

# Division of Occupational Psychology

## Delivery of disability support assessments

### Delivery of Disability Support Assessments for adults (18+) during Covid-19 lockdown

#### Neurodiversity and Employment Group, BPS, Division of Occupational Psychology

This interim position paper covers the use of diagnostic testing for dyslexia, developmental coordination disorder, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, non-verbal learning disabilities, processing speed/working memory deficit and applied (non-clinical) assessment of ADHD, during the Covid-19 lockdown.

#### Current situation

The pandemic and subsequent lockdown mean that support is more crucial than ever for individuals and, given that it may be some time before they can receive an accepted diagnosis, we need to provide appropriate support.

Without access to diagnosis, adult students and employees will be without reasonable adjustments in exams and at work, which is potentially damaging to their wellbeing and future opportunities.

Under normal circumstances, psychologists would conduct a differential diagnostic assessment using a broad range of interviews, observation and psychometric testing. Many psychometric tests cannot be administered remotely so an alternative solution is required to ensure that those waiting for diagnosis are not prevented from accessing support during this time.

#### Beyond diagnosis

Diagnosis and provision of support are not the same thing. Adjustments are key to supporting individuals and a formal diagnosis is not legally required in order to provide a certain level of adjustment and support.

Instead, diagnosis and provision requires that a professional assessment of chronic (lasting more than 12 months) difficulty with normal day-to-day functioning (including memory, learning and understanding) be in place to establish tendencies toward neurodiversity. During lockdown, certain screening tools (see below) can be used to identify

tendencies of a neurodiverse condition. These could potentially be provided without the standardised testing common to Specific Learning Disabilities Assessment Standards Committee (SASC) compliant diagnostic reports.

We recommend that adjustment conversations take place in line with Section 2.2 of the *BPS Practice Guidelines*, on working in the digital age<sup>1</sup>. These can draw on a client's personal history and use online tools such as screening and questionnaires.

<sup>1</sup> The British Psychological Society (2017). *Practice Guidelines (3rd Ed)*. Leicester: British Psychological Society.

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### Suggested screening tools (others are available)

#### Dyscalculia

Chinn, S. (2019). *The dyscalculia checklist* [Online]. Available at [www.stevechinn.co.uk/dyscalculia/the-dyscalculia-checklist](http://www.stevechinn.co.uk/dyscalculia/the-dyscalculia-checklist). [Accessed 16 April 2020].

#### Mental Health

Spitzer, R.L., Kroenke, K.W., Janet B.W. & Löwe, Bernd (22 May 2006). A brief measure for assessing generalised anxiety disorder: The GAD-7. *Archives of Internal Medicine*. 166 (10): 1092–1097.

Kroenke, K & Spitzer, R.L. (2002). The PHQ-9: A New Depression Diagnostic and Severity Measure (PDF). *Psychiatric Annals*. 32(9), 1–7.

#### ADHD

Kooij, J.J.S. & Francken, M.H. (2010). Diagnostic interview for ADHD in adults 2.0 (DIVA 2.0) [Online]. Available at [www.advancedassessments.co.uk/resources/ADHD-Screening-Test-Adult.pdf](http://www.advancedassessments.co.uk/resources/ADHD-Screening-Test-Adult.pdf). [Accessed 16 April 2020].

Brown, T. (2010). Brown Attention-Deficit Disorder Scales [Online] Available at [www.pearsonassessments.com/store/usassessments/en/Store/Professional-Assessments/Behavior/Attention-ADHD/Brown-Attention-Deficit-Disorder-Scales/p/100000456.html](http://www.pearsonassessments.com/store/usassessments/en/Store/Professional-Assessments/Behavior/Attention-ADHD/Brown-Attention-Deficit-Disorder-Scales/p/100000456.html).

#### ASC

Rutter, M., LeCouteur, A. & Lord, C. (2003). Autism diagnostic interview, revised (ADI-R) [ONLINE] [www.pearsonclinical.co.uk/Psychology/ChildMentalHealth/ChildMentalHealth/AutismDiagnosticInterviewRevised\(ADI-R\)/AutismDiagnosticInterviewRevised\(ADI-R\).aspx](http://www.pearsonclinical.co.uk/Psychology/ChildMentalHealth/ChildMentalHealth/AutismDiagnosticInterviewRevised(ADI-R)/AutismDiagnosticInterviewRevised(ADI-R).aspx).

Lord, C., Rutter, M., DiLavore, P. et al. (2012). *Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule, Second Edition: ADOS-2* [Online]. [www.pearsonclinical.co.uk/Psychology/ChildMentalHealth/ChildMentalHealth/ADOS-2/autism-diagnostic-observation-schedule-second-edition.aspx](http://www.pearsonclinical.co.uk/Psychology/ChildMentalHealth/ChildMentalHealth/ADOS-2/autism-diagnostic-observation-schedule-second-edition.aspx).

#### Dyslexia

Smythe, I. & Everatt, J. (2001). Adult checklist [Online] Available at [www.adc.org.uk/webedit/uploaded-files/All%20Files/Adult-Checklist.pdf](http://www.adc.org.uk/webedit/uploaded-files/All%20Files/Adult-Checklist.pdf). [Accessed 16 April 2020].

#### Dyspraxia

Kirby, A. & Rosenblum S. (2008). The adult developmental coordination disorder/ dyspraxia checklist (ADC) for further and higher education [Online] Available at [www.patoss-dyslexia.org/write/MediaUploads/Resources/ADC\\_checklist.pdf](http://www.patoss-dyslexia.org/write/MediaUploads/Resources/ADC_checklist.pdf). [Accessed 16 April 2020].

A report may be produced which highlights the person's challenges and strengths, and then recommends adjustments and strategies to address their difficulties, as per existing guidelines and advice.

#### Guidance

BPS (2017). *The psychological assessment of adults with specific performance difficulties at work*. [Online]. Available at [www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/psychological-assessment-adults-specific-performance-difficulties-work](http://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/psychological-assessment-adults-specific-performance-difficulties-work).

#### Advice

ACAS (2016). *Reasonable adjustments in the workplace*. [Online]. Available at [www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=6074](http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=6074).

BPS (2017). Neurodiversity at work, in *Psychology at work: Improving wellbeing and productivity in the workplace*. [Online]. Available: [www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/psychology-work-improving-wellbeing-and-productivity-workplace](http://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/psychology-work-improving-wellbeing-and-productivity-workplace).

Wellbeing and technological considerations will be important aspects of these conversations, both in terms of the assessment itself, and the recommendations made. The current circumstances may, for example, exacerbate certain difficulties such as stress and anxiety. Organisations should be encouraged to take this into account and put the wellbeing of the client

first, which includes swift action on assessing for and implementing adjustments where practicable within the constraints of lockdown.

This is consistent with case law which indicates that employers and others must provide reasonable adjustments if there are reasonable grounds to suspect a disability<sup>2</sup>.

### Recommendations

A formal report composed by psychologists with [The Health and Care Professions Council \(HCPC\)](http://www.hcpc.org.uk) registration (Level 8 qualification) will suffice as evidence for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010, that adjustments can be made and that those included

in the report constitute the best available evidence collated in difficult circumstances.

Should these adjustments be ineffective, there may be a requirement for more assessment after the crisis has passed and it is safe to conduct face-to-face assessments.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Sangha v Chemicare UK Ltd [ET 2016]; Curtis v East London NHS Foundation Trust [ET 2015].