

**National Assembly for Wales**  
Enterprise and Learning Committee

Follow-up report on Support for People with  
Dyslexia in Wales

October 2009



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The Enterprise and Learning Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

Tel: 029 2089 8018  
Fax: 029 2089 8021  
Email: [Enterprise.learning.comm@Wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Enterprise.learning.comm@Wales.gsi.gov.uk)

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## Enterprise and Learning Committee

### Follow-up Report on Support for People with Dyslexia in Wales

#### Introduction

1. In July 2007, a small cross-party “rapporteur” group of four Assembly Members from the Enterprise and Learning Committee was charged with considering established, innovative and emerging approaches to the treatment of dyslexia. The Enterprise and Learning Committee accepted the group’s report, “Support for People with Dyslexia in Wales”, which was published in July 2008.<sup>1</sup> The group’s approach proved to be an effective means of obtaining evidence as it enabled people to contribute their views in a more intimate setting than in the formal meetings of the full Committee.
2. The purpose of this short inquiry was to monitor progress made in implementing the ten recommendations<sup>2</sup> of our report by scrutinising the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills and Government officials, including the Medical Director of the Dyscovery Centre,<sup>3</sup> and by seeking views from groups involved with supporting people with dyslexia – the British Dyslexia Association Cymru<sup>4</sup> and the

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-guide-docs-pub/bus-business-documents/bus-business-documents-doc-laid.htm?act=dis&id=93073&ds=7/2008>

<sup>2</sup> See Annex A for the list of recommendations. The Minister accepted all ten, either wholly or in principle.

<sup>3</sup> The Dyscovery Centre helps individuals with living and learning difficulties, <http://dyscovery.newport.ac.uk/dyscovery/index.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> The British Dyslexia Association is a registered charity that campaigns for the early identification of dyslexia, [www.bdadyslexia.org.uk](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk)

Welsh Dyslexia Project.<sup>5</sup> We wish to thank all the witnesses, who appeared before the Committee on 23 September 2009.<sup>6</sup>

3. Having examined the written and oral evidence submitted to us, we appreciate that work is still ongoing in this challenging field. We realise there is a need to be patient with new developments initiated by the Welsh Government since we published our report last year as they need time to come to fruition, but at the same time, we hope that this follow-up report and recommendations may help speed the process.

### **Early intervention**

4. It is generally accepted that in Wales, the new Foundation Phase, through its emphasis on learning through structured play, is likely to lead to better opportunities for the earlier identification of dyslexia and other additional learning needs.<sup>7</sup> The British Dyslexia Association told us that in England, the Rose Review of dyslexia focused on the importance of early identification of dyslexia since the earlier the identification, the earlier the input of support programmes and the better the prognosis for the child. Following the Rose Report, £10 million has been allocated in England for the next two years to train 4,000 additional specialist teachers at either approved teacher status (level 5) or Associate Membership of the British Dyslexia Association level (AMBDA level 7).<sup>8</sup> The aim is to have one

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<sup>5</sup> The Welsh Dyslexia Project is a registered charity that offers advice and support to people with dyslexia, parents, carers, professionals and businesses in Wales, [www.welshdyslexia.info/](http://www.welshdyslexia.info/)

<sup>6</sup> See Annex B for the witnesses' written evidence and Annex C for a transcript of the Committee's meeting on 23 September 2009

<sup>7</sup> Record of Proceedings columns 19 and 94, 23 September 2009, Annex C

<sup>8</sup> Column 6, 23 September 2009, Annex C

teacher at AMBDA level in charge of a cluster of perhaps five schools, qualified to identify, screen and assess children for dyslexia as well as to support teachers in schools, helping to plan programmes for the children and monitoring the progress of those children. The British Dyslexia Association argued that intervention should take place as early as Year 1.<sup>9</sup>

5. The Minister informed us that the Welsh Government was looking at what is emerging from the Rose Review and the UK Government's response to it, and was calculating how much funding would be required to provide one teacher in every local cluster of primary schools in Wales, including the requisite training and learning resource materials. **We recommend that the Welsh Government should follow the Rose Review recommendation of providing a specialist dyslexia teacher for every cluster of primary schools, and that the Foundation Phase should be monitored as it develops to ensure that children with dyslexia can be identified as early as possible.**

