The Dyslexia Association of Ireland (DAI) is currently supported by some funding from the Department of Education and Skills (DES), SOLAS and the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government’s SSNO scheme administered by Pobal.
AGM 2016

The 43rd Annual General Meeting of the Dyslexia Association of Ireland will be held at our national office in Joyce’s Court, Talbot Street, Dublin 1, on Saturday, 11th June 2016 from 2:00pm to 3:00pm. In accordance with the Articles of Association of the Dyslexia Association of Ireland, an election will be held at the AGM for twenty current members (max.) to serve on the Board of Directors/National Executive Committee (NEC). If you would like to put your name forward for election, or to nominate another person, please complete the form below and return it to DAI, 5th Floor, Block B, Joyce’s Court, Talbot Street, Dublin 1, D01C861, before June 1st, 2016.

We are actively seeking individuals who are interested in a voluntary leadership role as a member of DAI’s Board/National Executive Committee. If you are interested in serving on the Board, a nomination form is printed on page 4. Please feel free to contact us if you would like any further information (ceo@dyslexia.ie).

The role of the Board of Directors is to ensure that all legal and financial obligations are met and that the Dyslexia Association of Ireland effectively serves our members and the wider dyslexia community as per our vision, mission and strategic plan.

The Board of DAI will ideally be comprised of the following mix of expertise, skills and backgrounds: people with dyslexia, parents, experts in teaching (primary and secondary), educational psychologists, representatives from Branches and Workshops, knowledge of volunteering, finance, legal, public relations, marketing, fundraising and governance. If you feel that you have skills/expertise in any of these areas, you may have a valuable contribution to make.

All Board members will be Directors of the Dyslexia Association of Ireland, which is a limited company, and a registered charity with the Revenue Commissioners. All positions on the Board and sub-groups are unpaid voluntary roles (though reasonable travel expenses will be reimbursed). Serving on the Board is also a great way to develop one’s own skills and expertise in other areas. The Board meets 8 times each year, generally on a Saturday morning at the DAI National Office.

As well as full Board members, we also have a range of Board sub-committees and working/advisory groups, the membership of which may include some non-Board members, and where appropriate some non-members with relevant expertise. This helps to broaden the range of skills and experiences and gives those not interested in governance an opportunity to input in other ways.

The following Sub-Committees will be convened following the AGM:
• Finance & Risk Sub-Committee
• Communications & Fundraising Sub-Committee
• Education Expert Advisory Group
• Governance Working Group
• Organisation Review Working Group

All sub-committees and working groups are advisory in nature to the Board of directors, and all appointments to these groups will be made by the Chair of the Board of Directors whose decision is final. Sub-committees/working groups will generally meet between 4-6 times each year. If you are interested in serving on any of these sub-committees or working groups, please contact the CEO at ceo@dyslexia.ie.

2015 Financial Statements/Audited Accounts can be viewed and downloaded on our website at www.dyslexia.ie/about/download-section (following Board approval). If you would like to receive a hard copy of these financial statements, please contact us at 01 8776001 or email info@dyslexia.ie and a copy will be posted to you. Copies will also be available on the day at the AGM.
AGM 2016

Motions: If you would like to put forward a motion for discussion at the AGM, please submit it in writing (in standard motion format) to DAI, 5th Floor, Block B, Joyce’s Court, Talbot St., Dublin 1, D01C861, before June 1st, 2016.

Board Nomination Form
I wish to nominate ________________________________ for election to the Board of Directors/National Executive Committee of the Dyslexia Association of Ireland, on Saturday, 11th June 2016.
Address of nominee: ______________________________________________________________
Current DAI Membership No.: ____________________________
I _______________________________________ (signature of nominee) am willing to stand for election and I am aware of the duties and responsibilities of membership of the National Executive Committee.

Proposed by: ___________________________ Seconded by: ____________________________
DAI Membership Number: _____________ DAI Membership Number: ___________

Please note that only full current members of the Association are eligible to serve on the National Executive Committee/Board of Directors or to attend or vote at general meetings of the Association.

AGM Booking Form for DAI Members
Please complete in full and return to DAI, 5th Floor, Block B, Joyce’s Court, Talbot St., Dublin 1, D01C861. Or email to: info@dyslexia.ie

Name: ______________________________________    DAI Membership Number: __________
Address: __________________________________________________________________________
Telephone: _____________________ E-mail: _______________________________________

I would like to book _____ places at the AGM. (If booking for more than one person, please provide the name of each person below and their current DAI membership number.)

1. ________________________________________     DAI Membership Number: __________
2. ________________________________________     DAI Membership Number: __________
3. ________________________________________     DAI Membership Number: __________

Agenda for DAI’s 2016 AGM
1. Minutes of 2015 AGM
2. President’s Address
3. CEO’s Report
5. Election of National Executive Committee
6. Debate on Submitted Motions
7. Appointment of Auditors
8. Any Other Business

Please note that the AGM is open to all current members of the Dyslexia Association of Ireland.
NEW Adult Information Resources

Thanks to funding from SOLAS we have been able to develop and produce 2 new information resources on adult dyslexia and 3 posters.

**Adult Dyslexia** is a new information booklet on dyslexia in adults. It covers basic dyslexia facts, a checklist and information on assessment. It also outlines literacy and learning opportunities including supports at third level, as well as information on dyslexia in the workplace and how technology can help.

**What’s Good for Dyslexia is Good for All** is a new guide for those working in the FET sector in Ireland. Based on the lived experience of adults with dyslexia, these guidelines tell the story of what helps and what does not help when teaching adults with dyslexia. The guidelines are based on existing good practice and important insights gained from the evaluation of the Career Paths for Dyslexia LTI programme run by DAI and KWETB, and in particular the experiences of adults with severe dyslexia who attended the Career Paths programme over recent years, and the expert staff at the Career Paths centre.

**Posters**: 3 new posters have been developed to raise awareness of dyslexia and to help signpost people to the Dyslexia Association where they can get further information, advice and support, relevant to their needs at the time.

All these resources will shortly be distributed nationwide to help raise awareness of dyslexia in adults. They can be downloaded freely from our website at www.dyslexia.ie/about/download-section/. Copies are also available from National Office on request.

