

Dear Panel Members,

We are writing on behalf of our volunteer advocacy group, Dyslexia Awareness NI.

We wanted to share with you some documents that we believe highlight the seriousness of the dyslexia crisis in schools on Northern Ireland, namely the failure of early intervention, that is very pervasive in schools here.

While it may be your first instinct to call this a matter of SEN, the reality is that EA policy puts the onus of for intervention of literacy difficulties first and foremost on schools. Less than 2% of children with Specific Literacy Difficulties/SpLD/Dyslexia will ever avail the EA's peripatetic services (you may have heard on the news that these services are under scrutiny). With at least 1 in 10 people having dyslexia in the U.K* (equates to 35,000 students in Northern Ireland), you can see the enormous responsibility being placed on schools. The failure of the Department of Education and the Education Authority to properly train, fund and support schools to consistently deliver well-founded evidence-based prevention and intervention strategies is significantly impacting the educational outcome for these students. This is supported by many reports including Children's Law Centre and the Northern Ireland Audit Office.

***NHS/BDA statistic**

Children's Law Centre response to the Department of Education's Consultation on the Draft SEN Code of Practice

"Our concern, as we have consistently stated, is about how the revised framework will be effective in the absence of school and EA capacity, time and resources which will enable it to operate in practice. Schools have been chronically underfunded, their budget deficits are growing in many cases, along with class sizes. Early intervention through the earlier stages of the Code is consistently unavailable and unmet need is neither measured nor reported upon."

"CLC believes it is critically important that the Department sets out clearly how it intends to operationalise early intervention through supporting schools in mapping available in-school SEN provision, formulating PLPs, identifying/monitoring the extent of unmet need, ensuring cooperation between children's services and making related investment in schools and EA SEN support services, along with setting out short and medium-term timings, costs and budgets for phased SEND implementation."

Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) Impact Review of SEN September 2020: "The importance of early identification of a child's needs and appropriate intervention is widely recognised. The sooner a child's needs are identified and appropriate support put in place, the more responsive the child is likely to be. The Department has reminded schools of the requirement to adopt a consistent approach to the identification, assessment and provision made for all children with SEN. **However, there is no evidence that this requirement is being adhered to in all schools.** Furthermore, a lack of early identification and intervention has again (NIAO Impact Review of Special Educational Needs) been highlighted recently by the Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY). In our view, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), at the direction of the Department, should assess whether schools are applying a clear and consistent approach to identifying and providing for children with SEN."

We have attached an evidence document that we submitted to the Committee for Education. We encourage you to discuss matters around dyslexia with them as they have been working hard to highlight these issues. We all urge you to speak with the Children's Law Centre,

namely Rachel Hogan and Liam Mackle, about dyslexia as well. They have decades of experience dealing with the fall out from this under-supported and under-funded area.

We also urge you to ask educators themselves!

We would be very happy to meet with you to discuss this further.

We also want to mention that although we strongly promoted the panel's survey on our social media (we have 3k+ followers on Facebook), dyslexia is a very genetic learning difference and some parents, especially those who did not receive support when they were younger, may have difficulty filling out the form. We urge you to allow for video, zoom or in-person consultations for parents and children as well. We would gladly facilitate this for you.

Kind regards,
Jodi Snowdon, Nicky Humphreys and Ally Lewis
Dyslexia Awareness NI

Written testimonies from parents and educators:

https://docs.google.com/file/d/1nMzIvx2VMHKYgTf8u3kcTfJd_Qg0jhiV/edit?usp=docslist_api&filetype=msword

DANI Evidence Document:

https://docs.google.com/file/d/1nMzIvx2VMHKYgTf8u3kcTfJd_Qg0jhiV/edit?usp=docslist_api&filetype=msword

Dyslexia Crisis in Northern Ireland (6 minutes)

<https://youtu.be/c2DbTF7cGPY>

Committee for Education meeting including testimony from Children's Law Centre
(Starts after 25:00 minutes)

<https://niassembly.tv/committee-for-education-meeting-wednesday-13-october-2021/>

Clips from ↑□:

Liam Mackle from CLC:

<https://twitter.com/daniadvocacy/status/1486602134724481024?s=21>

Kate's Story with Liam Mackle:

<https://twitter.com/daniadvocacy/status/1485055152256077833?s=21>

Tracy's Story with Rachel Hogan

<https://twitter.com/daniadvocacy/status/1485058193634086912?s=21>

Understanding Dyslexia

(use the code 'NessyWomenEdNI' for free access for up to five users):

<https://www.nessy.com/en-gb/product/understanding-dyslexia-home>

Notes: it is a two-hour self-paced/video-based training with no work to complete that can be completed in small intervals.

