

Termly Newsletter - Issue 3

Autumn 2012

Welcome...



A big thank you to everyone who took part in our survey on the top 10 causes of stress to parents and carers of children with dyslexia. 367 of you took part.

We commissioned this research so that we could provide the most relevant and practical support through the Parent Champion website (www.parentchampions.org.uk) and the Trust's partner organisations.

We want to give parents and carers a voice and make sure that they are being listened to. To make sure they are getting the help and advice they really need to reduce their stress levels and give them the confidence to deal with their child's dyslexia in a positive and practical way. We want to help them by offering reliable information and advice from experts. When a parent finds out that their child has dyslexia, it can be a very challenging time for them. They have lots of questions they want answered and feelings of isolation and uncertainty about what to do are very common. Mums, dads and carers have a great deal to cope with and we want to support them in the best way possible.



Mel Byrne
Director of The Dyslexia-SpLD Trust

Tell us how you are making a difference in your community

As Parent Champions you play a vital role in communities across the country. Whatever you are able to do to help us get the message out – whether it's showing this newsletter to a parent who may find it helpful, asking a school to have Parent Champion postcards in reception, getting a poster displayed in your local GP's surgery or library or organising a support group – you are all making a difference.

We would love to hear what you are doing so that we can include your ideas in our next newsletter and share them with all our Parent Champions.

Please take a few minutes to email us at social@parentchampions.org.uk

Survey results

Top 5 Causes of Stress in Education

1. Attitude of schools and level of support from the education system
2. Classroom teachers' lack of expertise and understanding
3. Lack of understanding among child's peers affecting confidence in school
4. Cost of private assessment
5. Lack of equipment and specific materials in schools

Top 5 Causes of Stress in Family Life

1. Parents feel guilty because they want to do what is best for their child but are not always sure they are making the right choices
2. Parents feel isolated and do not know who to turn to for reliable advice and information
3. Parents feel guilty because they want to help their children with reading and writing but get frustrated or struggle themselves
4. Impact on the family with siblings resenting the amount of attention given to the child with dyslexia
5. Mums finding it hard to get their partner to talk about their child's dyslexia.

Supporting You

Free Information Sessions for Parents and Carers

Our team of experts is running a series of free Information sessions for parents and carers across the country including London, Bath, Chelmsford, Nottingham, Knaresborough, Bristol, Haywards Heath, Tonbridge, Winchester, Hull, Scarborough, Wilmslow – and more. New dates and locations being added all the time – so check back often.

The Dyslexia SpLD Trust and partners are holding a free one-day conference featuring expert speakers and workshops on 24 November 2012 in Chippenham, Wiltshire.

Find out where and when at www.parentchampions.org.uk. Be great to see you there – and please pass this information on to anyone you know who will find it helpful.



Support Available in Different Languages

The Dyslexia-SpLD Trust leaflet, *Questions about Dyslexia* is available in Arabic, Bengali, Gujarati, Polish, Punjabi, Somali and Urdu.

Springboard for Children's booklet, *A Parent's Little Guide To Helping Children Read* is available in Bengali, Chinese, Polish, Spanish and Turkish.

If you know of any parents or carers, schools or organisations who would find these useful, please get in touch social@parentchampions.org.uk and we can send you some so that you can pass them on.

The leaflet and booklet can also be downloaded from our website www.parentchampions.org.uk.

It's Good to Talk

If you want to talk to an expert, you can

Call the British Dyslexia Association Helpline on 0845 251 9002

Arrange a consultation at one of the Dyslexia Action Centres or Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre full contact details at www.parentchampions.org.uk.



Join Parent Champions on Facebook and Twitter

It's a great place to share ideas, get support, be in touch with Parent Champions from across the UK – and air your views on any issue that is important to you.

You can also get in touch with other parents on the British Dyslexia Association's Moodle. You can post questions on and talk with each other about issues that matter to you www.bda.moodle.overnetdata.com.