We are very grateful to SOLAS for funding the development of these new information resources and the distribution costs for the nationwide circulation to relevant organisations (as part of their 2015 grant towards DAI’s adult services).

**Career Paths Course for Adults with Dyslexia**

Our Career Paths Course is a unique full-time 9-month long course for unemployed adults with dyslexia. It is held in Leixlip in Co. Kildare, just 20 minutes from Dublin. The programme offers a QQI Level 3 Major Award in Employability Skills, as well as intensive daily specialist tuition in literacy tailored to the needs of adults with significant dyslexia. The course has above average success rates; 99% achieve QQI certification, and over 70% progress to further education and/or the workforce. All participants make significant improvements in their literacy skills over the 9 months. The course is run in conjunction with KWETB and SOLAS.

The next course will start in November 2016, so if you or anyone you know might be interested, please contact Emma or Tracy now at 01 606 0009 or email careerpath@eircom.net as places are limited.
Introducing Amy Smyth, DAI’s new Information Officer

My name is Amy and I am delighted to be the new Information Officer here at the Dyslexia Association of Ireland. I myself was diagnosed as being dyslexic at the age of 7 and have dealt with people’s perceptions of what that means my whole life. I have had some negative reactions from people – both in academia and in the work place and I think that that has a lot to do with a fundamental misunderstanding of dyslexia. I am excited to begin working in a role that will help to inform people about dyslexia and banish some of the myths that are still out there in relation to it.

I myself have a background in law and human rights and I have previously worked for organisations in the area of widening access to education for young people. My particular passion is tackling the issue of a lack of self-confidence in dyslexic young people and adults. I believe strongly in the power of empowering people with dyslexia and the benefit of nurturing the talents of individuals while instilling in them the confidence and belief that they can do anything that they put their minds to. I look forward to working closely with you the members through my role here at the DAI.

Erasmus Youth Camp – Malta, 23-30 July 2016

Are you dyslexic and between 18 and 28 years of age? Would you like to attend a youth camp in Malta in July with similar people from across Europe? DAI is partnering with colleagues from across Europe for this Erasmus Youth Camp.

The group from Ireland will comprise a maximum of 16 as follows:
• 2 adult leaders who will take responsibility for the group - no need to be dyslexic.
• 4 accompanying leaders - must be over 18 and no need to be dyslexic.
• 10 participants - must be over 18 and must have a profile of dyslexia.

Flights must be booked by each participant. Flight costs will be refunded to each participant by bank internet transfer, up to a maximum of €270 against the production of the boarding passes x 2 and flight receipt. This refund will be available after the end of the project once the funding is received from the National Agency for European Projects.

There will be a participation fee to be paid by each of the 16 participants in the group, including the leaders and the accompanying persons. This will be confirmed soon, and is expected to be under €100. The funding will cover all the meals, accommodation and transport during the project days. The funding does not cover the airport transfers on arrival and departure. All participants must have a valid European health card. Individuals are advised to take out their own travel insurance (this is not covered by the Erasmus funding).

If you are interested in taking part as either a participant or a leader, please contact Amy our Information Officer now at 01 8776001 or email info@dyslexia.ie.
DAI runs a wide range of courses, seminars and events each year in Dublin and on rotation around the country, subject to demand. Here is an outline of just some of the courses planned for the rest of the year. Further information and booking forms for courses can be found in the Events section on the DAI website (once dates and venues have been finalised).

April 9 to 23 Course for Primary School Teachers (Dublin)
May 7 Parents Information Day (Galway)
May 21 Parents Information Day (Dublin)
June 11 AGM
August 22 to 26 Course for Primary School Teachers (Dublin)
Sept. 10 to 24 Course for Primary School Teachers (Cork)
September 10 Parents Information Day (Cork)
October 1 Parents Information Day (Dublin)
October 3 to 9 Dyslexia Awareness Week
October 8 to 22 Course for Primary School Teachers (Dublin)
November 12 Parents Information Day (Sligo)
Nov. 12 to 26 Course for Primary School Teachers (Sligo)
January 2017 Course for Primary School Teachers (Limerick)
January 2017 Parents Information Day (Limerick)

Talks and information seminars on dyslexia are also delivered nationwide in conjunction with our local community-based Branches and Workshops.

Our Information Officer Amy Smyth is involved in delivering a range of talks in libraries and community organisations in Dublin and around the country. Topics include ‘Encouraging Dyslexic Children to Read for Pleasure’, ‘Supporting Children with Dyslexia’ and ‘What is Dyslexia? An Overview. If your local library or community venue would be interested in holding any of these talks, please contact Amy at info@dyslexia.ie.

DAI also runs free seminars on dyslexia aimed at adults. The seminars take place at our national office on Talbot Street, Dublin. No booking is required, just turn up on the night. You do not need to have a diagnosis of dyslexia to attend these events. These events will be free to attend, but as always we welcome any donations to help towards running costs. We also deliver these seminars in conjunction with community organisations around the country, on request.

On Thursday May 12th from 6-8pm, we will be holding a seminar on Assistive Technology for Adults with Dyslexia. On Tuesday June 14th from 6-8pm we will be holding a workshop on Adult Dyslexia in the workplace. Topics covered will include general advice and coping strategies, disclosure and assistive technology.

DAI is open to invitations from organisations and community groups to deliver seminars in other areas of the country. For example, this could be a dyslexia awareness session for an organisation, a talk for a parents’ group on a specific topic or a seminar for adult literacy tutors. All talks are tailored to the needs of each group. Please call 01 877 6001 or email info@dyslexia.ie for further information. Please do follow us on Facebook and Twitter, and sign up for our monthly members’ email updates to ensure you hear about new events around the country as they are organised.
How to Succeed in Employment with Specific Learning Difficulties
By Amanda Kirby
ISBN: 978-0285642461

Amanda Kirby’s book serves as a guide for employees and employers on how to be successful in the workplace while living with a specific learning difficulty. The book covers Dyslexia, Dyspraxia/DCD, ADD & ADHD, Autism Spectrum Conditions, Dyscalculia and Language and Communication Disorders.

