



External Influences Impact on Practice

From Address by Lynn Greenwold, OBE, Chief Executive of Patoss
at 2019 Patoss Annual Conference, 30 March 2019

External influences impact our practice despite our best efforts. What are the challenges we see and how are we addressing them?

Each year or two we see policy changes that have tremendous impact on the support our learners can access and on our practice as professionals and the learners we support. Sometimes they even come like buses – all at once!

I will be exploring some of these external issues and their impact on us. I will be looking at how we can work to maintain and develop practice

I have invited colleagues to share their views, experiences, challenges and solutions, and consider what we can do together to continue to move positively forward.

Our members and our local groups are our 'eyes and ears' to what is happening in practice, what influences they see on these important issues and how they see these have impacted their practice and their learners.

Considering:

- The Rose Report, 10 years on
- SEND Code of Practice
- Local Authority policies for supporting children with literacy difficulties
- Ongoing anxiety around cuts in local authority and its impact on SEND pupil support
- The 'Dyslexia Debate' – again!
- DSA 'Modernisation'
- Extending assessment validity for DSA evidence to any age
- Other issues our members report 'on the ground'.

Our survey had 189 responses working across the full range of provision from early years through adults in higher education and included 62 from Patoss local group members around the England, Scotland and Wales.

The Rose Report, 10 years on

The Rose Report 'Identifying and Teaching Children and Young People with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties' was published in 2009. It led to government's funding specialist teacher training with the aim of every school having access to a specialist teacher. Ten years on, what is the impact?

- provided useful definition
- meant dyslexia taken more seriously in educational settings paving the way for specialist teacher to be employed
- contributed to the growing awareness of SpLD publicly and amongst teachers.
- encouraged individual CPD and boosting outcomes for learners
- encouraging whole school training
- better understanding among parents and learners

30 respondents received funding under Rose allocation and we are pleased to see they continue to practice in the field. The following comments include those from specialist teachers who benefitted from the training:

We saw significant numbers of places disappear shortly after the training due to massive cuts in government funding which meant schools and local authorities cut back on their SEND specialist support roles – thus the places offered disappeared.

The Rose Report meant that dyslexia was taken more seriously in educational settings and paved the way for a specialist teacher to be employed in my school. (Me!)

1) It provided me with a definition of dyslexia which greatly assists my report writing, and with which I can work; and 2) I feel sure that it helped to create an environment in which my contribution to the matters surrounding dyslexia became a little better understood.

The school saw the value in having a specialist teacher as one of our members commented 'Before I retired another was funded to replace me, as part of succession planning. The school was willing to support another specialist's training after the Rose report but no one came forward.

The Report has encouraged CPD 'I have read the Rose report alongside other articles. I regularly attend lectures at the Helen Arkell Centre and constantly look for ways to boost the outcome for all learners. Practice in the Dyslexia SpLD Trust is focused around SpLD learners but this benefits everyone. In the last 12 months there has been a focus on developing metacognition of all students and whole school training has been a part of this process.'

Students and their parents and the children I assess understand their dyslexia better because of the report.

Extremely positive, since we were able to identify children with dyslexia, create an open culture and to put positive, evidence-based steps in place to support them.

The somewhat negative comment came from a practitioner who has seen little impact from school initiatives from Rose through the Code of Practice on students being assessed before going to HE

[The SEND Code of Practice \(2015\)](#)

Setting Impact: With 54% seen as positive or extremely positive with only 3% seen as extremely negative or somewhat negative.

Learner Impact: 49% seen as positive or extremely positive with 3% seen as extremely negative or somewhat negative.

The SEND Code of Practice is only as good as the management team who are there to work with open thinking staff to put provision into place. I have seen excellent provision (in my previous school and cluster), particularly where there is a good, cohesive management team with flexibility to put funding into place. However, the current state of provision is suffering due to budget and service cuts.

