

DAN: The Dyslexia Adult Network

By Melanie Jameson

DAN is a lively new 'umbrella' network for adults with dyslexia and other specific learning differences (SpLDs). We aim to bust the myths, improve awareness and show how people with dyslexia/SpLDs can apply their strengths and abilities, rather than continue to be challenged by their very specific differences.

Launched on 1st June 2015, we are already making an impact. Working together, we will build on this early success to improve outcomes for adults with dyslexia/SpLDs.

The Dyslexia Adult Network is extending daily to draw in adults from across the country – and not just England: Dyslexia Scotland is one of our founding members.

What is DAN?

We are a collaboration of the major UK dyslexia charities and user-led organisations, together with nationally recognised specialists. This expertise has been brought together to focus solely on issues for adults.

Look at the DAN Website: www.dan-uk.co.uk for profiles of the founding committee and for further information on our organisations. DAN can signpost to sources of help but does not provide support for individuals.

Why do we need DAN?

Calls to our various organisations, and a survey carried out in 2012, have confirmed that many barriers still remain for adults with dyslexia/SpLDs, holding them back.

So DAN was born, to draw attention to this waste of potential which impacts on society as a whole. Concerns have now arisen about the quality of / and access to / a range of key services, as the Government's austerity programme leads to further cost-saving measures.

Although we were already working as individual organisations on issues that affect adults, we now have the opportunity to achieve much more by coming together and focusing our efforts.

What is DAN up to?

Our over-arching aim is an awareness campaign on the impact of dyslexia/SpLDs in adults. Our targets are policy makers, key individuals, employers and those responsible for public services.

DAN needs to engage as many people as possible in order for our voice to be heard. Find out more by visiting our Website: www.dan-uk.co.uk and following developments.

One of our specific campaign relates to Access to Work (AtW), who do work base assessments, and the delivery of the AtW programme. DAN has been working on

this for over a year, meeting with the senior contracts team for AtW and articulating our concerns. Communications with the Minister for Disability are now being resumed, after the Election.

Over the summer we shall be finalising plans for a regular bulletin – a mixture of updates and tips for every aspect of daily living with dyslexia/SpLDs.

How can you join in?

By joining DAN's campaigns: we are building support to maximise our impact on employers and challenge government bodies. There are a number of routes: through the DAN website: www.dan-uk.co.uk and linked social media. Facebook, Twitter and hashtag conversations are all ways of joining in the conversations. Another channel is our new Email Discussion List, using the jiscmail system. This will enable us to exchange documents and materials . Access it via www.jiscmail.ac.uk/DYSLEXIA-ADULT-NETWORK-DAN

Can you help shape DAN's identity? We are running a Logo Competition, closing date for entries: 21st August – see the DAN website for full details.

Can you provide tips and share useful information? Use any of the communication methods outlined above.

Can you help in other ways, such as funding? We receive no financial support, but funding will be needed to drive the campaign forward. Details will be on the website. Contact the Chair of DAN on Email mj@dsylexia-malvern.co.uk if you can offer help.

Message from Melanie Jameson, Chair of DAN

Greetings to you all!

Working with an enthusiastic and highly experienced group of colleagues, I want to get news of DAN out to the widest possible audience.

To introduce myself: my background is in adult dyslexia/SpLDs in the contexts of assessment, developing materials and workplace support. Many years facilitating an adult self-help group have taught me a lot about the skillset of the dyslexic-SpLD population, so that I always promote the associated abilities, while raising awareness of entitlements and accommodations. In recent years my focus has moved to the issue of accessing justice in courts & tribunals and support for (ex)-prisoners. I intend to bring all my experience to bear during my time as Chair of DAN.

Our best resource is each other. Together, we can make a difference.