appg for dyslexia

The case for a National Dyslexia Strategy

Because dyslexia matters

January 2026

Preface



It was the last Labour Government that set out how to understand and improve provision for dyslexic children. In 2008, the Labour government tasked Sir Jim Rose to lead the Rose Review, 'to make recommendations on the identification and teaching of children with dyslexia', their role was to investigate how to improve provision for dyslexic children.

Precise definitions of dyslexia changed over time, but several common characteristics have remained. Those with dyslexia struggle to break down words into their smallest constituent parts, making the use of phonics close to useless for dyslexics.

In 2009, the final report of The Rose Review defined dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling. Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory, and verbal processing speed. Dyslexia occurs across the range of intellectual abilities.

It is a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut-off points. Co-occurring difficulties can include language, motor coordination, mental calculation, concentration and personal organisation, but these are not, by themselves, markers of dyslexia.

It is poignant therefore that it was under the last Labour government that Sir Jim Rose provided a clear definition of dyslexia. Which makes it fitting that it is this Labour government continues to build on that work by producing the first National Dyslexia Strategy to take forward what Sir Rose began back in 2008/09.



Juliet Campbell MP
Chair APPG for Dyslexia
January 2026

"Too many people enter custody with unmet learning needs and we recognise how these difficulties have often shaped their pathway to prison. We welcome the focus on improving support for dyslexic people.

This work is supported by the MOJ's Neurodiversity Action Plan, which is helping people in custody build the skills and confidence they need for rehabilitation."

Jake Richards MP
Minister for Sentencing, Youth Justice and International Justice

"Juliet brings passionate commitment and deep experience to her campaigning work on dyslexia in Parliament. I applaud her call for the right support in the workplace, to remove the barriers which too often confront dyslexic people. That will open up opportunities in employment so that people with dyslexia can in future make a full contribution."

Rt Hon Sir Stephen Timms MP
Minister of State for Social Security and Disability

appg for dyslexia

1. Introduction

Dyslexia is a set of difficulties that affect the acquisition of reading and spelling, and how an individual processes information. It sits under the umbrella of neurodiversity and can also affect a person's short-term memory. Often overlooked is that dyslexia does not impact a person's intelligence.

Around one in ten people in the UK are dyslexic[1]. However, many children and adults still face avoidable barriers in education, professional careers, and research shows an overrepresentation of dyslexic people in both mental health services and the criminal justice system[2].

This paper will set out the case of why we need a National Dyslexia Strategy in four key areas:

- A reform of the teacher training curriculum giving newly qualified teachers a real understanding of dyslexia. Giving them the knowledge and skills to tailor their teaching methods to meet the needs of everyone in the classroom.
- Early identification and intervention in predominantly education settings
- Implementing greater workplace responsibility.
- To set out national standards to support dyslexic people using Health Services and within the Criminal Justice System.

This would significantly improve the outcomes for the roughly 6 million dyslexic people across the UK.

2. Why do we need a National Dyslexia Strategy?

Despite decades of research, dyslexia remains under-identified and poorly understood. Many children go through school without having their learning difference recognised and mistakenly labelled as lazy or disengaged. The impact of this can stay with dyslexic people throughout their life.

The British Dyslexia Association's recent report *"Set up for somebody else"*[3] highlights a deeply concerning picture of the landscape facing young people with dyslexia. The report highlights the troubling reality where dyslexic people feel ashamed of their dyslexia, hide it, and internalise damaging assumptions about their ability.

These experiences are compounded by inequality, where children from lower-income households are far less likely to be diagnosed or supported leading to a lifetime of disadvantage[4].

This extends far beyond the classroom with dyslexic adults struggling to progress at work, and finding employment, because workplaces do not understand dyslexia, or how it affects individuals, and therefore often do not meet their legal duties to provide reasonable adjustments.

The disadvantages faced extends to individual's emotional health and wellbeing, with dyslexic people being over represented in mental

1 House of Commons Library, *Support for Dyslexic Pupils at School*, research briefing, Nov 2025

2 Centre for Social Justice, *Dyslexia in the Education and Criminal Justice Systems*, Roundtable Report, Dec 2021

3 British Dyslexia Association, *"Set up for somebody else"*, October 2025

4 ibid

health services. The years of frustration and misunderstanding often manifests in elevated levels of anxiety, low self-esteem and depression.

Moreover, a shocking reality exists where dyslexic people represent between 30 and 50 percent of the prison population when just 10 percent of the general population are dyslexic.

Dyslexia does not predispose anyone to crime, but a lack of understanding at every corner throughout life increases vulnerability.

Dyslexia commonly co-occurs with other learning differences such as dyspraxia, dysgraphia, ADHD, and dyscalculia, which can compound the barriers individuals face[5], and the wider support they need. A National Dyslexia Strategy must therefore be inclusive of these challenges to ensure support meets the individual's needs.

