

**MODELLING PROVISION FOR LEARNERS  
WITH DYSLEXIA IN GENERAL FURTHER  
EDUCATION COLLEGES IN YORKSHIRE  
AND HUMBERSIDE**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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## **Abstract**

Dyslexia is the fastest growing learning difficulty in FE in terms of increase in number of self-reported learning difficulties (Fletcher and Munoz 2006), and affects a high percentage of learners (Institute for Employment Studies (IES) FEFC 1997a). The focus of this research is to investigate how best to provide support for these learners. It provides a background into Government legislation, current initiatives and reform programmes that have influenced provision. The concept of dyslexia is examined, especially as it relates to dyslexia in adults. Current research on good practice in teaching adult learners with dyslexia, and recommendations made, has been used to provide guidelines as to the criteria for effectiveness of provision. This was utilized to help devise detailed research questions.

High quality inclusive provision is envisaged with a whole college approach as well as personalised and specialist support. The research investigates how colleges can move forward in achieving this vision.

A mixed methods research approach has been used with both quantitative and qualitative methods utilized to provide depth and width to data. The present position as to the situation in General Further Education (GFE) Colleges in Yorkshire and Humberside (The Humber) is examined with the aid of a questionnaire sent to colleges in order to gather initial information, followed by telephone interviews. A small number of colleges were subsequently used to seek the opinions of specialist tutors through the use of semi-structured interviews, as well as the perceptions of learners through focus group, dyad and individual interviews.

The views of tutors and learners have been taken into account in devising an emerging model, which can be used by colleges to audit and develop support provision. It aims to provide a starting point for further discussion.

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## Abbreviations

ADHD	- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ADLS	- Additional Learning Support
ADO	- Adult Dyslexia Organisation
ALP	- Adult Literacy Programme
ALS	- Additional Learning Support
AoC	- Association of Colleges
ART	- Adult Reading Test
ASCLA	- Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act
AT	- Assistive Technology
BDA	- British Dyslexia Association
BIS	- Department of Business, Innovation and Skills
BKSB	- Basic Key Skills-BUILDER Test
BPS	- British Psychological Society
CCET	- Certificate of Competence in Educational Testing
CEBE	- Centre for Education in the Built Environment
Cert. Ed.	- Certificate in Education
CIF	- Common Inspection Framework
CPD	- Continuing Professional Development
CTOPP	- Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing
D	- Dictaphone
DA	- Dyslexia Action
DAST	- Dyslexia Adult Screening Test
DCSF	- Department for Children, Schools and Families
DDA	- Disability Discrimination Act
DED	- Disability Equality Duty
DfE	- Department for Education
DfEE	- Department for Education and Employment
DfES	- Department for Education and Skills
DRC	- Disability Rights Commission
DSA	- Disabled Student's Allowance
E2E	- Entry to Employment
EdD	- Doctor of Education
Ed.Psych.	- Education Psychologist
ESOL	- English for Speakers of Other Languages
FE	- Further Education
FEDA	- Further Education Development Agency
FEFC	- Further Education Funding Council
FHE	- Further and Higher Education
FLR	- Freedom to Learn Report
F/T	- Full Time
GCSE	- General Certificate of Secondary Education
GFE	- General Further Education
GL	- Granada Learning Group (GL Assessment)
GST	- Guidance Support Tutor
GSRT	- Gray Silent Reading Test
HA	- Health Authority
HE	- Higher Education
HMSO	- Her Majesty's Stationery Office
ICT	- Information and Communication Technology
IES	- Institute for Employment Studies