## Training

6. We heard from the Welsh Dyslexia Project that while there are courses available to train teachers to be licensed additional learning needs teachers, there is no specific course on dyslexia.<sup>10</sup> **We recommend that the Welsh Government should establish courses to train teachers to develop expertise in dyslexia, not just additional learning needs.**

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<sup>9</sup> Column 20, Annex C

<sup>10</sup> Column 7, Annex C

7. We were also concerned to hear that only teachers are allowed to attend the accredited courses that the Welsh Government has established.<sup>11</sup> They are not open to teachers who are not serving teachers, or to supply teachers; neither are they open to classroom assistants. **We recommend that training courses in dyslexia should be made available for all staff working with children in the classroom.**

### **Provision in the Welsh language**

8. We heard from the Welsh Dyslexia Project that there is a lack of resources for screening and assessing children for dyslexia and for supporting those children diagnosed with the condition through the medium of Welsh.<sup>12</sup> It also appears that the Welsh-medium education strategy will be delayed some two years behind the timetable to develop general dyslexia services.<sup>13</sup> In addition, there is evidence of inconsistency between local authorities in the degree of support given for dyslexic children whose first language is Welsh;<sup>14</sup> we heard that in some areas, children are being moved from Welsh to English medium schools solely to access dyslexia support. We therefore welcome the Welsh Government's comments about the benchmarking exercise that is currently being carried out to identify current practice and delivery and therefore determine where the gaps in provision lie.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Column 27, Annex C

<sup>12</sup> Column 7, Annex C

<sup>13</sup> Column 32, Annex C

<sup>14</sup> Column 45, Annex C

<sup>15</sup> Column 103, Annex C

9. **We recommend that all local authorities in Wales provide a Welsh medium service for screening and supporting children with dyslexia, including funding for the provision of standard norms for testing purposes, such as at Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2. We suggest that cooperation between different authorities may be part of the solution in meeting local needs and in providing a more consistent level of service through the medium of Welsh.**
  
10. The British Dyslexia Association told us that in comparison with the situation in England, Wales has quite a number of good course providers, although there is not sufficient provision for dyslexia-specific teacher training in Welsh. There is also the difficulty of school staff and teachers not being able to afford the courses.<sup>16</sup> **We recommend that the Welsh Government redress issues of lack of provision and lack of affordability for Welsh language dyslexia training for school staff.**

### **Support for parents, teachers and pupils**

11. We heard that in England the British Dyslexia Association receives money from the Department for Children, Schools and Families to run a dyslexia helpline.<sup>17</sup> **We recommend that the Welsh Government should fund the Welsh Dyslexia Project to run a free helpline for users in Wales, in both the Welsh and English languages.**

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<sup>16</sup> Column 42, Annex C

<sup>17</sup> Column 49, Annex C

## External Reference Group

12. Following the launch of our report in 2008, the Minister established a small task group of experts in the field of Specific Learning Difficulties to consider our recommendations and to advise her on a way forward. We were very concerned to be told that this group has been suspended until the academic expert group comes up with a definition of dyslexia, and that the Welsh medium task group, which was working on identifying need, has been abolished and responsibility transferred to the Welsh Government's Welsh language unit.<sup>18</sup> **We recommend that the Welsh Government resume its involvement of key external stakeholders in discussions and proposals for implementing our recommendations including involving Welsh speaking practitioners in the Government's work on supporting people with dyslexia.**

## Funding

13. £2 million has been made available in Wales for dyslexia, with £118,000 ring-fenced for a literature review and for defining dyslexia. In the view of the British Dyslexia Association, there is no need for another literature review;<sup>19</sup> the Welsh Dyslexia Project thought that the money could have been,  
"better spent on other ways of addressing the difficulties faced by schoolchildren and schools."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Column 33, Annex C

<sup>19</sup> Column 41, Annex C

<sup>20</sup> Column 43, Annex C

14. The Minister's response to these criticisms was that the work being undertaken is wider than a literature review as it includes audit and benchmarking of effective practice across Wales.<sup>21</sup> She felt it was important to look at definitions across the whole ability range and the variations in the severity of learning difficulties – not just dyslexia, but also dyscalculia<sup>22</sup> and dyspraxia<sup>23</sup> and the connections between them.<sup>24</sup> This was an essential difference between the approach adopted in Wales compared with England.

