

# Dyslexia Scotland Ambassador Education Outreach Programme

# Introduction

The aim of this programme was to reinforce the Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit dissemination programme by supplementing it with a programme of teaching staff, pupils’ and parents’/carers’ workshops in selected primary schools. Led by two of [Dyslexia Scotland‘s Ambassadors](https://www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk/our-ambassadors), Paul McNeill and Rossie Stone, the pupils’ workshops (targeting P4-7 pupils) aimed to raise awareness of dyslexia and inclusive practice throughout the whole school environment, while the teaching staff’s workshops aimed to embed the Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit into everyday practice. The parents’ workshops led by Paul McNeill outlined his personal story about dyslexia as a dyslexic adult as well as being a parent of a dyslexic child; they introduced the programme to parents whose pupils were taking part.

During Phases 1 and 2 (2017 – 2019), the programme engaged with 22 primary schools in total across four different local authorities (Falkirk, East Dunbartonshire, Glasgow City and South Lanarkshire). The programme involved three to four workshops per school, including inspirational workshops by our Ambassadors, which developed four ‘Dyslexia characters’ to help dyslexic pupils identify issues and solutions to help them learn. Rossie Stone, cartoon artist and creator of Dekko comics, created the cartoons. The schools were identified in liaison with the Director of Education in each of the local authorities and in consultation with the Toolkit and Making Sense working groups.

The pupils who took part in the interactive workshops led by Paul McNeill/Rossie Stone shared their views/experiences of dyslexia and contributed to the development of the cartoon characters by reflecting their own experiences, coping strategies and issues. Around 660 pupils (30 pupils per school in 22 schools across 4 local authorities) shared their experiences in this way.

This Professional Learning Guide includes two of the presentations used (for the teaching staff and pupils), session plans and teaching notes, feedback from participants in the pilot phases, a link to a film clip of a pupils’ workshop and the comic featuring the cartoon characters. The lessons learned from the pilot have been incorporated into the materials within the Guide.

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## How to use this professional learning guide

This guide provides a framework to support practitioners to:

* Further develop their understanding of dyslexia
* Help their learners who are dyslexic to understand their strengths
* Help families to further develop their understanding of dyslexia.

The Ambassador Outreach Programme comprised three workshops in each school, for teaching staff, parents and pupils. This guide provides an overview of each workshop and highlights the resources that can be used in the teaching staff’s and the pupils’ workshops and also ideas for the Parents’ workshop.

The resources to support the delivery of the programme and the workshops are highlighted at the start of each section in this guide and they are all freely available to download from the Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit <http://addressingdyslexia.org/ambassador-outreach-programme>

To support the workshop facilitators, session plans are also available and the presentations have accompanying notes.

## Workshop One: Briefing workshop for teaching staff

A film of an interview with Rossie Stone talking about the programme is available to watch on the Ambassador Outreach Programme page of the toolkit. The film lasts 11-12 minutes and staff may prefer to watch it outside the workshop if time is an issue.

**Resources:**

* **Presentation ‘**The Dyslexia Scotland/Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit Ambassador Outreach Programme Workshop for Teaching staff’
* **Session plan**
* **Questionnaire to issue to teaching staff at start of programme**
* **2 sample letters to issue to teaching staff delivering the programme and to parents/carers**

This workshop is aimed at teachers and teaching staff and linked into the Dyslexia and Inclusive practice work that has been carried out as part of the 2014 Education Scotland report ['Making Sense: Education for Children and Young People with Dyslexia in Scotland'.](http://addressingdyslexia.org/making-sense-dyslexia-review)  This first workshop covers the following:

* Background to the Ambassador Outreach Programme and the contents and resources included in the Professional Learning Guide
* The Scottish policy context for Dyslexia and inclusive practice, the Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit and the wide range of professional learning resources available
* Agreeing on the learning outcomes for the programme with teaching staff in your establishment or local authority.
* The completion of a questionnaire to highlight the knowledge and understanding of dyslexia, with the same one completed again at the end of the programme.

**Monitoring/Evaluation**

Schools used the following measures of success during the pilot phases:

* Engagement with the Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit and the Making Sense Executive summary and full report and the learning modules
* Continued awareness training on support about identification, including roles and responsibilities
* Discussions/surveys to look at ways of enhancing communication with parents
* Changes that take place within the school to support dyslexia
* The outcomes of the questionnaire
* The number of teaching staff, parents and pupils who attend the workshops

**What teaching staff said about the Workshop One:**

“It has made me think about my classroom practice.”

“I’m now aware of all the resources online.”

“Better knowledge of how to support, what strategies to use and how to identify.”

“I will use the Toolkit Getting Started resource with pupils.”

“I am more aware of other resources to help my dyslexic learners.”

“I will continue to develop my understanding and knowledge.”

“The workshops have given me more confidence that there are resources and modules to help support me in order to better support pupils.”

“The workshops provided me with additional practical strategies that I can use to support learners.”