ILP	- Individual Learning Plan/Programme
IQ	- Intelligence Quotient
KBST	- Key and Basic Skills Team
LADS	- Lucid Adult Dyslexia Screener
LDD	- Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities
LEA	- Local Education Authority
LLD	- Learners with Learning Difficulties
LLDD	- Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities
LLLU	- London Language and Literacy Unit
LLU+	- London South Bank University
LSA	- Learning Support Assistant
LSC	- Learning and Skills Council
LSDA	- Learning and Skills Development Agency
LSIS	- Learning and Skills Improvement Service
LSRC	- Learning and Skills Research Centre
MIS	- Management Information Systems
n	- Number
NACCCE	- National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education
NERF	- National Educational Research Forum
NFER	- National Foundation for Educational Research
NRDC	- National Research and Development Centre
OFSTED	- Office for Standards in Education
QIA	- Quality Improvement Agency
QIP	- Quality Improvement Plan
PATOSS	- Professional Association of Teachers of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties
PC	- Personal Computer
PCET	- Post Compulsory Education and Training
PDA	- Personal Digital Assistant
PGCE	- Post Graduate Certificate in Education
PPVT	- Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test
P/T	- Part Time
RCUK	- Research Council United Kingdom
SAR	- Self Assessment Report
SD	- Standard Deviation
SDDSS	- Specific Developmental Disorders of Scholastic Skills
SDMT	- Symbol Digit Modalities Test
SEN	- Special Educational Needs
SENCO	- Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SENDA	- Special Educational Needs Disability Act
SFL	- Support for Learning
SLD	- Specific Learning Disability
SLDD	- Special Learning Difficulties and Disabilities
SMART	- Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-related
SpLDs	- Specific Learning Difficulties
SSD	- Social Services Department
STM	- Short Term Memory
TOWRE	- Test of Word Recognition
TVET	- Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UK	- United Kingdom
UN	- United Nations
UNESCO	- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
VAK	- Visual, Auditory, Kinaesthetic

VET	- Vocational Education and Training
VETO	- Vocational, Educational and Training Organisations
W	- Wordprocessor
WBL	- Work Based Learning
WHO	- World Health Organisation
WIAT: TUK	- Wechsler Achievement Test
WRAT	- Wide Range Achievement Test
WRIT	- Wide Range Intelligence Test

## Chapter 1

### Background and research aims

#### 1.1. Background

The central problem addressed in this research study is how to best provide for adult learners with dyslexia in a General Further Education (GFE) College. This topic evolved out of my professional interests combined with an emerging role as a researcher. As a specialist tutor for learners with specific learning difficulties (SpLDs) in a GFE college, a need was identified for research into the most effective ways of organising provision for learners with dyslexia. There was a lack of such research in this rapidly expanding field.

The term 'dyslexia' will be used to describe 'adult developmental dyslexia' (present from an early age) as opposed to 'acquired dyslexia' as a result of brain damage. Dyslexia is regarded as a disability and hidden impairment in the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) (HMSO 1995 Sch.1). It is also referred to under the umbrella term of 'specific learning difficulty'.

Further Education (FE) refers to post-16 education that is primarily taught in FE organisations. GFE colleges are one of the three main types of institutions in the FE sector and the largest in number. This term is used to refer to colleges that deliver five areas of activity in varying proportions (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) 2012 Sec. 4.8): remedial FE, community FE; vocational FE; academic studies (up to level 3); and Higher Education (HE) studies (Section 2.1). FE Colleges in England differ from those internationally, which focus on occupational skills and vocational education. The term used by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (2005 p.5) is 'technical and vocational education and training' (TVET or VET) which encompasses a wide variety of learning experiences that are relevant to the world of work (Section 2.1).

There are a high percentage of learners with dyslexia in FE (Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) 1997a). It is the fastest growing learning difficulty in FE in terms of increase in number of self-reported learning difficulties (Fletcher and Munoz 2006).

There is strong anecdotal evidence that large numbers of adults with dyslexia are undiagnosed (Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) 2000) and have experienced years of frustration and failure in an education system that has failed to adequately meet their needs, leaving them with low confidence and self-esteem. Many of these adults are lacking in basic skills (DfEE 2000; Learning and Skills Council (LSC) 2004; Bell 2010). There has been little attempt to understand the particular needs of adult learners with dyslexia and their continued problems in later life (Morgan and Klein 2001).

The importance of listening to the voice of the adult learner with dyslexia is emphasised in research (Section 2.4.2, 2.4.3, 2.7.1.8); insufficient evidence of this exists, with a shortage of research from the point of view of the learners themselves. The present research assists in filling this gap, enabling the voices of adult learners with dyslexia to be heard and their views taken into consideration. It also elicits the opinions of specialist tutors, at the forefront of delivering support provision. The conceptions of learners and tutors have enabled recommendations to be made for improvements to college systems, in order to meet their needs. Their voices will aid and facilitate management in making decisions, leading to growth in the quality of support provided.