Ask an Expert

Our 'Ask an Expert' resources section includes a wide range of expert advice to help reduce parents' stress in all areas identified in the survey including:

- *Advice for parents feeling isolated and not knowing where to turn* from Mel Byrne, Director, The Dyslexia-SpLD Trust
- *Tips on building a positive relationship with your child's school* from Sue Flohr, Manager of the British Dyslexia Association's National Helpline
- *Advice on building your child's confidence and self-esteem* from Bernadette McLean, Principal of The Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre
- *Feeling guilty and being negative with a child* from Glenys Heap, Head of Educational Development, Dyslexia Action
- *Struggling to get a child interested in reading* from Tim Mungeam, Chief Executive, the national charity Springboard for Children

Coming Soon ...

2 new screencasts on *The Impact Of Concept-Mapping* and *Free Software For Parents To Use*

www.parentchampions.org.uk



We Need Your Help Urgently!

"The survey highlights how vital it is that teachers understand dyslexia so that they can work with parents to support children in the best possible way"

Says Katrina Cochrane, Head of Education and Policy at the British Dyslexia Association.

"The British Dyslexia Association believes it should be statutory for all teachers to receive training in dyslexia and specific learning difficulties in their Initial Teacher Training. At the moment provision is very patchy. The BDA is campaigning to trigger a debate in Parliament."

To do this, it needs 100,000 signatures before 31 October 2012. Please take a few minutes today to sign our petition www.epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/20674. Please pass onto friends and colleagues so that your children have the best chance of having any specific learning difficulty identified as early as possible.

British Dyslex!a
Association

Interview...

PARENT CHAMPION IN THE SPOTLIGHT



EMMA SEYMOUR mother of Elliott (8) - Haywards Heath, West Sussex.

What made you decide to become a Parent Champion?

I joined Parent Champions so that I could find out about the resources and support available for parents. I wanted to be able to help my son who has dyslexia and also to offer support for other parents. Sometimes just having somebody who really listens to you and who understands your situation can be the thing that makes all the difference.

Tell us about the journey you are on with your son

I began seeing signs of dyslexia in Elliott really from the time he started school. I asked the school to test him when he was 6 ½ years old. They tested him and told me he definitely wasn't dyslexic. After months of Elliott struggling in school, we took him to an educational psychologist for a private assessment. We were told that Elliott was definitely dyslexic. The school apologised.

I have learnt many things. The most important being the following:

1. Communication: I talked to Elliott about dyslexia. I explained that there are things that his brain can do easily and there are things that his brain struggles. This opened up space for Elliott to talk about his experiences and ask questions. Elliott was definitely calmer and happier after our conversation.
2. Well-being: I ignored all the bits of paper from school which said your child must read and do times tables every night. I decided that the most important thing was to regain our sense of well-being as a family. Instead of battling over reading and maths we would snuggle up and watch movies, listen to stories, build Lego and just follow our intuition about what we really needed.

3. Strengths: I began to focus on what Elliott was good at, what he enjoyed doing, what made him happy. I focused on re-building Elliott's self-esteem, self-confidence and well-being. We created opportunities for Elliott to follow his strengths and passions; science, nature and cubs which has been fantastic because of the 'learn by doing' ethos.

4. Re-building: I decided to concentrate on building a positive relationship with school. I think this can take time but making the decision to adopt an attitude of 'working with' was one of the most important things I have done as a Parent Champion. Open, honest communication and appreciation when things are being improved can make all the difference.

Overall I have learnt to trust my gut and to ask myself 'What can I do?'; 'How can I make a positive difference?'

Tell us about the difference you are making in your local community.

- Hosting a free local Parent Information Session run by Dyslexia Action in November 2012
- Having a presence in school for National Dyslexia Week 8th-14th October 2012 where I will have information available for parents
- Encouraging school to hold a national 'No-Pens' day www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/resources/resources-for-practitioners/no-pens-day-resources.aspx
- Encouraging school to make their 'BDA Dyslexia Friendly Quality Mark' mean just that. Volunteering to be part of school's drive to create dyslexia friendly classrooms.
- In conversation with the BDA about setting up a local branch of the BDA
- Planning to organise a local event for children with specific learning difficulties, including dyslexia.
- Running a monthly Parent Champions support group and also being available for 1 to 1 parent support.

What one top tip would you give to other Parent Champion?

Believe that positive change is possible, one step at a time.

Contact Information...

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