## Data

15. The British Dyslexia Association informed us how important it was to have accurate data on the numbers of identified dyslexic pupils in order to plan, resource and support students who experience dyslexic difficulties, and to monitor progress with intervention reading and spelling results.<sup>25</sup> Yet we heard from the Welsh Dyslexia Project that the Pupil Level Annual Schools Census could be significantly under-estimating the number of pupils with dyslexia.<sup>26</sup> **We recommend that in order to more accurately inform the monitoring and review of how progress is being made at school, local authority and national levels to identify and support people with dyslexia, the Pupil Level Annual Schools Census (PLASC)**

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<sup>21</sup> Columns 61 and 68, Annex C

<sup>22</sup> A specific learning disability involving innate difficulty in learning or comprehending mathematics

<sup>23</sup> A range of development disorders affecting the initiation, organisation and performance of action.

<sup>24</sup> About 35 to 40 per cent of children with dyslexia also have dyspraxia and 30 per cent also have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Column 70, Annex C

<sup>25</sup> British Dyslexia Association written evidence, Annex B

<sup>26</sup> Welsh Dyslexia Project written evidence, Annex B

**should be refined and improved so that dyslexia can be identified separately from specific learning difficulties.**

## **Conclusions**

16. Early recognition and appropriate support for people with dyslexia is essential if children are to achieve their full potential in life. Hopefully, the Foundation Phase will go some way to improving the early identification of the condition.
17. The British Dyslexia Association (BDA) told us that there is some excellent work already taking place or being developed in Wales, and we were encouraged with the action that the Minister has been taking since we published our report in July last year.
18. However, we would like to see excellence in support for people with dyslexia as standard throughout the whole of Wales, and for there to be equality in the provision of those services through both the Welsh and English languages. The British Dyslexia Association said it would like to see every local authority in Wales becoming “Dyslexia Friendly” by 2012; 50 per cent of schools in Wales gaining the Dyslexia Friendly Quality Mark Award by 2013; 70 per cent by 2014; 90 per cent by 2015; and 100 per cent by 2016.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> British Dyslexia Association written evidence, Annex B

19. **We recommend that the Welsh Government set targets for all schools and local authorities in Wales becoming Dyslexia Friendly by 2016.**

**Committee Service**

**October 2009**

## **Summary of Recommendations**

### **Recommendation 1**

We recommend that the Welsh Government should follow the Rose Review recommendation of providing a specialist dyslexia teacher for every cluster of primary schools, and that the Foundation Phase should be monitored as it develops to ensure that children with dyslexia can be identified as early as possible.

### **Recommendation 2**

We recommend that the Welsh Government should establish courses to train teachers to develop expertise in dyslexia, not just additional learning needs.

### **Recommendation 3**

We recommend that training courses in dyslexia should be made available for all staff working with children in the classroom.

### **Recommendation 4**

We recommend that all local authorities in Wales provide a Welsh medium service for screening and supporting children with dyslexia, including funding for the provision of standard norms for testing purposes, such as at Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2. We suggest that cooperation between different authorities may be part of the solution in meeting local needs and in providing a more consistent level of service through the medium of Welsh.

### **Recommendation 5**

We recommend that the Welsh Government redress issues of lack of provision and lack of affordability for Welsh language dyslexia training for school staff.

### **Recommendation 6**

We recommend that the Welsh Government should fund the Welsh Dyslexia Project to run a free helpline for users in Wales, in both the Welsh and English languages.

### **Recommendation 7**

We recommend that the Welsh Government resume its involvement of key external stakeholders in discussions and proposals for implementing our recommendations including involving Welsh speaking practitioners in the Government's work on supporting people with dyslexia.