## Workshop Two: An awareness workshop for parents of pupils across the whole school

**Resources:**

* **Sample letter to parents/carers**
* **Slide on Dyslexia Scotland Support and resources**

**Parental engagement**

During the pilot phases of the Ambassador outreach programme, workshops were delivered for parents, during which Paul McNeill shared his own experience of dyslexia as an adult as well as a parent of a dyslexic child. When reviewing the pilot programme, it was agreed that the parents’ workshops were the most difficult part of the programme to replicate beyond the pilot phases, as they involved Paul sharing his own story with the parents in the workshops.

Therefore,it was agreed that this element of the programme could be delivered in a number of other ways by schools. The learning from the programme indicated that the Professional Learning Guide should not be prescriptive in this area, but instead it should provide schools with a range of different options and tools for them to design their own way of delivering the programme in their school or local authority. It is particularly important to involve parents at each stage of this programme, but how this is done will depend on the school.

Here are some suggestions based on the lessons learned from the pilot phases:

* Letter to invite parents to take part **(sample template available to download)**
* Parents’ nights – could be one way of introducing the programme, including its aims, who it is for, interactive workshop content
* There is a range of support for parents whose children have been, or are in the process of being identified for dyslexia, on where to go next e.g. Dyslexia Scotland [Helpline](https://www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk/helpline), Parent Masterclasses, Branch meetings, [Dyslexia Scotland’s leaflets](https://www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk/our-leaflets) **(See ‘Support and Resources’ slide)**
* Schools should consider what they would like to get out of the parents’ session – would they like parents of all children to be invited or only those who are dyslexic? (Both options worked well in the pilot phases).
* When talking about the identification of dyslexia, the key message is about putting support in place at the right time. A child does not have to have a ‘label’ of dyslexia in order to get support – often teachers are observing and putting in strategies to see if they help the child but they may not have communicated this to the parents. If parents have any concerns, they should speak to the teacher in the first instance. The Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit gives advice on engaging with parents: <http://addressingdyslexia.org/index.php/supporting-learners-and-families>
* Consider timing of the parents’ workshops – daytime, evening or twilight? If the programme is delivered in several schools in one local authority, should the workshops be held in the individual schools, or, if feasible, could one event be held for 3-4 schools?
* In the pilot phases, each workshop consisted of a 35-40 minutes presentation by Paul, followed by 15 minutes for questions and 15 minutes for anyone wishing to ask individual questions (the reason for this is that parents may prefer not to ask a question in front of everyone else).
* If an external speaker is invited, it is helpful to give them advance warning about any particular issues that the schools/local authorities do or do not wish to highlight so that they can tailor presentation accordingly.
* Celebration at end of the programme for parents to listen to the voices of learners.

**What teaching staff and parents said about the Parent/Carer workshops:**

“Parent workshop was very well received and well-attended. Parents were enthused and asked many questions at the end of the presentation. The school will subscribe to Dekko comics.”

“Raised awareness across staff. More effective support and communication with parents. More effective support for pupils. A very worthwhile programme. To be recommended.”

“The programme has been well thought out to allow holistic support for the child, parents and teachers. This makes everyone feel involved and supported which helps in the overall communication and allows a better understanding throughout.”

“I think this is a wonderful programme and hopefully this can be rolled out across Scotland!”

## IMG_4936Workshop Three: Interactive workshop with pupils

**‘Struggle sister’**

**Resources:**

* **Film clips of the workshop (with introduction by Rossie Stone): see additional information on point 8 below**
* **Presentation used by Paul McNeill and Rossie Stone**
* **Session plan**
* **Teaching notes – guidance for class activities are on the ‘Notes pages’ that accompanies the presentation**
* **Strengths and challenges list**
* **Comic (PDF) – featuring Superheroes created by Rossie Stone and pupils during the pilot phases.**

This interactive workshop with pupils in P4-7 highlights what dyslexia means. It introduces ‘Dyslexia Characters’ to provide pupils with coping strategies and other advice.

The ‘Dyslexia Characters’ provide an interactive journey for pupils. The ‘characters’ aim to help pupils to develop coping strategies to meet the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence:

* Successful learners
* Confident individuals
* Responsible citizens
* Effective contributors.

Pupils have interactive resources to work through, for use during and after completion of the programme.

Throughout the pilot phases, children were very happy to interact and talk about the challenges they faced while learning. The most common answers they gave when asked about their dyslexia challenges were:

* Finding it hard to concentrate
* Finding it hard to read out loud
* Spelling
* Finding it hard to organise
* Day dreaming
* Remembering facts about subjects
* Time going too fast

**What teaching staff said about the pupils’ workshops:**

“Kids loved the programme! Encouraged them with the barriers they experienced.”

“Really helpful to reduce barriers to learning and increase confidence for learners. The pupils loved it! Parental feedback very positive too!”

“Children in my class enjoyed the Ambassador programme and were positive about it.”

“Very good. Motivational.”