3. What a National Dyslexia Strategy would do

A National Dyslexia Strategy would provide the architecture for change. It would codify government ambition, align policy across departments and ensure that dyslexic people are supported consistently throughout their lives. It will set expectations, improve consistency, and hold systems to account.

The strategy would:

- Establish dyslexia as a priority in policy creation for teacher training curriculum reform, education, employment, health and justice.
- Set clear national ambitions and standards across both the public and private sector.
- Improve early identification and intervention.
- Equip employers with the skills and confidence to support dyslexic people.
- Reduce long-term costs associated with poor mental health, unemployment, and criminal justice.

4. Reform the Teacher Training Curriculum

Reform of the teacher training curriculum is the most important ingredient in an effective national dyslexia strategy.

Teachers sit alongside parents as one of the most powerful influences on a child's life. When Teachers are confident that they have the correct guidance, training, and resources available to understand dyslexia they can help to ensure early identification, support and the encouragement to give dyslexic pupils a better chance in the education system.

University training for teachers would effectively ensure that dyslexic pupils are not misunderstood or overlooked. As things currently stand, initial teacher training and early career frameworks provide limited coverage of dyslexia and other co-occurring learning differences.

5 British Dyslexia Association, Neurodiversity and Co-occurring difficulties, available at: https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/dyslexia/neurodiversity-and-co-occurring-differences?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Reform of the teacher training curriculum therefore stands as an imperative cog in any National Dyslexia Strategy. The benefits would stretch far beyond education and persist from childhood into employment and later adult life. This vital step is a focus on reinforcing the platform from which all dyslexic people launch their lives.

5. The Four Departments

The strategy would be built across four government departments adopting an invest to save model where preventative measures are put into place that can drastically improve both the life chances and economic outlook for dyslexic people across the UK.

A. Educational outcomes – Department for Education

Teachers are committed to giving children the best start in life, but the current teacher training curriculum does not adequately equip them with the tools and understanding to identify and support dyslexic learners.

Dyslexic pupils often underperform within the education system as they struggle through school without recognition or support.

Early identification remains inconsistent, and access to an assessment and support is too often dependent on ad-hoc good practice, parental advocacy and income.

A National Dyslexia Strategy would:

- Place an emphasis on reforming the teacher training curriculum to include mandatory training on dyslexia, how dyslexia impacts on learning and how to teach a dyslexic pupil (kinaesthetic learners.)
- Help to establish national guidance on identifying dyslexia in schools.
- Promote early identification and intervention.
- Ensure dyslexia is considered in wider education reform, like the Schools White Paper.

B. Employment and career progression – Department for Work and Pensions

Despite the Equality Act 2010, dyslexic people continue to face significant barriers in the workplace.

Many dyslexic adults report stalled careers, disciplinary action or job loss linked to a lack of understanding. Apprentices can be particularly vulnerable, where support falls away between education and employment.

This is a loss to the wider economy, as talents in creativity, problem solving and innovation go underutilised, small changes can make big differences.

A National Dyslexia Strategy would:

- Help to set expectations for employers on supporting dyslexic staff.
- Improve awareness of legal duties and reasonable adjustments for dyslexic employees.
- Embed dyslexia understanding within apprenticeship standards.
- Promote best practice and dyslexia-friendly workplaces.
- Ensure DWP services cater for dyslexic people by supporting them into work.

C. Mental Health – Department for Health and Social Care

There is compelling evidence that dyslexic people experience higher levels of anxiety and low self-esteem[6], which can harm one's mental health.

The British Dyslexia Association's report highlighted that seven in ten young people feel dyslexia has negatively affected how they feel about themselves.

A National Dyslexia Strategy would:

- Help reduce anxiety and poor mental health in early educational settings.
- Encourage joined-up work to tackle this overrepresentation between education, health and social care, work and the criminal justice system.
- Raise awareness of the impact of dyslexia on mental health.
- Contribute to long-term reduction of dyslexic people needing to access mental health services.

D. Criminal Justice – Ministry of Justice

The overrepresentation of dyslexic people in the criminal justice system is one of the clearest indicators of systemic failure.

A lack of understanding during education, barriers to employment and poor self-esteem derived from challenges throughout all stages of life increase the chances of issues ranging from school exclusion to sentencing and rehabilitation.

Once a dyslexic person has been entered the criminal justice system, their dyslexia often stays unidentified, which in turn could lead to a further and compounding reduction in support following release.

The Centre for Social Justice's 2021 report into *Dyslexia in the Education and Criminal Justice Systems*[7] suggested that four-fifths of prisoners with learning disabilities report having problems understanding certain words, reading prison information and expressing themselves.

In some circumstances, prisoners have reported being unable to read letters about their court cases, missing important appointments, and breaking bail conditions, due to their dyslexia which can escalate minor offences to custodial sentences.