### **Recommendation 8**

We recommend that in order to more accurately inform the monitoring and review of how progress is being made at school, local authority and national levels to identify and support people with dyslexia, the Pupil Level Annual Schools Census (PLASC) should be refined and improved so that dyslexia can be identified separately from specific learning difficulties.

### **Recommendation 9**

We recommend that the Welsh Government set targets for all schools and local authorities in Wales becoming Dyslexia Friendly by 2016.

## **Annex A – Recommendations of the Enterprise and Learning Committee’s Report on Support for People with Dyslexia, July 2008**

### **Recommendation 1:** [Accepted by the Minister]

A standard definition of dyslexia should be agreed by the Welsh Government and the local authorities in Wales in order to ensure a greater consistency across Wales in the screening, assessment and provision of local authority funded services for dyslexia.

### **Recommendation 2:** [Accepted by the Minister]

Dyslexia screening tests in both English and Welsh should be available to all children at the beginning of Year 2 who are identified as having greater reading, spelling or writing difficulties compared with their peers. This should be followed by additional support and appropriate intervention by the end of the Christmas Term in Year 2 for those children who are identified as being at risk of dyslexia by the screening tests.

### **Recommendation 3:** [Accepted by the Minister]

Accurate official information should be collected by the Welsh Government on the prevalence of dyslexia in school children; including data on the characteristics of those with dyslexia and data on the length of waiting times for individual children to have an appointment with an educational psychologist.

### **Recommendation 4:** [Accepted in principle by the Minister]

The Welsh Government, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales and the individual institutions should reassess the content of Initial Teacher

Training courses to significantly improve Trainee Teachers' understanding of additional learning needs and this should apply to all initial teaching training courses. All trainee teachers (not just for those intending to teach in infant schools) should receive increased mandatory training to enable them to identify children who have additional learning needs. All trainee teachers should also receive increased mandatory training in the provision of basic support for children who are achieving below the average for their cohort.

**Recommendation 5:** [Accepted in principle by the Minister]

The Welsh Government should reassess the training given to classroom assistants, particularly as part of the Foundation Phase, ensuring that teaching the skills to support children with additional learning needs becomes a mandatory part of both the initial training for classroom assistants and a compulsory part of their continuous professional development to ensure that classroom assistants are equipped with the skills to provide this support effectively.

**Recommendation 6:** [Accepted by the Minister]

The Welsh Government should review the training on support for dyslexia available to Special Education Needs Co-ordination Officers (SENCOs) and fund additional provision as required to ensure a more even level of expertise amongst all SENCOs.

**Recommendation 7:** [Accepted in principle by the Minister]

The Welsh Government should commission research to consider the feasibility and potential costs of training a specialist teacher in every school to post-graduate level (level 4) in support of children with dyslexia.

**Recommendation 8:** [Accepted by the Minister]

Screening, assessment and support for dyslexia should be equally available in both Welsh and English and the Welsh Government should make additional resources available to meet the demand.

**Recommendation 9:** [Accepted by the Minister]

The Welsh Government should commission an independent research project into different types of programmes in order to better identify which people are likely to benefit most from different types of assistance. This research study should be carefully planned to produce authoritative results and give ethical issues proper consideration. The research project should be developed in conjunction with the National Assembly's Enterprise and Learning Committee. The interventions to be evaluated should include:

- multi-sensory / movement-based programmes
- phonic based reading schemes
- use of tinted lenses and coloured overlays (in conjunction with testing by an orthoptist for visual problems)
- if the circumstances for the Dore Programme change and they are able to resume services to new clients, the Dore Programme should be included in the research project.

**Recommendation 10:** [Accepted in principle by the Minister]

The Welsh Government should commission a separate, statistically robust, pilot study of the FastForWord® products to independently evaluate the results of this intervention.

## **Annex B – Written evidence**

### **British Dyslexia Association**

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-third1/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=141759&ds=9/2009>

### **Welsh Dyslexia Project**

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-third1/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=141415&ds=9/2009>

### **Welsh Government**

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-third1/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=141418&ds=9/2009>

## **Annex C – Transcript of evidence session on 23 September 2009**

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-third1/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=144948&ds=9/2009>