



SLDN Newsletter

The latest news, updates and announcements

ISSUE 9

June 2026

DfE funds new neuroscience policy research centre

SLDN on the bill at Curious Festival

Dyscalculia insights for House of Lords

Double KE award win for EPIC ThinkLearn

Where are you speaking? Meet you there?

Tell us your findings, speak to new people, have a lightbulb moment...



DfE launches new £3m Educational Neuroscience Policy Research Centre

The Department for Education (DfE) has committed up to £3 million to create a new policy research centre on educational neuroscience (ENPRC), led by University College London (UCL).

Designed to provide policymakers with robust evidence, the new centre will bring together expertise from nine universities*, in disciplines from educational neuroscience and cognitive psychology to applied classroom practice, genetics, and AI.

The ENPRC will host a two-year programme to create a strategic evidence base ranging from early years to higher education. It will look at how the brain learns, and will inform teaching methods, learning environments, and educational outcomes. As well as using existing knowledge to inform policy, around a third of its activity will be directed to providing rapid analysis and evidence to officials.

Reflecting a commitment to ensuring future expertise in educational neuroscience, the centre will recruit seven postdoctoral researchers and involve MSC students. The consortium will focus on topical issues for learning and education, from cognitive and biological factors material to early identification, to technologies and their impacts.

The Department for Education said the centre "marks a deliberate shift in how DfE engages with research – moving towards an ongoing, strategic partnership with academia that keeps pace with the real challenges facing schools, families and children".

SLDN colleague Prof Jo Van Herwegen of UCL will co-lead the centre with Prof Denis Mareschal, of Birkbeck Centre for Educational Neuroscience (CEN).

The ENPRC is created alongside the Educational Economics Research Centre, also funded to the tune of up to £3m, which will consider the economic and social benefits of education, and brings together experts from UCL, the London School of Economics and the Institute of Fiscal Studies.

**The consortium comprises: Aston University, Birkbeck, University of London, University of Bristol, University of Cambridge, University of East Anglia, University of East London, University of Oxford, University of Surrey, University College London.*



SLDN to profile links between SpLD and mental health at RSE festival in Edinburgh

Does having a specific learning difficulty like dyslexia increase your risk of mental ill-health? In September SLDN co-chair Silvia Paracchini and colleague Dr Sam Warne will present initial findings on this from their qualitative interrogation of Dyslexia Scotland's 2024 survey responses to the public. The Royal Society of

Edinburgh's [Curious festival](#) provides the platform for a walk through the results followed by a panel and audience Q&A, all led by broadcast journalist Pennie Stuart.

Details of the date and time will be released mid-July when the festival programme is published.

From Loughborough to the Lords: How Dyscalculia Entered Policy Conversation

Concern about dyscalculia's impacts is finally reaching the highest levels of the policy realm. How this has happened illustrates how expert evidence can enter parliamentary process.

The recent focus on dyscalculia in the House of Lords grew from earlier discussions on numeracy, SEN and widening participation, allowing dyscalculia then to be raised explicitly. Peers highlighted that persistent difficulties with maths attainment could not be explained by curriculum content alone, prompting interest in evidence on related learning difficulties.



Baroness Bull came across Dr Kinga Morsanyi's [work on dyscalculia at Loughborough University](#), noting connections to foundational number skills, co-occurrence with dyslexia, and lifelong impacts. Kinga is a [Re:State Scholar](#), with a remit to work at the intersection of academia and policy. Initial informal conversations led to policy her preparing briefings adapting academic findings into policy-ready insights for the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST).

Kinga was then invited to submit evidence to inform House of Lords discussions, ahead of the first standalone Lords debate on dyscalculia, in June 2025. The [debate](#) drew directly on research evidence to underline three systemic gaps: limited teacher training, unclear diagnostic pathways and the absence of structured support, despite evidence that at least one dyscalculic learner is likely to be present in every classroom. POST briefings reinforced the message that early identification and targeted intervention are more effective than simply extending maths teaching for dyscalculic students. Kinga also fed into this [POST note](#).

This increase in profile shows how academic engagement can help move an issue onto a legislative agenda and indicates a route for researchers to feed into policy via POST.



Research priorities paper - preprint now available

'Co-produced research questions about dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia...' by several SLDN colleagues is now available as a [preprint](#).

On the platform somewhere? Meet you there!

We can help coordinate mini get-togethers where SLDN people will be attending other meetings. Tell us what events you're going to and we can share information to help shared interests catch up. Links on logos.

British Educational Research Association Teacher Education Network (BERA-TEAN)

Sheffield on 20/21 May



2026 Behavior Genetics Association Annual Meeting

Amsterdam, 23 - 26 June



The Dyslexia Guild Annual Online Conference

Online, 1 July



Society for the Scientific Study of Reading Conference 2026

Rotterdam, Netherlands 16 to 18 July 18



European Association for Research on Learning & Instruction (EARLI) SIG 15 (SEN) 2026 conference

Helsinki, 17-19 August



European Dyslexia Association Autumn Seminars

Gdansk, Poland 26 & 27 September.



2026 World Congress of Psychiatric Genetics

Glasgow 30 September - 3 October



International Workshop on Reading and Developmental Dyslexia

San Sebastian, Spain 9 October



Fill your name in on [this list](#) and leave the rest to us.



InterLace Work Conference on Neurodiversity + Creativity Reykjavík, June 9-12

Next week sees a [neurodiversity led conference in Iceland](#), but also

available remotely. It's being run as part of Dr Kathy D'Arcy's research on Neurodiversity and Creativity. The conference is part of the Autism and Neurodiversity reFraming Innovation (Anfinn) research project, which explores neurodivergent creative artistic practices and how arts spaces can become more inclusive of these.

Reduced fees now apply for in-person and online attendance.

Consultation responses on ASN/SEND reforms from SLDN - in!

Several Network members got heads together in May to submit joint expert responses to recent consultations on SEND/ASN provision in England and Scotland. Thanks to Dr Kinga Morsanyi for coordinating.



EPIC ThinkLearn win at Scottish Knowledge Exchange Awards

Social enterprise and University of Edinburgh spinout EPIC ThinkLearn won two awards at the recent Scottish Knowledge Exchange Awards: Making a Social Difference and Research and Innovation in Digital Health and Social Care.

Co-founded by Prof Sinead Rhodes and Dr Iona Beange of the Institute for Neuroscience and Cardiovascular Research, EPIC provides resources for parents, caregivers and teachers of autistic children and those with ADHD, dyspraxia or who were premature. The research-based and co-designed resources are available via a digital platform. The Scottish Government recently provided funding for 1000 places, endorsing the utility and credibility of the service.

EPIC improves children's wellbeing by equipping families and professionals with individualised, practical, research-based strategies. It enhances early intervention, and its digital delivery strengthens support for neurodivergent learners at scale.

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