This book can be described as a users guide to gaining employment, being employed and employing someone with a hidden disability such as those mentioned above. The book is very practical and systematic in its approach and takes the reader though hints and tips in relation to choosing a career, writing a C.V. and cover letters, interview preparation as well as covering the topic of disclosure. It details how to cope with different aspects of employment that may be a part of your job such as assistive technology, communicating with colleagues, managing dress codes, how to organise and prioritise tasks and mental health and well-being.

It also has lots of information and overviews on different aspects of specific learning difficulties for employers as well as information on their responsibilities to their employees.

Overall this book is very user friendly and well researched. It has lots of practical advice and has references and information that can point you towards more in-depth information in areas of particular interest. This book is a good source for information for both people with specific learning difficulties and their employers.

Creative Successful Dyslexic
By Margaret Rooke
ISBN: 978-1849056533

In this book Margaret Rooke speaks to 23 high achievers from the worlds of sport, art and business about their dyslexia and how it has shaped them and their careers. This book is a first-hand account of how dyslexia can shape a person and the positive skills and character traits one can build around the dyslexic profile. Rooke uses these interviews as a means of discussing how dyslexia can make someone tackle problems in their careers in unique and creative ways. Rooke interviews people from a diverse range of backgrounds including Dragon’s Den judge Theo Paphitis, EMMY award winning comedian Eddie Izzard, TV Chef and Restaurateur Ed Baines and Virgin Group founder Sir Richard Branson.

This book can provide inspirational and interesting reading for anyone who is curious about how dyslexia can be empowering as well as challenging.
DAI Branch Structure

Branches of DAI are local community-based associations that must apply for re-affiliation annually to the national organisation. The annual affiliation process requires Branches to provide evidence of their local structures and a financial report on their activities for the previous year, as evidence of good practice. Once satisfactory affiliation data and reports have been received, the Branches affiliation for the year is then formally confirmed. Most Branches have now completed their affiliation for 2016 and we thank them for their increasing compliance, though would stress the need for more timely submission of relevant paperwork. Affiliation means that each Branch then comes under DAI’s charity registration status and has the support and recognition of being part of the Dyslexia Association of Ireland nationally. A listing of current Branches is available on our website at: www.dyslexia.ie/nationwide-branches

We would like to advise members that the dyslexia workshops which had been operating in Arklow, Glenties, and Navan are no longer affiliated to the Dyslexia Association of Ireland (effective December 2015).

Organisation Restructuring

DAI is actively reviewing our organisation structure with a view to developing a new operational model which would enable stronger compliance with the new legal and regulatory requirements now falling on voluntary/charitable bodies. These include reporting to the Charities Regulatory Authority, Companies Office, updated child protection legislation and Garda vetting practices, lobbying disclosures, and Revenue requirements. Consultation with stakeholders has taken place and external expertise is now being sought to help clarify a proposed new model and the transition processes required. A report will be provided to members and Branches in early autumn once this work has been completed and approved by the Board.

VHI Women’s Mini-Marathon June 2016

Will you do the distance for dyslexia? On Bank Holiday Monday 6th June thousands of women from all over Ireland will take part in the VHI Women’s Mini-Marathon in Dublin. DAI is looking for volunteers to run, jog, or walk in aid of the Dyslexia Association of Ireland. Race details are available at www.vhiwomensminimarathon.ie . Sponsorship cards and t-shirts are available for DAI fundraisers; email info@dyslexia.ie or call 01 8776001 for further information. All funds raised will be used by the Dyslexia Association of Ireland to provide valuable support services to children, young people and adults with dyslexia, to help them achieve their full potential.
Over recent months there has been much on-going advocacy work on issues relevant to those with dyslexia. The following is just some of the areas we have been working on:

- **Positive changes to DARE (Disability Access Route to Education)** have been agreed. These will make DARE easier to access, as they eliminate the mandatory requirement for an up-to-date psychological report which had previously been a major barrier (especially for those who lacked the means to pay for an up-to-date assessment). A new Educational Impact Statement has also been introduced (read more on page 11).

- **RACE (Reasonable Accommodations in Certificate Examinations)** - we have had ongoing communication with the SEC (State Examinations Commission) raising issues including the lack of clarity in the guidance/circulars, complaints to the Ombudsman on RACE, and seeking participation in a review of the RACE process. There has also been a legal case pursued by a Leaving Cert. student over recent months; at time of going to press, the student had just won a High Court order overturning the SEC’s refusal to give him a reader (based on their failure to give clear reasons for that refusal). A major overhaul of RACE policy and procedures is long overdue.

- **Irish exemption** - we have had ongoing communications with the DES highlighting issues with the Irish exemption process. An internal Exemption from Irish Working Group is underway within the DES (Department of Education and Skills); we are waiting to hear the report from that group and will seek a subsequent meeting in order to respond and raise the issues faced by our members.

- **NCSE capacity review consultation**: DAI took part in a consultation session as part of a capacity review of the work of the NCSE (National Council for Special Education).

- **Proposed changes to SEN (Special Educational Needs) provision**: a pilot project is underway in a number of schools to assess the impact of the proposed new model for the allocation of SEN provision to school. We are currently waiting to hear the results from that pilot project.

- DAI developed an **Educational Psychology Assessment policy** in 2015 to promote best practice and evidence-based assessment of dyslexia. We are currently seeking dialogue with others in the educational psychology and special education fields to lead best practice in dyslexia assessment. Donald Ewing will be making a presentation on this issue at the EDA conference in Italy in September, and we are also seeking to make a presentation to the Psychological Society of Ireland.

- **The Fund for Students with Disabilities**: DAI made an initial submission to the HEA in relation to their forthcoming review of the Fund for Students with Disabilities (it allocates funding to further and higher education colleges for the provision of services and supports to full-time students with disabilities).

- We continue our ongoing **collaboration** work with colleagues in other related disability organisations to address areas of common interest including the Spectrum Alliance, and the Disability Federation of Ireland.
Changes to DARE Requirements for Applicants with a Specific Learning Difficulty for Entry 2017

DARE is the Disability Access Route to Education. If you apply to DARE and are deemed eligible for DARE you may be offered a place even if you do not have enough Leaving Certificate points for your preferred course. Each participating college and university has a reserved number of places to offer eligible DARE applicants at lower or reduced Leaving Certificate points. See www.accesscollege.ie for more information.