Overall, as a SENCo, I was never able to meet the expectations of the parents and was overburdened with bureaucracy and futile attempts to gain funding / Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) from the local authority. [Note: with the SEND Code of Practice 2015

Statements of Educational Need to access specialist provision were replaced by EHCPs compiled by multi-disciplinary teams)

Responses are mixed for older learners:

As yet the impact of the new CoP, which is supposed to cover learners through age 25, on Higher Education settings is not evident, not least as entry into HE supersedes the EHCP, but also because few students with dyslexic-type difficulties qualify for EHCPs, and those who do are the least likely to end up in HE. That said, the high expectations for the CoP combined with the downward pressure on resource/funding are generally negative.

Some parents comment that it has helped their older children at the post 18 stage with the support expected to age 25.

The Code of Practice makes it clear that provision for pupils with SEND is 'underpinned by high quality teaching and is compromised by anything less'. From <http://maximisingtas.co.uk/assets/content/ta-review-guide-final.pdf>

For example, one contributor noted:

Really good that responsibility of all teachers for SEN is recognised. In theory this should benefit learners but there is also a need for training of all teachers in SEN, which isn't happening everywhere. There are then not the provisions in place for children with SLCN and/or dyslexia unless the parents fight and go to tribunal.

Patoss, this summer is introducing introductory online training for teachers, support assistants, and school leaders to speak directly to underpinning knowledge and to support the mainstream workforce to better understanding and supporting our learners.

New Patoss training will help upskill the school workforce

Linking to specialists to ASSESS, PLAN, DO, REVIEW: advise, review, measure progress and restructure support to address the Code of Practice

Local Authority Policies

Setting Impact: With 22% seen as positive or extremely positive with 23% seen as extremely negative or somewhat negative

Learner Impact: 21% seen as positive or extremely positive with 30% seen as extremely negative or somewhat negative.

The Local Authorities don't seem to have a strategy for these children and place all within mainstream, expecting the schools to manage/buy in services. This is then down to the individual schools, so provision is pot luck for children.

Somewhat commendable - the level of 'wave 2' intervention I am seeing is commendable.
Comment from WEST MIDLANDS

EHCPs are quite rare for dyslexia, and this has to change. Until this is addressed, those with a diagnosis in schools will not receive the specialist intervention they require.

There is little provision at secondary. It seems a bit better at primary although the reliance on catch-all programmes is concerning.

Year after year the bureaucracy and form filling became greater as the amount of support and funding became less.

There has been a negative impact due to academisation across the local area and the sector.

Literacy difficulties are not prioritised over other conditions, limited funding and time allowed

Increasing number of children are now out of school in my LA - one of the worst for exclusions. Many of these children have language/literacy difficulties, but no-one is assessing. Note this is just as we saw when the Patoss was involved in the No To Failure project was launched it was a 'postcode lottery' then and we have reverted to that again with even more pressure from lack of funding and most learners in Pupil Referral Units had undiagnosed specific learning difficulties. [The results of No to Failure Project led to the DfE's commissioning the Rose review.]

Local Authority Spending

Setting Impact: With only 9% seen as positive or extremely positive and 58% seen as extremely negative or somewhat negative.

Learner Impact: With only 6% seen as positive or extremely positive and an increase to 66% seen as extremely negative or somewhat negative.

Spending has become tighter and the Executive Headteacher has had to support the Trust's work within the LA. Two of the schools have Additionally Resourced Centres and are the schools of choice for parents with children having an EHCP. Two schools have 100 EHCPs between them. The Executive Headteacher and Associate Headteachers have had to battle with Headteachers of schools with few EHCPs to ensure the funding levels are fairly maintained. To date this has happened.

Funding is my biggest issue. We simply cannot implement what I know done children need it whet specialist reports recommend

My Local Authority is seriously underfunded and not enough specialists.

Because there is not sufficient funding, schools still prioritise disruptive children.

