

Screening and Mentoring Case Study

Unlocking Strengths and Rebuilding Confidence



Overview

Many adults who suspect they may be dyslexic experience long-term challenges such as low confidence, reduced self-esteem, and difficulties accessing or sustaining employment. These issues often stem from years of struggling without appropriate support, and they can create significant barriers to work, training, and personal progression.

In response to these needs, we have developed our Dyslexia Screening and Mentoring Service for adults aged 18+, specifically supporting individuals who are in receipt of benefits, out of work, or on a low income. The service aims to provide early identification, practical strategies, and the confidence-building support required to help participants move forward.

Dyslexia Cornwall

Dyslexia Cornwall is a registered Charitable Incorporated Organisation providing support for dyslexic children and adults of all ages, along with their families, educators, employers, and the wider community. We offer outreach services across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, working to create a dyslexia-friendly society where every dyslexic person can reach their full potential. We provide practical help, information, and emotional support through our volunteer helpline, outreach work, and subsidised screening and mentoring for adults on low incomes. We also work closely with local organisations, including Cornwall Libraries and colleges, to raise awareness, train staff, and improve access for dyslexic individuals in the community.

With no statutory service available in Cornwall, we play a vital role in supporting dyslexic people and their families, helping them build confidence, understand their strengths, and overcome barriers in education, work, and everyday life.

Community Need

There is a clear community need for accessible dyslexia identification and support for adults. In 2024, over 60% of our helpline enquiries were about dyslexia identification, showing a significant gap in awareness and assessment options.

Many adults—particularly those from an older generation—were never identified during school, as dyslexia was less recognised at the time. The effects of this often continue into adulthood, impacting confidence, employment prospects, and wellbeing.

We also see growing demand from adults who already know they are dyslexic but need help understanding their strengths, challenges, and practical strategies. Structured support can give them clarity, build confidence, and improve opportunities for work and personal development.

Target Group

Our service is designed for adults aged 18+ who are in receipt of benefits, out of work, or on a low income, and who may be experiencing barriers linked to dyslexia. This includes individuals who were never identified during their education, those seeking initial screening, and adults who already know they are dyslexic but need support to understand their strengths, challenges, and next steps.

Client 1

Background & Reason for Contact

The client first approached the service after beginning a new public-facing role with a local town council. Although she had previously been diagnosed with scotopic sensitivity during university (in 2010), she found herself increasingly struggling to manage information and communication in her new position.

She described difficulties processing large amounts of written material, particularly PDFs, and found that people often spoke too quickly for her to keep up.

Although she had developed coping strategies over time, she hadn't fully recognised them as such. In her new role, many of these strategies became difficult or impossible to use—for example, working on a small tablet where text could not be enlarged sufficiently.

These challenges had a significant emotional impact. She described feeling overwhelmed, confused, and under intense pressure. As someone in a public-facing role, she felt she was “failing” in representing the council, which led to low confidence, embarrassment, and emotional distress.

Conversations with a friend, whose son is dyslexic, prompted her to recognise similarities and consider that dyslexia might also be a factor and made contact with us.

Experience of the Service

The initial online screening process was a positive and reflective experience, helping her to better understand her difficulties. However, it also raised further questions, as the results indicated possible dyslexic traits.

A follow-up face-to-face session proved particularly valuable. During this session, our staff member was able to explore the results in more depth and identify how the client's existing coping strategies may have masked some of her challenges in the screening.

The client found it especially helpful that our staff member could share her own lived experience, which helped build trust and reassurance.

She attended three face-to-face mentoring sessions, which she described as highly beneficial. She particularly valued:

- Mind mapping techniques, which aligned well with how her brain processes information
- Colour coding and visual strategies
- Introduction to assistive technology

The sessions also helped her recognise and validate the strategies she was already using, while reframing her experiences more positively. She began to see not only her challenges, but also her strengths, such as empathy and creative thinking.

Importantly, the mentoring provided space to reflect on her wider life experiences, including past trauma, and how these may have interacted with her learning differences. She found this holistic approach especially meaningful.

Impact & Outcomes

The support had a significant and lasting impact on both practical and emotional levels.

She described implementing strategies such as colour coding, tabs, and visual organisation systems, which have become “invaluable” in her day-to-day life. What had previously felt overwhelming is now something she describes as “colourful and pleasurable” and even “a delight.”

Her confidence has improved substantially. She no longer feels ashamed of her difficulties and is more comfortable asking for support and explaining her needs.

This shift has extended beyond her personal experience. She has openly shared her challenges in public council meetings and has been thanked by members of the public for doing so.



Stock image to protect clients identity

As a result, she is now actively contributing to improving accessibility within the council, including:

- Advocating for documents to be shared in Word format rather than PDF
- Providing feedback on website accessibility
- Supporting wider awareness of neurodiversity in the community

She also highlighted ongoing barriers, particularly around access to appropriate equipment as a volunteer, noting that funding limitations can restrict support compared to employed roles.

On a personal level, she described a profound shift in self-understanding:

- She has “stopped beating herself up for being different”
- She feels less fearful and more accepting of how she works
- She has gained clarity on long-standing challenges, including with maths
- She now recognises both her “dyslexia challenges” and her “dyslexia bonuses”

Reflection & Recommendation

The client felt that the support worked especially well because it was personalised, practical, and empathetic. The combination of professional expertise and lived experience was particularly powerful.

She would strongly recommend the service to others, especially those who may be struggling without fully understanding why. She emphasised the importance of both the practical strategies and the emotional reassurance provided.

“I’ve stopped feeling ashamed and started recognising both my challenges and my strengths.”

“It’s made it a colourful and pleasurable thing to look after myself – it’s a delight. It works, and I can share it with others.”