Important changes to DARE requirements for applicant’s with a Specific Learning Difficulty for Entry 2017 have been announced, as follows:

Evidence of Disability:
Evidence of a full Psychological Assessment Report of any age that clearly states that the applicant presents with a Specific Learning Difficulty (other acceptable terminology also include: Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Specific Learning Disability/Disorder).

PLUS

Evidence of Educational Impact:
Educational Impact Statement signed off by the applicant’s school.

The Educational Impact Statement can contain scores from schools based attainment testing as they apply to DARE once these tests are carried out within the previous two years of application.

OR

Be accompanied by attainment tests carried out by a Psychologist within the previous two years of application.

Please note that an IQ Score or General Ability Score is no longer a requirement for DARE.

Full details of all the DARE requirements for entry 2017 will be published as usual in the autumn. See www.accesscollege.ie for more information.

DAI Comment: DAI welcomes these changes which the HEA has implemented as the DARE requirements now better reflect the evidence base on dyslexia. DAI campaigned strongly for these positive changes as they recognise that dyslexia is a life-long condition, which does not go away. The Educational Impact Statement does require attainment testing scores (literacy and/or numeracy) within the previous two years (at time of application) which aims to identify the impact that the dyslexia is having currently; these tests can potentially be done by the school. The changes effectively eliminate the need for students to get costly re-assessments for DARE (though some may still chose to do so). This previous requirement had been proven to cause great inequality of access to the DARE scheme. DAI hopes these changes will now improve equity of access to the DARE scheme to all.

Please Follow DAI on Twitter and Like Us on Facebook

DAI is eager to keep in regular contact with our members, and we are very active on social media as it is a great way to keep our followers informed. We would really encourage all members to follow DAI on Twitter and Facebook.
Update from the BDA International Conference
By Donald Ewing, DAI Head of Psychological and Educational Services

Rosie Bissett (CEO) and Donald Ewing (Head of Psychological and Educational Services) attended the International Dyslexia Conference run by the British Dyslexia Association (BDA) in Oxford, England in last month. This is a biennial event that attracts the world’s leading academics and practitioners with an expertise and interest in dyslexia. In addition it serves as an opportunity for the DAI to network with advocacy organisations from other jurisdictions and share expertise on such issues as advocacy, fundraising and access updates on new dyslexia-related products and services.

The theme of the conference this year was Moving Forward: Challenges and Transitions and was the tenth event of its kind, the DAI having attended all previous events. Our overall impression of the conference was that there was nothing brand-new or ground-breaking per se in the research or evidence findings that were presented, and there was more a sense of consolidation and replication of previous findings. This is no bad thing and may represent a developing maturity to the knowledge-base. For example there was regular reference to the problems with the traditional and outdated IQ-discrepancy model of assessment, and the problems that this creates in hindering timely and equitable access to assessments. In addition there was continued stress placed on the need for a comprehensive approach to be taken when supporting the literacy needs of dyslexic children - and not rely solely on a phonic-based approach without embedding this in a balanced approach that also emphasises reading for meaning and pleasure.

Areas where Ireland is seemingly behind in its practice compared to our international partners continues to be how well we train (or don’t train for that matter) our teachers about dyslexia, and is reflective of our continued call for mandatory training for all teachers in Ireland (at both pre-service and in-service stages). There is much room for improvement also with how easily dyslexic children and young people in Ireland can access appropriate accommodations and supports, particularly when it comes to being offered assistive technology and exam supports. The criteria and rules that currently apply in Ireland also often seem to fly in the face of the current evidence base. This reflects the need for policy makers and civil servants in this country to prioritise engagement with key stakeholders (including DAI) to ensure that policy and process is in line with international best practice.

In short the experience of attendance was on one hand refreshing and enlightening – yet at the same time somewhat sobering to see how far we still have to travel. We look forward to sharing the Irish experience with a wider European audience at the forthcoming European Dyslexia Association Conference in September in Italy where the DAI will be delivering a presentation on the need for a paradigm shift in how we devise policy and support practice around the needs of the dyslexic community in Ireland. We will share more information about this in our next newsletter and via our social media channels.

EDA Conference 2016
The European Dyslexia Association will hold its 5th All-European Conference in Modena, Italy, from 21st to 24th September 2016. Full details on the programme and booking information are available at www.eda2016.unimore.it. EDA conferences present current academic research on dyslexia, as well as presentations on policy and practice from across Europe. DAI was one of the founding member organisations of the EDA back in 1987.
There are a number of supports or reasonable accommodations available for students with dyslexia at third level. To qualify for support students are required to provide a copy of their most recent assessment (completed within the last five years or using age appropriate adult-scaled tests) and to attend for a Needs Assessment. This is an informal meeting with a member of staff where the student has a chance to express their needs and supports are agreed upon based on this expression of need, the requirements of the student’s programme, national guidelines and best practice.

Supports can include classroom accommodations as well as exam accommodations. Typical exam accommodations for a student with dyslexia includes use of a smaller exam venue, extra time (10 minutes per hour), and a spelling & grammar waiver. Some students may also require a reader for exams, use of a computer to type and occasionally a scribe may be required. Classroom accommodations can include lecturer/tutor awareness, provision of slides used in class and of course assistive technology (AT) tools. The common tools provided to students include recording devices to use in class, usually a Livescribe pen, proofreading software and read aloud software. A number of colleges are now moving towards the promotion of apps, rather than the very expensive software which had been commonly provided. Apps can perform the same functions and can be more effective and user-friendly as they are used on the smartphones and tablets with which students are most comfortable.

