

Update on Council Motion: Supporting Those with Dyslexia

Action/Activity	Comment
<p>A. The provision of specialist support for jobseekers with dyslexia should be a part of the Get Oldham Working strategy. This would include access to screening services, pre-employment courses and assistive technology.</p>	<p>The Get Oldham Working Campaign works closely with the Early Help team, National Careers Service and Job Centre Plus to offer wraparound support to residents. Lifelong Learning provide pre-employment courses which has access to a dyslexia specialist who can support citizens if they require support.</p> <p>GOW register now asks for residents to declare if they have a disability or are if they are a carer – this allows for a more bespoke service which forms part of the commitment to deliver improved outcomes for people with disabilities and/or carers.</p> <p>The Economy and Skills team work closely with clients to understand their barriers and have successfully supported residents into work by using alternative recruitment mechanisms such as working interviews. The Access to Work programme has been promoted locally via Job Centre Plus and the team have supported employers access funding for adaptations but more can be done to support citizens with dyslexia.</p> <p>Screening services have yet to be factored into the activity as there has been no request for this to date. The cost of which is between £300 - £1000 per assessment which would require an allocation of resources to cover this cost which will need to be agreed.</p> <p>The Link Centre has suggested that links to the 'Volunteering for all Programme' could be made so that if people with dyslexia are struggling to get work they may be able to volunteer through this scheme which is a welcomed addition to the portfolio of opportunities offered via GOW.</p>
<p>B. It should follow best practice in its treatment of employees with dyslexia by establishing appropriate recruitment practices, and a regime of job redesign, support and understanding.</p>	<p>For the purpose of this paper the relevant current support has been broken down to that offered to two main groups; applicants to Council vacancies and the current workforce.</p> <p>Applicants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council advertises all substantive positions through www.yourcounciljobs.co.uk. This offers accessibility adjustments including text size and background colour (including white, yellow and black). These adjustments are present through the full application process. - The website offers full compliance with WC3 and AA web accessibility standards.

- Applicants, on being invited to interview are asked of any special requirements to support their attendance.
- Successful applicants are required to undertake a pre-employment medical questionnaire. Should any disability which would potentially affect an individual's ability to undertake a role be identified this would trigger an appointment with a medical professional. On assessment they would offer appropriate advice on the individual's fitness to undertake the role and any recommended adjustments the Council should consider as part of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

Current employees:

- The Council offers advice to managers on supporting employees with both mental and physical disabilities and the range of adjustments they may consider. This includes employees with existing conditions or those who become diagnosed in the course of their employment.
- The Council provides majority contribution to specific equipment / support for disabled employees provided as part of the Government's Access to Work Scheme.
- The Council contracts the services of medical professionals through its Occupational Health service who provide robust advice on the nature and occupational impact of medical conditions and the appropriate support for an employee with such disabilities. This can include referral to specialist services where appropriate and necessary.

The above represents the Council's commitment to support employees suffering with any type of physical or mental disability with the nature of the condition forming an integral part in the development of support. Both the British Dyslexia Association (www.bdadyslexia.org.uk) and Dyslexia Action (www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk) offer specific advice to employers on supporting employees with the condition. To further improve the support available to those suffering with dyslexia or any other disability, People Services will:

- Continue and seek further to embed good practice within the relevant policies and processes, predominantly; Recruitment and Selection, People Performance Framework and Performance Improvement.
- Seek to extend support identified through the Get Oldham Working Programme, external partners and the Council's own Wellbeing programme to the existing workforce and applicants for Council vacancies.