The policies are still not helping children to receive support because there is not sufficient funding.

Lack of funding limits the number of people available to undertake interventions. Lottery-based approach to identification

I remain distressed by how poorly so many of our SpLD children are treated in school. There is enough evidence and there are enough good strategies - so why are our SpLD children still so damaged. 25% of the prison population is ADHD. That says almost all of it.

I find now in my work as an independent consultant that whereas previously children were working on a highly personalised level, they are now tending to be sat on a computer on an intervention such as IDL, rather than small group multisensory work. Some individual work remains, but this is watered down and not at the 2x1 hour weekly we were previously able to provide under a Statement, with additional Learning Support Assistant hours for overlearning/access to learning. Prior to the funding cuts, our LEA was superb in supporting

us to help children with literacy difficulties. From the early days with my LEA (30 years of teaching) I was in receipt of high-quality training (free), support from skilled advisors who came out to my school to work with me and my colleagues. As the cuts bit, these services were reduced and now the advisory service is only available in terms of interaction for EHCPs. Otherwise it is a "free market" which many schools can't afford to pay for. In terms of Statutory assessment, under the previous system I was able to monitor student progress and then, where necessary, to provide evidence that the learner needed specialist teacher provision, with possible additional support from a dedicated LSA to help to transfer learning and to support access in the classroom. Our County recognises dyslexia, but do not fund for it. This means that most specialist teachers no longer work in the primary schools which previously employed them to work 1:1. This is due to funding cuts - schools had to make the choice to maintain LSAs to work with children with emotional and behaviour difficulties, leaving the children with SpLD to be catered for differently, without the high quality practice that was previously available when staffing was there.

However, one respondent pointed out: It is not at all clear that LA's have insufficient funds. Some local authorities pride themselves in maintaining a surplus in their budgets.

So in campaigning we should be looking at the Local Authority budgets through Government Audits such as the recent 'Local authority revenue expenditure and financing England: 2017 to 2018 individual local authority data – outturn Published 23 August 2018, Last updated 21 March 2019' to question authorities on how their Education spend.

Further audit information is available as schools must publish information on how they spend their Pupil Premium funds – for more information see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings>.

Additional Concerns

High among our concerns is that many children struggling to learn to read, especially those deemed to be 'dyslexic', often experience repeated failure that starts in the primary years and is exacerbated thereafter.

The Dyslexia-SpLD Trust, of which Patoss is a member, has represented to OFSTED:

While we applaud the rise in the overall standards of reading in primary schools, this ought not to mask the substantial trailing edge of under-performance that, among other factors, suggests a lack of expertise in teaching reading and a limited supply of specialist teachers. At age 7 it will be clear those children who have not 'cracked the code' and cannot read sufficiently well to access the curriculum. Between age 7 and year 7 there has to be a greater focus on what happens to those children who have not made enough progress by the end of Key Stage 2 much earlier in the subsequent years, well before year 7. We firmly believe that OFSTED is a major force in tackling these problems.

Lack of knowledge amongst teaching staff on the impact of dyslexia on a child in the classroom.

Changes to literacy focus (SPAG – spelling, punctuation and grammar penalties) plus amount of testing and knock on impact on self-esteem for dyslexic learners.

Reduction in specialist support for schools so a learner's difficulties may take longer to be identified and any resulting support may be more superficial.

Resolving the Dyslexia Debate

The current 'debate' represented by Prof J Elliot and colleagues was well summarised by Prof Rod Nicolson at the Patoss 2019 Conference.

Elliot et al:

1. The Assessment is lengthy and complex
2. The Diagnosis depends on identifying a discrepancy between IQ and reading performance
3. Following a diagnosis of dyslexia, a systematic phonics programme is recommended, following current best practice
4. Following a diagnosis of 'not dyslexia', a systematic phonics programme is recommended, following current best practice
5. Why do a diagnosis at all!?