In UCD, we ran a pilot project with a secondary school whereby we trained teachers in Assistive Technology and provided a number of copies of literacy software which had been returned by graduating students. Feedback has been that it is difficult to get students to buy-in to the technology and there have been issues with the amount of time available to train the students effectively. In our workshops with teachers we have received feedback that there are a number of issues with the provision of AT at second level, aside from the obvious funding difficulties. First of all teachers need to be given the opportunity to build on their own IT and AT skills as without the support of staff in schools the tools themselves are virtually worthless. We also heard that while technology such as PC labs have been provided there is a lack of maintenance so the machines fall in to disrepair and ultimately cannot be used. The decision of whether or not the AT tool can be brought home to help with homework is also contentious. However, if the tool is used only in school its effectiveness is greatly reduced and parents don’t have the opportunity to assist their children with the tool.

Ultimately the success of Assistive Technology relies on the training and buy-in of children, teachers and parents. All three must work together to build on skills and ensure that the financial investment in the tool or software is matched with the enthusiasm and dedication to warrant this outlay. Research carried out by UCD Access & Lifelong Learning has shown that students feel they should have been introduced to AT at an earlier age – ideally at the start of second level. Students can see the benefits of the technology and would certainly have benefited from using this in school. Perhaps if AT was permitted more easily in state exams its use may be more widespread in schools.

Overall, the feedback we receive is that it is much easier to access supports at third level than it is at second level. We encourage students to come forward as early as possible to register with us to ensure we can support their academic success from the beginning of their programme. To learn more about the supports available in UCD please visit www.ucd.ie/disability
Report on Dyslexia Awareness Week 2015
By Rosie Bissett, CEO

Dyslexia Awareness Week (Oct. 5-11, 2015) carried the message of Small Change – Big Impact, to signify and drive awareness of the small changes, in practice and policy, which could have a big impact for people living with dyslexia in Ireland. Our key messages focused on calling for (1) mandatory teacher training on dyslexia identification and support strategies and (2) equitable access to evidence-based assessment and supports. Data from our major surveys completed in 2015 was very helpful in evidencing the need for the above.

The event was launched by two of our ambassadors, actors Jane McGrath and Catherine Byrne, with a photo shoot with some of the children with dyslexia who attend the Catherine McAuley Reading School in Baggot Street. Jane and Catherine also created some videos for us which we shared on social media during the week, which were very well received. Two other supporters, Tom Dalton and Joanne Smith, also shared videos on their experience of dyslexia; these captured the human impact and reality of dyslexia.

We were delighted with the media response and succeeding in getting articles in the Irish Examiner, the Irish Independent Life Parenting section and Maternity and Infant magazine. Ross O’Neill had an opinion piece published on The Journal, sharing his personal journey with dyslexia. Radio features included Morning Ireland, the Pat Kenny Radio Show, news pieces for Today FM, Spin, and several local radio stations including KFM and Highland Radio. Our Ambassador Jane McGrath was also a guest on TV3’s Midday programme where she spoke movingly about her personal experience of dyslexia (the poem she shared is printed on page 16). Our combined media response had an audience of over 1 million.

Social media activity was also a key feature of our campaign, which peaked on Monday 5th Oct. 2015 with highest post reach of 52,000, almost 2,000 reactions, and over 60 shares. Thank you to everyone who engaged on social media and helped to spread awareness.

Several fundraisers were also held in tandem with Dyslexia Awareness Week, our text donation campaign, as well as the Alphabet Jump and Dress as Your Hero fundraisers which you can read more about later in this newsletter.

A huge thank you to everyone who helped to make Dyslexia Awareness Week 2015 such a success, especially the members of our Communications and Fundraising sub-committee. A special thank you to Keira Doyle whose advice and efforts were invaluable with our PR work.

Dyslexia Awareness Week 2016

A date for your diary – Dyslexia Awareness Week 2016 will take place from 3rd to 9th October 2016, in line with European Dyslexia Awareness Week.

Our autumn newsletter will contain more info on planned activities for the week and how you can get involved.
Dress as your Hero

As part of Dyslexia Awareness Week 2015 we trialled a new fundraising and awareness raising event in primary schools, called Dress as Your Hero. While there was a very positive response to the idea, only a limited number of schools took part. Those who did really enjoyed the event, and used it to raise awareness of dyslexia and positive role models. In total, the participating schools raised over €1,000 to help fund DAI support services. A big thank you to Ailbhe Oman and her Granny Bergin who helped to promote the event. Here’s Ailbhe’s story:

Is mise Albha Oman agus do fhreastail mé are Gaelscoil and Eiscir Riada agus ar ceardlann an DAI sa Tulach Mhóir. Tá mé 14 bliain d'aois agus freastalaím ar meánscóil béarla ‘Meánscóil na Trócaire’ I Cill Beagán. Tá Dyslexic ag mo athair agus ag mo dhaideo.

Sí mo sin sean mamó mo aoi. Tá sí fós ag obair ina siopa féin I Mhainistir Laoise. Is bean iomtach agus ábalta I fós.

My name is Albha Oman and I attended Gaelscoil Eiscir Riada and the DAI workshop in Tullamore (Offaly Dyslexia Group) for four years. I am now 14 years of age, and attend the Mercy secondary school in Kilbeggan. My dad who is from Dublin is also dyslexic as are two of my aunts, one of whom is dyslexic in maths called dyscalculia. All my dad’s family were also brought up tríd Ghaeilge.

My Dadó (Grandad) is also dyslexic (so we can blame it all on him), he is on the board of the DAI.

My hero is my Great Granny Bergin (Mrs. Bergin) who lives in Abbeyleix and still works in her shop, where she raised a family of 3 girls. She started working in the shop owed by her husband’s family and later took it over. We love going to visit her and exploring all around the shop. She is in great health and is great fun to be around, and when we have family gatherings we can have 4 generations present. She is still as sharp as a pin.

We plan to review and re-launch a version of the Dress as Your Hero event in 2017.

Mary A McKenna MBE Golf Classic 2016

The 2016 Mary A McKenna MBE Golf Classic in aid of the Dyslexia Association of Ireland will be held in Donabate Golf Club, on Friday June 3rd, 2016.

It is a 4 person team event @ €200 per team. (Stableford, with two scores to count.)

All funds raised will be used to support DAI services, including assessment and tuition for people with dyslexia, and our busy information service. Tee times available from 9am to 4pm. We would be thrilled if you would join us!