	<p>The Get Oldham Working programme is examining how it can work with a number of providers to deliver a “project search” style scheme which includes “job carving” or job redesign. This has yet to be signed off but could enable new roles to emerge which are more suited to residents with disabilities.</p>
Resolution.	
1. Investigate installing voice recognition software on computers in dedicated areas in public libraries and The Link Centre for use by individuals with dyslexia.	<p>The Library and the Link Centre both support the idea of providing voice recognition software. The most common application is Dragon Dictation. The Council would be required to purchase the Dragon Naturally Speaking Professional at a cost of £549.99 per license. There has been no funding committed to this project to date. It is proposed that a small pilot using one or two machines in Oldham Library and one in the Link Centre are trialled initially to gauge demand at a cost of £1,650. There will also be a cost of installation and training which will need to be factored in.</p> <p>One thing that has to be noted is that most, if not all, voice recognition software has to be trained to be used for each user so that they recognise individuals speech patterns, dialect etc. Some additional technical work would need to be undertaken to develop a mechanism whereby a resident can “train” the software to recognise their voice pattern. The library has a system which “wipes” clean the user stored information every evening. Unity will be required to investigate a solution and cost. Finally microphones would also have to be purchased as well as headsets.</p> <p>There is a free voice recognition application installed on all Windows 7/8 PCs called Windows Speech Recognition which is adequate but not as powerful as Dragon.</p> <p>It is proposed that a small pilot is trialled to assess costs and barriers.</p>
2. Establish an area within the Link Centre to showcase the assistive technology available to people with dyslexia	<p>The Link Centre has a demonstration suite which showcases adaptive and supportive tools for elderly and physically disabled persons. It also has a demonstration area for those with sensory difficulties mainly sight issues. The manager has agreed to expand this and to include kit for individuals with dyslexia. A review of assistive technology is underway but would need a budget for purchasing and maintaining equipment/licences.</p>
3. Provide training to staff and volunteers to support these individuals in the use of this technology	<p>Both the Library and Link Centre have agreed that staff and volunteers would be trained to support residents to use the technology.</p> <p>The Economy and Skills team, Early help team would be supported to undertake appropriate training (and potentially the volunteers from the Work Club network could be included).</p>
4. Ask the Chief Executive to write to the District Manager of	<p>The Job Centre Plus District Manager and Centre manager have been written to and invited to the O&S meeting to discuss their approach. The Job Centre Plus District Manager was not</p>

<p>Job Centre Plus to request the installation of similar technology and the provision of similar training to job coaches as part of the Digital Job Centre roll out at the Oldham Job Centre</p>	<p>able to attend but a separate meeting is to be arranged.</p>
<p>5. Work with the Dyslexia Foundation, to establish Pre-Employability Courses and the Dyslexia, Spt. D and Learning Difference Development Programme in Oldham</p>	<p>The Service has a trained dyslexia specialist who can undertake assessments and who understands the needs of individuals with dyslexia. The Service can provide support, where needed, for the Council's traineeship programmes and other pre-employability programmes. The Service could provide access to a discrete dyslexia class; access to specialist teaching and learning software within the class and/or individual learning support. Individual interventions would require Council funding.</p> <p>The Library, Library, Get Oldham Working, Early Help and Job Centre Plus teams can signpost residents to this provision.</p>
<p>6. Work with existing business networks and other partners to promote these programmes, and the availability of funding through Access to Work, to employees and the self-employed as well as to local jobseekers</p>	<p>Oldham Business Leadership Group held an event which focussed on wider disability issues including recruitment and retention of staff with disabilities, including promotion of the Access to Work scheme. The Get Oldham Working team intend to follow this up with a further event later in the year.</p> <p>Promotion of Access to Work has been promoted and will continue to be included within the GOW marketing campaign</p>
<p>7. Mark Dyslexia Awareness Week (5th to 11th October 2015) with suitable events to raise awareness amongst the public and employers and to promote this provision."</p>	<p>There are no firm plans currently; but Officers at the Link Centre and Oldham Library have agreed to be involved in hosting an event.</p> <p>The Marketing and Comms team will help promote any key activities/event during Dyslexia Awareness Week.</p> <p>It is proposed that a working group could shape the activity as requested but there is not allocation of resource currently.</p>
<p>8. Contact Work Clubs for update</p>	<p>It is recommended that Nathan Pearson is invited to the Board to provide an update on the Work Club network. Mr. Pearson was not available to attend the meeting.</p>

The motion is a cross cutting proposal which requires commitment from across the Council and with partners. This is work in progress but the response to date has been positive and officers are working together to determine how best to deliver on this commitment. The approach that is proposed is to procure equipment incrementally so as to ensure expenditure is aligned to need.