Dyspraxia Awareness Week 9-15 October 2016

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Dyspraxia in the workplace: hidden challenges, hidden assets

New findings released today (Monday 10th October 2016) reveal that adults with dyspraxia are not receiving the understanding and support they need in the workplace, meaning that employees are underperforming and employers are missing out on the many strengths and talents that people with dyspraxia have to offer.

The nationwide poll commissioned by the Dyspraxia Foundation reported that although 64% of adults voluntarily disclosed their diagnosis to their employers, only 33% actually received any specific advice or support. As a result, employees with dyspraxia were at risk of underperformance or losing their job.

Experts from the Dyspraxia Foundation - the only national charity in the UK supporting people affected by the condition – believe poor awareness and understanding of dyspraxia is to blame for the lack of support.

Dyspraxia (also known as Developmental Coordination Disorder) is a common but poorly understood condition affecting motor coordination, organisation, planning and time management in children and adults. It can also affect speech.

Around 3% of the adult population are affected, but poor awareness and limited support mean that many adults with dyspraxia have experienced discrimination or difficulties in the workplace. As a result, employers and organisations are not benefitting from the unique skills and perspectives that employees with dyspraxia have to offer.

Worryingly, 68% of employees who chose not to disclose their diagnosis did so because they were concerned they would be discriminated against. For some, the decision not to disclose was made because they had experienced discrimination or workplace bullying previously.

The nation-wide survey questioned 339 adults with dyspraxia aged 18+ years (132 males, 191 female and 16 individuals who chose not to say). 221 individuals (66%) were in paid employment; 66 (21%) were unemployed /job-seeking; 28 (9%) were volunteers/unpaid workers; and 13 (4%) were retired.

Encouragingly, the survey revealed that 66% of those who had received advice or support for their role found this to be effective. Furthermore, many of the reasonable adjustments that had helped were relatively inexpensive, for example dyspraxia awareness training for managers and colleagues and adjustments to the job role so that employees' strengths were utilised to best effect.

Richard Todd, Dyspraxia Foundation Trustee comments: "The Dyspraxia Foundation always knew there was a lack of understanding of dyspraxia/DCD in business, and this survey has quantified that. It shows there is a real productivity opportunity for employers. There is a substantial waste of potential in all of those who are being managed poorly or have received no adjustment. Almost all adjustments highlighted by survey respondents are easy to implement, have low or no cost and will pay for themselves in a matter of weeks."

That's why the Dyspraxia Foundation will be focusing on "dyspraxia in the workplace" for Dyspraxia Awareness Week in October 2016. Awareness Week will also see the launch of a new information pack for employers and employees with dyspraxia as part of the annual campaign.

John aged 29 is one of the many adults who have contacted the Dyspraxia Foundation Helpline for advice and support. He says "I was diagnosed with dyspraxia at the age of seven because I was clumsy and had poor handwriting. I also struggled to organise my thoughts and ideas and needed extra help with reading, writing and numbers. At secondary school I had extra time for exams, but not much other help. I've worked in the retail industry since I was 17 and always declare my dyspraxia when applying for jobs. When I started work I didn't have any support whatsoever, but I managed to get by because of my good social skills."

John contacted the Dyspraxia Foundation Helpline because he was at risk of losing his job. "I was suspended from work because of anomalies with the tills. The tills crashed and in my panic I bulked sales

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together so that they balanced at the end of the day rather than recording them separately. My employers didn't believe that dyspraxia was a contributing factor for my actions and demoted me. With advice and support from the Dyspraxia Foundation Helpline however, I won my employment appeal and was reinstated."

John goes on to say "Being suspended really affected my confidence. I think employers need to understand dyspraxia and ensure that reasonable adjustments are put in place. I need instructions to be given clearly and help to fill in forms and to organise things as I'm very forgetful. These things don't cost very much, but a little understanding and small changes make a big difference for me and my employer."

ENDS

For more media/survey information or to set up an interview with a case study or a dyspraxia employment expert, please call Lisa McCarthy 01462 455016 or email dyspraxia@dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk

For more information about the ongoing work of the Dyspraxia Foundation, how to become involved or to access help, information and advice, please visit www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk / @DYSPRAXIAFDTN

Note to editors:

The survey ran for 39 days from 7th July to 15th August 2016 and was promoted via the Dyspraxia Foundation website, Facebook and social media.

- Of the 339 respondents, 39% were male, 56% were female and 5% preferred not to reveal their gender.
- 66% were in paid employment; 9% were working in an unpaid/voluntary capacity; 21% were unemployed/job-seeking; and 4% were retired.
- Dyspraxia Foundation is the only national UK charity supporting people with dyspraxia of all ages and those who live or work with them.
- Dyspraxia (also known as developmental coordination disorder) affects around 5-10% of children, 2% to a severe degree. Difficulties continue into adulthood in 50-70% of cases.
- Dyspraxia affects gross and fine motor coordination; memory; perception; organisation; planning; time management and sequencing skills. It can also affect speech. There can be serious negative consequences for an individual's academic, social, emotional and economic outcomes if appropriate help and support is not provided.

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