Please book early to get your preferred time. You can book now at:
- Online: marymckennaclassic2016.eventbrite.ie
- Email: ceo@dyslexia.ie
- Phone: 01 877 6001
Poetry Corner

Jane’s Dyslexia Journey

Jane McGrath, DAI Ambassador, and star of TV3’s Red Rock, here shares her experience of dyslexia, and a lovely poem she wrote about it.

If you have dyslexia, did you ever say cruel things about yourself? Words like ‘stupid’, ‘can’t’ and ‘failure’ were words I used to repeat regularly. In my primary school and in my secondary school years I just couldn’t accept my learning difficulties. I tried to be someone that I wasn’t. I was diagnosed very late in my teens with dyslexia and it was an eye opener. Learning to understand dyslexia has helped me immensely and I am embracing how my brain works. Let’s celebrate it!

This . . . Kaleidoscope, bashes through this infinite blocked brain box. Smithereens of glass thoughts are but see through and absorb nothing, not even a sound. Words surround like a merry-go-round and spin and dance all day. What is this twisted game, that I don’t want to play? The only sound of tic toc teases and flicks at my small ears and then stops what I have chased.

I am deafened by the sound of time and the time that I have put to waste . . .

But now, This . . . drop of finger paint blinks open my eyes and drops become cooling pitter patters of gentle raining colour and waves of understanding wash away this noisy clutter with branches bursting full of light, life and ideas and they spin with me and dance and dance with me all day . . .

This. . . is how I want to play!

Jane originally shared this poem when she appeared on TV3’s Midday programme just after Dyslexia Awareness Week 2015.

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New NCSE Transitional Guidelines

The NCSE has recently published a series of Transitional Guidelines to assist parents/guardians and schools to support children with special educational needs to make successful transitions including starting school, moving from primary to post-primary, moving between mainstream and special school settings, and preparation for life after school. They are available now on the NCSE website: http://ncse.ie/information-booklets-pamphlets-2
I was asked recently by a fellow dyslexic do I get emotional due to my dyslexia the following piece is inspired by that dyslexic person’s question:

My emotions are like a veil or energy whispering in the wind, like stepping on crisp leaves and can shatter like broken glass at first frost.

I go through waves like a juggernaut with crashing white, and blue, and the spray of determination prickling on your face over the big wave and diving for the clear and stable ground.

My rage at sight of obvious flaws like the unleashed beast and joker on sleeve. Growling, and roaring, at obvious flaw whilst sinking in quick sink sand.

My thoughts are faster than a blink, like shell through the air, like gaseous clouds of energetic particles glistening on plumes of speckling smoke a mist of chaos and wonder, a speeding train with no breaks on an endless quest of thought and knowledge.

My memory flawless a photograph of time encapsulated with in crystal frozen for all time at near reach every second, every minute, a haze of colour and light, a rainbow of colour and constant evanescent.

But the pain of pure thought like candles flickering flame never stopping never ending continual what if, why not, could i, should I, would it, should I, could not.

A glimpse of calm through the storm we land a rest break as such but don’t get comfy and don’t rest your hand the engine roars the brain goes off were on to the next mission and thoughts of such.

Dyslexic’s gift a world wind of colour a chaotic mix of mind bending wonder.

The day ends the thoughts go on, ideas flowing, brains a glowing, any minute now I think its a blowing, the darkness comes and the calm returns then hits like a slap a first light never stopping and never bowing. The dyslexic mind never stopping and never more going.

From reading this it may appear my dyslexia isn’t too bad I still have a lot of help for my dyslexia and technology which helps to a certain degree it enables me to get my thoughts onto the page helps give me a voice. I would like to thank my parents for their continued support with out them I wouldn’t have been able to achieve what I have.
Tips for Leaving Cert. English Paper 1
By Wyn McCormack, www.dyslexiacourses.ie

These tips are for students with dyslexia who find the English Paper 1 in the Leaving Certificate the most challenging paper of the whole exam. The difficulties may be with some of the following:

- The amount or reading involved.
- Understanding the question asked.
- Structuring answers so that they answer the question.
- Blanking out when asked about a personal response.
- Writing compositions.

**Comprehension**
There are 3 texts with an A and B question. Students are required to do an A and B question but not from the same text. If your reading is slow or you have to reread several times to get the full meaning of the text, this is a way to reduce the amount of reading and save time.

1. Don’t read through all the texts.

2. First look at the B questions. Decide which B question you would be most comfortable with. This could be something you can structure easily such as diary entries or a letter giving information rather than an inspiring or persuasive writing task.

3. Having decided which B question to do, look at what you are being asked in the other two A questions. Decide which set of questions would be easier for you to answer. This becomes your choice. This means that out of the three texts, you only have to read one.

4. Read what you are being asked to do in your chosen A question. Then read the text with this in mind. Then begin answering.

After answering the A question, go to the B question. Take time to plan your answer before you begin. Having a clear structure helps your answer to be targeted to what you are being asked.

**Question the question**
Ask yourself ‘What is this question asking me to do?’ Take time here. Don’t plunge into your answer.

One approach is by numbering / highlighting the tasks asked in the question. Look at the example below where I have inserted the numbers and letters.

The New Yorker has been described as a magazine that (1) informs, (2) entertains and (3) comments. Based on your reading of the written extract above, would you agree with this description? Support your answer with reference to both the (A) content and (B) style of the written piece.

The instruction to you is ‘Do you agree with the statement’? Decide if you agree or not, and then the answer can be structured into 3 main paragraphs with a short introduction and conclusion. The three paragraphs deal with points 1, 2 & 3 above making sure to refer to content (A) and style (B) as part of the answer.

**Prepare checklists of points that will help you structure an answer in the exam**
You may be asked to comment on the writing style or humour of a piece. Prepare lists of points which you can use in the exam. See below for examples. Then check the text to see if you can identify some examples in the text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Style</strong></th>
<th>direct speech, humour, good descriptions/imagery, poetic language (similes, metaphors, alliteration), easy to understand, good structure, contrasts, use of examples/statistics, anecdotes to illustrate points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Humour</strong></td>
<td>exaggeration, making fun of one’s self, double meanings, black comedy (making fun of serious issues), puns, irony, misdirection, surprises.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tips for Leaving Cert. English Paper 1
By Wyn McCormack, www.dyslexiacourses.ie

Such checklists will also help in Paper 2. When asked about drama in a text, you could look for: tension, violence, conflict, characters with depth, characters the reader identifies with, plot and twists, life-changing events, strong emotions etc.