Nicolson resolves the apparent paradox raised by Julian Elliott in his destructive 'Dyslexia Debate' by acknowledging that it is important to support many types of learning difference and that Elliot's logical error is to accept without question a 'one size fits all' approach to intervention.

Rather than being a costly but valueless activity, a good assessment should point the way to an effective and positive individual success programme, structured to take account of the full range of strengths, weaknesses, aspirations, stressors and learning differences of each individual child.

Nicolson made the point that the 21st century tools of tablet-based testing and intervention provides unprecedented opportunities for effective and immediate support. Consequently, rather than being a costly irrelevance, a PATOSS assessor or an educational psychologist actually has a crucial role in design, implementation and monitoring of the effective support programme for each child.

PATOSS members, as specialist teachers and assessors, are particularly well placed to provide the individual support and the wisdom needed for this challenging undertaking. It just cannot be done in school.

Working together we can help develop the grassroots alliance of parents, children and supporters who can transform the sterile debate on reading education into personalised educational achievement for all.

“Allowing a student with a hidden disability (ADHD, Anxiety, Dyslexia) to struggle academically or socially when all that is needed for success are appropriate accommodations and explicit instruction, is no different than failing to provide a ramp for a person in a wheelchair”.

Ofsted reported key factors for good progress were: the involvement of a specialist teacher; good assessment; work tailored to challenge pupils sufficiently; and commitment from school leaders to ensure good progress for all pupils. From OFSTED 'Inclusion: does it matter where pupils are taught?' **2006!** It was true then; and is just as true today.

How members are addressing these challenges

Encouraging continuous feedback to and from parents.

Inhouse training using train the trainer materials

Drop in sessions at the end of each college day open to any student for Study Skills support. Attending as much mental health training as I can. Delivering spotlight training on Dyslexia and SpLD's to Learning Assistants.

I am extending my service by improving my website and links with schools in Somerset

Setting up online feedback on the impact of difficulty in the classroom for AA evidence - verbal feedback is easier to gain but written feedback more difficult. Build on links with LA - specific disclosure question on enrolment forms regarding EHCPs. Additional colleagues trained for AA assessment.

I offer information and advice to parents/grandparents about how to tackle schools and LAs. Most of my learners have low self-esteem so helping them towards a more positive view of themselves is my primary goal.

The message for schools:

- Don't let our learners 'fall through the net'
- Assess strengths and difficulties,
- Closely monitor progress AND get the right support in place quickly!
- Excellent research is out there to guide effective practice.

The message for campaigners:

- Funding
 - Query Local Authority school reserves vs SEN support
 - Audit Pupil Premium allocation
- Put greater focus on what happens to those children who have not made enough progress by the end of Key Stage 2
- Let the Education minister and government know of the pressures staff are under in trying to support students with SEN, and indeed all students, to provide them with the support, teaching and positive learning environment needed.
- Look at new pre key stage assessments about to be introduced to primaries and campaign against the discriminatory judgements of dyslexics - those with no physical cause of being unable to meet spelling targets.
- Foster participation in SpLD training courses
- Patoss Local Groups are our eyes and ears and need to provide input

Disabled Student Allowances (DSA) 'Modernisation'ⁱ

Setting Impact: With only 9% seen as positive or extremely positive and 25% seen as extremely negative or somewhat negative.

Learner Impact: With only 11% seen as positive or extremely positive and 24% seen as extremely negative or somewhat negative.

The difficulty of obtaining consistent support for students funded under DSA and the privileging of agency over individual Band 4 providers has had an extremely damaging effect

on many colleagues. That said, the drive towards greater inclusive practice in universities is desirable - provided it does not become one size fits all and lecture capture answers everything.

Relying on inclusive practice remains hit and miss as far as my experience goes and the modernisation seems to have discouraged DSA application.

