# Notes for Tutors, Trainers and Peer Mentors relating to Specific Learning Difficulties, in order for reasonable adjustments to be made in the classroom or workshop to address the Learner’s ‘different way of working’.

## For those who show tendencies towards, or are at risk of, DYSLEXIA.

Dyslexia is a neurologically-based disorder, which interferes with the acquisition and processing of language.

### Tips when working with learners who are at risk of dyslexia.

* Clear instructions
* Chunk tasks into smaller sections
* Be aware of any frustration from the learner
* Use a coloured overlay if necessary
* Continually practice spellings (word list, possibly work related)
* Cover up parts of text (too much information is overwhelming)
* Create a simple mind-map to help the learner remember
* Be patient (phonological processing) some learners need more time to process any information before answering – repeat question or answer if necessary
* Give time to re-read to gain understanding
* Respect learner’s wishes (be discreet – confidentiality)
* Show interest
* Encourage and Praise!
* Sense of Humour! (laugh with them **not** at them!)

## For those who show tendencies towards or are at risk of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

ADHD affects people in different ways and to different degrees of severity.

There are a number of definitions but the following characteristics are generally accepted as the most common.

* Frequently blurt out inappropriate comments
* Often act impulsively
* Rarely pause to think before they act
* Sometimes endanger themselves by taking unnecessary risks
* Annoy everybody and cannot help it
* Have low self-esteem and often disliked by others
* Demonstrate behaviour in a persistent and enduring way
* Move quickly into a state of high agitation
* Often talk incessantly and loudly, are constantly moving and frequently switch from one activity to another without pause
* ADHD usually becomes apparent during early childhood. It is considered a life-long condition and although the ‘symptoms’ never go away, maturity helps the individual to develop effective strategies that keep their behaviour in check.
* If you can imagine feeling over-excited most of the time, simple things like waiting for a ‘turn to speak’ can be quite difficult for a learner with ADHD, thus resulting in him ‘jumping in’ and annoying his peers.
* Learners with ADHD usually become easily distracted. They cannot filter out unimportant stimuli – everything grabs their attention.

Here is an example to help you understand:

Assume you are reading a book in relatively quiet room but you are in ear-shot of a road. A few seconds ago you may have heard a car door slam, but a part of your brain will have immediately filtered that noise out as normal but unimportant. You would, therefore continue reading.

A learner with ADHD does not have an effective filtering system so any distraction in the classroom his brain encounters, diverts his attention from a task.

* Some learners are prescribed medication for ADHD. This medication is not a cure but may help the learner to focus on a task and control behaviour more effectively.

A learner’s medication given at 8.30 am would not necessarily start to work for up to an hour after that, therefore concentration levels would probably be higher after that time. If possible work around these times to achieve the best from your learner.

### Tips when working with learners diagnosed with ADHD

* Give good eye-contact when giving instructions.
* Give clear instructions, if necessary breaking down into manageable chunks.
* Regular praise will improve the learner’s self-esteem and encourage him to use strategies to control his behaviour.
* They may need to move from the desk, go to the toilet etc. for a break.
* Be patient with the learner.

## For those who show tendencies towards, or are at risk of DYSPRAXIA.

Dyspraxia is an alternative name for Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD). Dyspraxia mainly causes issues with co-ordination resulting in clumsy type behaviour.

Dyspraxic people also have problems with motor skills. Below are some symptoms of Dyspraxia:

* Poor balance
* Poor posture and fatigue
* Difficulty in standing for a long time as a result of weak muscle tone
* Poor hand-eye co-ordination
* Tendency to fall, trip, bump into things and people
* Difficulty with handwriting and drawing
* May have a poor pen grip
* Press too hard when writing and difficulty writing on a line
* May talk continuously and repeat themselves
* Difficulty with the content and sequence of their language
* May have unclear speech and be unable to pronounce some words
* Speech may have uncontrolled pitch, volume and rate
* Tendency to lose their place while reading
* Difficulty looking quickly from one thing to another e.g.: looking from a TV to a magazine.
* May be over-sensitive to light
* Lack of awareness of space
* Little sense of time
* Difficulty distinguishing left from right
* Difficulty planning and organising
* Poor memory
* Can be messy and cluttered
* Poor sequencing
* Difficulty copying writing
* May be slow in completing a task
* Difficulty listening to people especially in large groups
* May interrupt frequently
* Difficulty understanding
* Difficulty following instructions
* Impulsive
* Easily frustrated
* Tendency to have erratic good and bad days
* Tendency to opt out of things that are difficult
* Tendency to get stressed and anxious
* May have low self-esteem.

## For those who show tendencies towards or are at risk of Asperger Syndrome

**Autism** is a developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with and relates to other people. **Asperger Syndrome** is a form of autism. People with Asperger syndrome are often of average or above average intelligence. They have fewer problems with speech but may still have difficulties with understanding and processing language.

We can usually judge how another person is feeling by their tone of voice and body language and can tell whether they are happy or sad and respond accordingly, but people with Asperger Syndrome can find it harder to read the signals that most of take for granted, making it more difficult for them to communicate and interact, which can lead to high levels of anxiety and confusion.

### Tips when communicating with learners who show tendencies towards Asperger Syndrome:

* Look directly at the person, when addressing them.
* Speak simply to clarify understanding.
* Avoid humour or sarcasm, this will confuse their understanding.
* Learners may display poor social interaction
* Poor eye-contact
* Lack of awareness of other’s feelings
* Usually prefer to be alone
* Engages in unusually repetitive activities
* Focus extensively on certain things
* Collect obsessively (things or numbers: e.g.: car/train numbers etc.)
* Not aware of how blunt they are in conversation
* Would not necessarily recognise an ‘instruction’, they may interpret it as a question! (They can then appear rude)
* Have problems understanding other‘s points of view.