Signposting
Signposting is the use of words that can link the paragraphs and guides the reader through your ideas. They are particularly useful for examiners to clearly distinguish the points you are making if you have the use of tape recorder as an accommodation. Examples include words such as:
Firstly, Then, Next, Finally, Since, However, Nevertheless, Thus, Therefore, etc.

Framework
Have a Framework for your answer.

OPENING SENTENCE AND INTRODUCTION
Your opening sentence should address the question. Then briefly outline what you say in your answer.

EACH PARAGRAPH
Each paragraph should deal with one IDEA only. You may have more than one idea or angle on your one idea but you must be precise and clear. Don’t worry about opinion unless you are asked for it. MAKE your point, EXPLAIN it and BACK IT UP with EVIDENCE.

CONCLUSION
One sentence is enough here. You should press home your arguments. (Keep the key words in mind).

Choosing the Composition
Again these tips are for the students who may blank when faced with the choice of composition or find they don’t write enough, write off the point, structure the essay poorly or run out of ideas or time. If the student is comfortable with composition, these tips are not for them.

a. Take some time to totally imagine a character. Know their life, habits (good and bad), how they get on with friends, what they look like, their weaknesses and strengths, their ambitions, their interests, how they handle conflict or a crisis, how they get on with their family, their neighbourhood, their occupation or school, incidents they have been involved. Take pictures from magazines so you can see them in your mind’s eye. Develop two key back-up characters. One might be a friend with whom they might disagree. The other could be a parent, sibling or friend that they rely on for support. Develop these characters as well. Then if you choose a short story for the essay, you have ready-made characters. The examiner will not know all your essays are about the same person.

b. If you choose an essay asking your point of view or personal experience, remember you can make these up. No examiner will know if it is true of you or not. Your task is to write enough for the examiner to give you marks.

c. Take time to plan your answer so you know the structure of it. Write it down so that if when writing, you lose the thread of thought, you can refer back to the plan. Use signpost words to show the links in what you are saying.
d. Graph organisers/frameworks are a wonderful help in structuring your thinking. Draw the appropriate one out on a blank page when you are planning your answer. Here are some examples.

(A) could be used for a debate type essay, e.g. a debate on school uniforms.
(B) could be used for a narrative or an essay with stages, e.g. training for and running a marathon.

The framework below could help with a story.
- Introduction
- What happens first
- The main event
- What happens after the main event
- Conclusion

e. Look for compositions titles that are easy to structure. Below are some compositions from the 2014 higher level paper. While the example is taken from the higher paper, the method applies equally well at Ordinary level.

- For Composition 3, think of 5 unusual or interesting people, and you have your paragraph structure. You can make up the impact they had on your life.

- For Composition 4, think of 4 to 5 moments or things you find exotic or beautiful in everyday life. You then have your paragraphs. When writing descriptions, use your five senses to help you imagine them. It will help you write more. Take a moment to envisage a stormy day at the coast. Describe what you see, hear, smell, taste, and feel and try to get those images into the reader’s mind. A brainstorm of your senses might help here.

- For Composition 6, think about 3 or 4 moments of uncertainty that a young person might experience and you have a paragraph structure. (Remember you need not actually have experienced them. The examiner won’t know. It could be moments that others you know have experienced. Just make them yours in the answer).

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**English Higher Level Paper 1, 2014 - selected compositions**

3. In TEXT 1 we meet the feisty Mildred Remlinger. Write a personal essay about your encounters with a variety of interesting or unusual people and the impact they made on you.

4. “It was a completely exotic item in that ordinary world ...” (TEXT 3) Write a descriptive essay about what you find beautiful or exotic in everyday life.

6. In TEXT 1, Dell’s future is very uncertain. Write a personal essay about one or more moments of uncertainty you have experienced.
A Parent's Story
By Joan

Unlike other children, our son’s early experience of school was very unhappy. Although he found it easy to make friends, his anxiety around going to school was huge. We went through years of sleepless nights, tears and watching our normally happy son almost turn to jelly at the mention of school and no amount of support in the classroom seemed to help.

We realised fairly early on that he was experiencing difficulties around literacy. Night after night we’d sit and go through the routine of opening his schoolbag, taking his homework out, searching for his pencil case and then the ritual would begin: Can I have a drink please?, I don’t like that pencil, can I get another one?, I’m going to rub that out and start again, it doesn’t look right, I’m rubbish at that, I can’t do it. Anything for a distraction to not do his homework.

In hindsight, it may seem that it was obvious he had dyslexia but to us, he just seemed to have a fear around school. He’d been diagnosed with epilepsy at the age of three but was seizure free for years and that was the only thing on our radar.

In May 2015 things changed radically. He’d just had his 2nd class Easter tests and as a treat, his Dad took him to his first ever big football match in Croke Park. When he came home, he was complaining of a bad headache and we put him to bed. The next morning, the pain was worse and his vision was affected. The following day he was admitted to Temple Street for observation as it was feared his epilepsy had returned.

Then, a very tuned in doctor suggested that we take our son to talk to one of the hospital’s psychologists. That proved to be a turning point. He was diagnosed with clinical anxiety and was then assessed for a learning disability. In August 2015, our son was diagnosed with severe dyslexia and after the initial shock, everything started to fall into place.

As parents, we had no idea of the anxiety dyslexia could cause. Obviously the Easter exams had brought on a huge amount of stress and that coupled with the big match in Croke Park sent him over the edge. Our son had been completely lost in literacy but he was trying to hide his problem and it was causing him huge distress.

Although we now had a diagnosis, we felt very isolated and didn’t have an idea of how to help with his dyslexia. We were encouraged to contact the Dyslexia Association and it was like a light being switched on. We became members and attended a parent’s workshop, the best thing we ever did. There are so many children and adults with dyslexia and there are so many resources to help when you know where to turn. We would have been years trying to find out information that was made available to us. We also found the talk information about assistive technology really helpful.