It has almost destroyed any high-quality provision from professionals working for a university and has jeopardised the earnings of the more experienced tutors. I used to manage an award-winning in-house team of tutors, all with Level 7 qualifications. DSA-QAG reduced it to a farcical and irrelevant tick box exercise. An unnecessary level of bureaucracy. This created extra work for no benefit whatsoever to students who were already well supported. There was no attempt to find out what good practice was and the people carrying out the audit had absolutely no clue about the profession or the job role. Multiple QA frameworks were issued by people without the skill or understanding to write them.

Very negative because of the difficulty obtaining consistent support/changing supplier/jumping through bureaucratic hoops.

Since the introduction of the DSA-QAG there are more stringent 'rules' in order to comply with the QA. I personally feel that this is a good move and the annual audit serves a necessary purpose to ensure consistent support.

I was a highly respected provider of non-medical helper DSA funded dyslexia support yet did not receive one referral from them after going through the new registration process. I did not re renew my registration and decided to be the river not the rock so diversified into all KS range support and am happy.

Made it more and more difficult to provide DSA support in house.

[DSA new evidence requirementsⁱⁱ](#)

Setting Impact: With 36% seen as positive or extremely positive and 26% seen as extremely negative or somewhat negative.

Learner Impact: With 53% seen as positive or extremely positive and 24% seen as extremely negative or somewhat negative.

This change introduced within a month of the Patoss conference, SpLD diagnostic assessments used for DSAs purposes to have been carried out by APC holders and HCPC-registered psychologists.

The SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC) who issues guidelines for these assessments (under consultation at the time of this survey) is introducing in July new guidelines for diagnostic assessments for younger students along with those for older learners. But the DfE announcement preceded the completion of this work.

SASC review now taking place should have happened before change was implemented DfE put under pressure from Lord Addington in House of Lords

I think the new formats (to be implemented end June) will make reports more accessible for all.

Learners and parents will no doubt be glad of not having to be re-assessed and it might have the benefit of younger children taking up an assessment as they know it will remain valid. However, the downside of not having a current picture remains.

Only parents with means can afford assessments - this is problematic in itself, and it may be easier for parents to justify the cost once if they know they won't need to fund it again post-16.

Changes to accepting any reports I feel both positive and negative impact- positive in that pupils shouldn't have to have more assessments than is absolutely necessary, and negative in that pupils needs change over the years and, although some needs assessors are well trained and qualified, having met a few, some may have difficulty in picking up on all the areas of relevant support that a student may benefit from. The needs and support outlined in the report at the age of 10 can be very different to that of a 16+ year old.

Assessments carried out when student was young provide the diagnosis but not up to date information about current strengths/weaknesses

It will make my work with pupils even more essential.

This was a bit of an Article 50 - announced with a very tight timeframe and little understanding of the implications. In principle it could be seen as desirable in that other disabilities don't have to provide updated evidence and if we consider dyslexia a lifelong condition, why is it different? It could also mean that the quality of APC-supported assessments for younger children would improve as they would have to meet SASC standards (but this should NOT imply using the current 'approved list' which may not be fine-grained enough for younger children with literacy difficulties.) On the other hand, a test done in primary school would not offer much insight into the needs of a young adult at university. However, the change does indicate what I have argued for years - that the current artificial split or pre- and post-16 is even less defensible than it was before. All specialists should understand the whole trajectory from emerging literacy to the workplace and be able to assess and recommend accordingly.

I now feel under pressure to provide a full diagnostic assessment for all pupils who come to me querying dyslexia, whereas before I could do a "school version" to establish a learning profile and then could do a full DSA assessment for post-16.

Not sure now what the requirements are to apply for DSA, especially where the learner was diagnosed in primary school.

However, as a University lecturer as well as DSA assessor, I am concerned about the gap between assessment in Primary, even early Secondary years. There will need to be an interim mechanism for gathering information and possibly for updating progress on spelling, reading, etc. Furthermore, I am concerned regarding available proof for Exam Access Arrangements - how will this be verified for University purposes?