The then Minister for Sentencing, Sir Nicholas Dakin MP, recognised the overrepresentation in July 2025, who agreed with the troubling nature of the statistic at Ministry of Justice oral questions[8].

A National Dyslexia Strategy would:

- Reduce the number of dyslexic people entering the criminal justice system.
- Ensure access to appropriate educational support while in custody.

---

6 International Dyslexia Association, *Social and Emotional Problems Related to Dyslexia*, available at: https://dyslexiaida.org/social-emotional/

7 Centre for Social Justice, *Dyslexia in the Education and Criminal Justice Systems*, Roundtable Report, Dec 2021

8 Hansard, Ministry of Justice Topical Questions, 8 July 2025 https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2025-07-08/debates/E4244F26-C106-4319-BAAD-0F980FE186FB/details#contribution-A5CD125F-F1F5-4EBD-A5AD-C9ECC340C56E

- Greater long-term support for rehabilitation over punishment to reduce reoffending.
- Ensure full participation in the criminal justice system, and probation officers are signposted training effectively.

6. Consensus for a National Dyslexia Strategy

There is broad agreement among experts, charities, practitioners and Parliamentarians for the need of a National Dyslexia Strategy. The Westminster Hall Debate on Tuesday 11 November 2025, set out a clear cross-party consensus, for the need for greater collaboration on dyslexia, including a coordinated national approach at a cross-Government level[9].

Organisations such as the British Dyslexia Association, Dyslexia Action, the Dyslexia Association and the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Dyslexia have consistently highlighted the need to address the overt inequalities experienced by dyslexic people.

Research reviewed by the Dyslexia Delphi Study[10] shows that not supporting dyslexic learners has significant social and economic costs, and that early intervention in schools and workplaces yields measurable benefits[11].

7. A small investment with a big return

The Made by Dyslexia Report, in conjunction with Randstad Enterprise, *The Return on Dyslexic Thinking*[12] suggests that dyslexics could contribute up to £98.2 billion to the UK economy and the underutilisation of dyslexics is costing the country billions in lost innovation and growth.

A National Dyslexia Strategy would unlock potential across the UK. The strategy would improve lives, address rising inequalities, and strengthen both the social and economic outlook of the country.

This strategy is about investing early, acting preventatively and valuing dyslexia. A National Dyslexia Strategy supported by relevant Departments would ensure dyslexic people are no longer excluded, can contribute to our economy, strengthen our workforce, and enrich our communities.

The cost of inaction is too high.

9 Westminster Hall Debate, *Support for Dyslexic Pupils*, 11 Nov 2025 https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2025-11-11/debates/AA161A3F-F962-477E-8AE0-F48FE12E6444/details?utm_source=chatgpt.com

10 Carroll, J.M., Holden, C., Kirby, P., Thompson, P.A., and Snowling, M.J. (2025), *Toward a consensus on dyslexia: findings from a Delphi study*. J Child Psychol Psychiatr. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.14123

11 Holden, C., Kirby, P., Snowling, M.J., Thompson, P.A. and Carroll, J.M. (2025), *Towards a Consensus for Dyslexia Practice: Findings of a Delphi Study on Assessment and Identification*. Dyslexia, 31: e1800. https://doi.org/10.1002/dys.1800

12 Made by Dyslexia & Randstad Enterprises, *The Return on Dyslexic Thinking*, Oct 2025

Secreteriat:

Membership of the APPG for Dyslexia 2025/2026

Members:

Juliet Campbell MP (APPG Chair)
Lord Addington (APPG Vice Chair)
Lord Lucas
Daniel Aldridge MP
David Baines MP
Richard Baker MP
Olivia Blake MP
Sureena Brackenridge MP
Charlotte Cane MP
Jen Craft MP
Torcuil Crichton MP
Adam Dance MP
Marsha De Cordova MP
Damien Egan MP
Josh Fenton-Glynn MP
Amanda Hack MP
Sharon Hodgson MP
Rachel Hopkins MP
Alison Hume MP
Peter Kyle MP
Rachael Maskell MP
Jo Platt MP
Dave Robertson MP
Lauren Sullivan MP
Peter Swallow MP
Chris Webb MP
Michelle Welsh MP
Steve Witherden MP
Ellen Broomé – British Dyslexia Association
Helen Goodsall – British Dyslexia Association
Julia Carroll – Birmingham University Dyslexia Professor
Kay Carter – The Dyslexia Association
Natasha Davies – ADHD360
Lynn Greenwold – Chair SpLD Assessment Standards Committee
Caroline Holden – Member, SASC (Delphi study group)
Philip Kirby – KCL Dyslexia Professor
Jessica Milligan – Dyslexia Guild
Anna Smith – Dyslexia Guild
Maggie Snowling – Oxford University Dyslexia Professor

appg for dyslexia

Secreteriat:

British Dyslexia Association