**Film clips – Pupils’ workshop**

The film clips show one of the ‘Mission Superheroes' pupils’ workshops that took place at Denny Primary School in April 2019. The film is divided into sections, so that teaching staff can access the relevant part of the workshop. We suggest that teaching staff view these films as part of their preparation for the workshop.

**The workshop itself**

1. Introducing the workshop (3-4 minutes)
2. What is Dyslexia? (10-11 minutes)
3. The superheroes (8-9 minutes)
4. The interaction: pupils sharing their own experiences of dyslexia

 (18 minutes)

 5. The exercise: imagining solutions – how can the superheroes help?

 (16-17 minutes)

 6. Review time! (6-7 minutes)

The presentation in the Guide is the one that the Ambassadors/programme facilitators used during each workshop. This has been adapted from the original to incorporate comments from the participants and staff in the schools where the workshops were delivered.

**What worked well in the Pupils’ workshops?**

A review of the workshops delivered during the pilot phases identified the following ‘key ingredients’:

* The Famous Dyslexic people exercise
* The fact that the presenters Paul and Rossie were dyslexic (Schools may wish to consider involving Dyslexia Champions within the school to deliver the workshops)
* The characters being cartoons, with scope for imaginative and creative development
* During the workshops, encouraging children to think differently, or ‘outside the box’
* Modelling the drawing and helping add a visual shape to ideas generated from the class as a group before moving into smaller groups
* 15-20 minutes where pupils create their own characters and strategies and have the freedom to explore specific, personalised solutions, e.g. pausing time; speech balloons with words broken down
* Giving permission to pupils to come up with their own ideas, no matter how outlandish.
* Build on the confidence gained in the workshop, e.g. some schools developed Dyslexia ambassadors enthused by the workshops, to share their experiences about dyslexia with the rest of the school
* Some schools used older (P7) ‘buddies’ or champions as assistants during the workshops

## On completion of the programme: Next Steps

**Resources:**

* **Final questionnaire for the teaching staff and schools that have taken part**

Evaluation of the completed questionnaires will support future:

* Planning of appropriate professional learning
* Whole school improvement planning to improve inclusive practice and the health and wellbeing outcomes for learners who are dyslexic.

## General Feedback from Phases One and Two of the Programme

**Workshop for teaching staff at Dyslexia Scotland’s 2018 Education conference on Mission Superheroes – Ambassador outreach programme**

“This was super - very relevant and transferrable to the classroom - I will definitely use the ideas given. Presenters were lively, colourful, open and very receptive to their audience."

“WOW! Simply outstanding. Passionate, engaging, stimulating and inspiring. A first class presentation which allowed us to tackle activities from the perspective of an eight year old child. Excellent strategies and ideas were given to support learners and to overcome barriers. Comic strip idea was first class and I have already implemented this in my classroom setting - pupils are already engaged and excited! Thank-you! Can't wait to further develop this!”

 “Value of emphasising need to discuss dyslexia more widely with all children, and to plan to support wellbeing of children of dyslexia”

“Creating a superhero to battle difficulties would work well with the children.”

“Enthusiasm to tackle problem issues for all learners, not just dyslexic ones.”

**Feedback from schools and parents involved in the Ambassador programme**

 “Just wanted to pass on my thanks to Paul for the Dyslexia presentation tonight. I took great confidence from Paul’s journey and took on board all the info and hope we can put it into practice to support my son moving forward.” **(Parent after a Parent/Carer workshop).**

“I would like to say that the response to your parent workshop has been very positive!  I have had the opportunity over the last couple of weeks at parents’ night to speak to parents who were there and their feelings are that you gave them a much more positive and hopeful outlook of their children’s futures as learners.  They were very inspired by your experience and appreciated your practical tips on how they as families could build on their children’s skills.”  **(Support for Learning teacher)**

“Thank you so much for a very entertaining and informative afternoon.  All of the pupils had a great time.” **(Deputy Head Teacher after pupils’ workshop)**

“The work that Paul did with the children was fantastic.  The children really enjoyed it and their discussion afterwards showed that they had developed some understanding of dyslexia.  The children really engaged with the work on the superpowers!” **(Depute Headteacher)**

“The HT and I and my class teachers could not speak highly enough of the Dyslexia Ambassador Programme. It has provided an excellent opportunity for CPD for staff to look at the Toolkit and to attend Shawlands Academy for training from the GDSS team.”

These quotes are taken from the **Making Sense Programme Final Report (January 2020)**.

## Other Useful Resources

**a. Film clips of Pupil Workshop delivered in April 2019 at Denny primary school**

These films are available on the Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit page, under the purple banner headed Workshop 3: Pupil Workshop, at the following link:

 <http://addressingdyslexia.org/ambassador-outreach-programme>

**b. Video from Castleton primary school, Glasgow** – pupils sharing their characters with Paul McNeill and Rossie Stone at a workshop in May 2018:

<https://youtu.be/FNUnuyg8KwI>