Two things that really hit home were firstly we have to advocate for our children in school and call for appropriate education for children with dyslexia and secondly, the part I found most difficult was telling our son this year that he has dyslexia. I thought I was being cruel but would you believe, he already knew although he didn’t have a name for it. It’s like a weight has been lifted off his shoulders.

Last week he had his friend over to play Lego on his Xbox and when he couldn’t understand the instructions he asked to tell him he had dyslexia, result!

All Ireland Jersey Raffle

Jimmy Ward from Swords was the winner of our raffle for the signed Dublin Kerry All Ireland jerseys (which took place in the autumn). Thanks to everyone who supported the event, and especially Martha O’Neill Brennan who made it all happen.
Digital Textbooks - An Update
By Wyn McCormack, www.dyslexiacourses.ie

Digital copies of books are very useful for some students with dyslexia as it enables them to see and hear the text. The educational publishers make digital copies of textbooks available. It may be the PDF file of the book with images and graphics stripped out or the eBook version of the text. There is a problem with the integration of iPad assistive technology software with some eBook versions of textbooks. This may mean the textbook cannot be read aloud on the device. However the educational publishers are working to overcome this incompatibility. This article describes the situation as of spring 2016.

CJ Fallon
- If contacted by teacher or parent, they will create and assign an eBook account free of charge for textbooks used in the classroom. If they feel it is being abused, they can revoke the access. The books are same as the printed version.
- Their full range of books is accessible, so it would be possible to buy revision eBooks.
- They are working on integration with the iPad assistive technology. At the moment the way to access it is as follows:
  On iPad, go to Setting > General > Accessibility > Turn on Speak Selection > Set Accessibility Shortcut to VoiceOver (triple click home). This is important as it allows you to toggle VoiceOver on and off. Next open a title in your CJFallonReader app, go to a page you want to read, next click the ‘T’ icon top right of screen, next triple click the home button, then tap the paragraph you want to read and tap again. Triple click to turn VoiceOver off.
  The next version of the iOS app is due in 2016 and will allow the iOS to speak selected words from within the text only option. This removes the necessity to have text-to-speech enabled via triple click, reducing the technical setup/requirement to simply having speak selection enabled.

EDCO
The EDCO Learning app is now available for download from the App Store for iPad, Google Playstore for Android and Windows Store for Windows 8 and Windows 10. Devices running Windows 7 can access EDCO books through the EDCO Learning web app available at www.edcolearning.ie but note that an active internet connection will be required at all time to use the site. The EDCO Learning suite of apps and the accompanying website offer a wide range of resource material to accompany texts including video, audio and interactive activities.

Text-only versions which contain all the text from the book with the formatting, images and graphs removed are also available. The company asks for an application form to be completed and returned with proof of purchase of the book and the student’s medical report. While they have a large number of texts available in this format, not all of their texts are. In particular revision book are not.

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Free eBooks are supplied with the printed version of their books but these do not read the text aloud to the student. Educate.ie does provide PDF versions of textbooks on a CD for the benefit of pupils with reading difficulties. The format of the PDF is a full text copy of the book, in the same layout as printed book. Due to copyright, these files are solely for use by the pupil for whom they are authorised. The pupil should have original printed copy of the book being used in this way. There is an application form to be completed. There is no charge for the CD.
Digital Textbooks - An Update
By Wyn McCormack, www.dyslexiacourses.ie

**Folens**
If someone is interested in obtaining digital copies, they should submit a request on Folens’ support line using the link: http://support.folens.ie/home. On this site they also have an article How to use iBooks with PDF files which would be of use to parents and students.

Once the request is received and Folens get the information they require from the applicant, they organise a download link using a service called sendthisfile.com. The download link expires after ten days or 3 downloads, whichever comes first, so it is designed to be stored locally on the device and will not be accessible online after 10 days.

The files are secured by copyright protection measures which mean no one is able to print, copy the text, add notes or edit the files.

The files are designed and have been tested to work with Natural Reader and Read Write Gold. The turnaround is about 2-3 days. They do not require a letter or assessment.

**Gill Education (Gill & MacMillan)**
They do provide digital copies of textbooks. The format is a link sent by email which you click to download the PDFs. A CD format is still available on request. PDF files which is accessible for Read-aloud software which can be transferred to iPad or tablet.

They need:
- Proof of purchase of the physical copy of the book.
- One page medical cert or psychologist assessment detailing the student’s name and diagnosis.
- Signed copy of their copyright agreement. This can be obtained by phone call or email contact.

It is also possible to open an eBook account and access revision books.

**Mentor**
It is possible for students to get digital copies of most text books. Any new text books either Leaving/Junior Cert will have an eBook version. For students with dyslexia to receive a free copy of an eBook they must purchase the textbook. Some information from parents is required before the eBook is dispatched. At present revision/workbooks are not available in eBook format. At present the eBooks cannot be read aloud on iPad/Tablet. To access a reading aloud, Mentor will provide a pdf and, if the student has software on their laptop, it can be read back.

**The Alphabet Jump**
On Saturday 26th September, 11 brave volunteers did a fundraising skydive for DAI. We were blessed with beautiful weather on the day for the Alphabet Jump which took place at the Irish Parachute Club in Clonbullogue, Offaly.

Our skydive heroes were: Jackie Kennedy, Paul Carew, Hazel Tynan, Sarah McNally, Ailish Groves, Andrew Groves, Rosie Bissett, Jenny Byrne, Martha O’Neill Brennan, Ursula Dalton and Patrick Fleming. As well as facing their fears, this wonderful group also raised nearly €7,000. A fantastic achievement all round! Here’s Sarah, one of our Board members showing what a hair-raising experience it was.

You can complete a Charity skydive at any time in aid of DAI; we are a listed charity with the Irish Parachute Club. For info see the Irish Parachute Club website www.skydive.ie or contact DAI at info@dyslexia.ie or 01 8776001.
For further information about dyslexia and the work of the Dyslexia Association of Ireland, please contact:

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