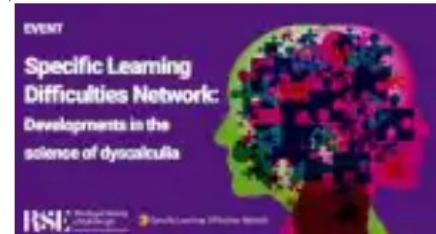
The full lecture and panel discussion are also available. **Full lecture video.**

New dyscalculia toolkit

ADDUP
Awareness of Developmental Dyscalculia: Uplifting Practice

Colleagues at UCL have launched a new toolkit to help teachers and parents identify dyscalculia. 'ADDUP' details how to get support for dyscalculic children and is designed to raise awareness of mathematical learning difficulties. ADDUP also signposts opportunities to learn more about dyscalculia through UCL short courses, presentations and blogs.

Spread the word
Please share details of the network and the newsletter with colleagues and to help 'join the dots' between players, projects, practices and partners working on SLD.

#SLDnetwork
Internships, Events, Contracts, Projects, Ideas, Useful intel...Let us know!

sldn@st-andrews.ac.uk