This is a great concern. I feel that reports should be no older than completed in year 9, but ideally an up-to-date report better reflects an individual's strengths, difficulties and normal way of working. A report from primary age does not do this adequately. The report format may also be very different. This is not a positive development to some extent, although

individuals should not be over-assessed. Very clear guidelines are required but could there please be some consultation with specialists.

How Patoss can help with these challenges

Training and campaigning

Learning Support Assistants working with students with SpLDs feel unsupported and undervalued. Also funding cuts have reduced the number of staff available for support. Patoss is providing a new online course, launching this summer, at levels 2 and 3 to help develop recognition of dyslexia in the classroom or other learning environments to underpin working with students, their parents and specialists to holistically help these students.

Patoss is introducing a new category of membership for those who work with our learners but are not yet specialist teachers.

We want to provide support and access to our professional network to these committed individuals. On completion of our Assessing for Access Arrangements [Triple A] or our new online Understanding and Supporting Learners with Dyslexia individuals can join our PATOSS community to continue their professional development and awareness. Look for the launch this summer. (see the Patoss website for more details: <https://www.patoss-dyslexia.org/Online-Courses>).

We continue to maintain strong links through our members, through the SpLD Assessment Standards Committee [SASC], the Dyslexia-SpLD Trust, Disabled Student Stakeholder Group SLC, the Department for Education, the Dyslexia-SpLD Policy Group and local networks.

Through our outreach, training support and public messages to schools, tutors, government bodies, assessors we aim to foster a consistent voice for disabled students; provide the latest training and research for teachers and assessors. Our mission is to help people with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) succeed in their education and workplace by nourishing the professionals who teach, assess and support them.

What to do next?

- **Strengthen our voice through member participation, help us build a stronger network**
- **Provide more comments and suggestions to help strengthen our campaigning – use this link: https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/Exploring_Issues2019**

Some additional notes received:

- Thank you for the help you provide.
- Local groups should raise their issues to ensure any difficulties with the 'practicalities' of putting new protocols in place are flagged up.
- I am proud to be a member of Patoss
- Thanks to Patoss for training and support for APC renewal process
- Keep up the excellent work! I am particularly impressed by the expert knowledge of your tutors and staff and the professional manner in which they conduct courses and support members.

If you or your colleagues wish to express an interest in our upcoming 'Understanding & Supporting Learners with Dyslexia' to learn about

- Neurodiversity
- Dyslexia
- Phonics and reading development
- Writing and spelling development
- Cognitive skills
- Enabling environments
- Interventions

Go to the Patoss website: <https://www.patoss-dyslexia.org/Online-Courses>

For PowerPoint of Lynn Greenwold's 'External Influences' presentation and a copy of this article go to the Patoss website: <https://www.patoss-dyslexia.org/past-conferences>

ⁱ Disabled Student Allowances provide government funding for specialist support for disabled students in Higher Education. The 'modernisation' brought into effect in 2015 looked to HE institutions to provide wider range of reasonable adjustments to support their disabled students, introduced a register for providers of non-medical support under a new framework, assumed all learners had access to a computer so required contribution of £200 if one were needed for specialist support.

ⁱⁱ In 2019 the Department for Education waived the age limit for assessment evidence supporting applications for DSA. Formerly a diagnostic assessment report from a suitably qualified assessor and meeting specific guidelines, confirming dyslexia or another specific learning difficulty had to be when the learner was 16 or older. This age limit was lifted on the basis that dyslexia or other specific learning difficulty is a lifelong condition so only one 'diagnosis' was required. SASC guidelines are required to be met for any report being used as evidence for DSA of a Specific Learning Difficulty, regardless of the age of the candidate. Therefore, for reports to be acceptable for DSA evidence, the author must hold a current SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate (APC) or be on the Health Care Professions Council register as a practitioner psychologist at the time of the assessment and follow SASC guidelines.