The first priority of the research was to investigate the present position of GFE colleges with respect to identifying and providing for learners with dyslexia. Background research was initially conducted into what constituted effective or quality provision. A set of aims and purposes for the research were devised (Section 1.2), as well as research questions (Section 1.3) that would enable these aims to be met and greater insights to be gained into identifying promising practices.

## **1.2. General aims and purposes of the research**

The general purpose of the research was to investigate the extent and effectiveness of GFE College systems in identifying and providing for learners with dyslexia. The general aims were:

1. To gather evidence on the present position in GFE Colleges with respect to systems for identifying and providing for learners with dyslexia.
2. To give tutors and learners a 'voice' to express their feelings and opinions on identification and provision for learners with dyslexia.
3. To contribute to professional knowledge through aims 1 and 2, so practitioners can work more effectively to meet the needs of learners with dyslexia.

In order to meet the aims and purposes of the research a set of research questions was prepared. These balanced all interests and focused on the minimum necessary areas.

### **1.3. Research questions**

1. What is the present position in GFE Colleges in Yorkshire and Humberside with respect to systems for identifying and providing for learners with dyslexia?
2. What are the different perceptions by specialist tutors and learners of effective practice in the identification and provision for learners with dyslexia?
3. What opinions do tutors and learners have concerning improvements that could be made for making identification and provision more effective?
4. Based on this evidence how can FE provision for learners with dyslexia be audited and modelled?

The first research question enabled the present situation in GFE colleges to be examined. The second and third research questions were devised in order to elicit the views of the learners and their tutors. The fourth question enabled a working model to be derived at, based on the emerging themes and variables.

The study had limitations in that it aimed to investigate support provision from the viewpoint of specialist support providers within colleges as well as the learners who accessed this provision. This is only one domain of support within a college. Separate research studies would be needed in order to gain further insights and viewpoints of support provided on the main course, by other services in college and by management.

### **1.4. Methodology and research methods**

Both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies were needed in order to gain answers to the specific research questions and enable triangulation of different data. A mixed methods research approach was used (Section 3.4). Research instruments included: a questionnaire, telephone interviews, semi-structured individual interviews, focus group and dyad interviews (Section 3.5). The different research methods enabled a broad and comprehensive amount of data to be gathered, revealing different aspects of reality. The combined methods gave a better understanding of the situation in colleges, developing completeness, depth and breadth to the data. The use of multiple methods helped to demonstrate validity, clarify meaning and enhance interpretability. The different

approaches of the pluralistic methods enabled the research questions to be answered and helped to increase the quality of the research.

Data analysis was carried out on the range and depth of both quantitative and qualitative data in a sequence of steps. Analysis began during the data collection process and was on-going throughout the research. Three types of activity took place in data analysis: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification. The ethical standards of the University of Leeds research ethics committee were conformed to and the research adhered to University and School of Education policy. As discussed in Section 3.3.3, a wide range of ethical issues was considered and built into the research design.

## **1.5. Overview of the study**

The present situation, with respect to identifying and providing for learners with dyslexia in GFE, is examined in Chapter two, with an outline of the main principles of legislation and reform programmes (Section 2.2.1). The main issues and debates relating to the term dyslexia and its current definitions are explored, and those relevant to adult learners are identified (Section 2.3.1). The key theories and concepts associated with dyslexia, and their implications for a practical method of identification and assessment are discussed (Section 2.3.2). Reports and literature relevant to the particular needs of adults with dyslexia are examined, and their recommendations for provision in FE considered (Sections 2.4, 2.5). An investigation into the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) guidelines on effectiveness in Post-16 Education and Training is provided in Section 2.6, and research on effective practice in teaching adults with dyslexia in FE (Section 2.7).

Chapter three outlines the research design and methodology. It includes a broad overview of terms associated with research methodology (Section 3.2), the design of the research and the mixed method research approach used (Section 3.4), the research methods (Section 3.5) and the process of data analysis (Section 3.6). The research findings are presented in two separate chapters (Chapters 4 and 5). Firstly the data gathered from the questionnaires, telephone interviews and tutor interviews (Chapter 4), and secondly the data gathered from the learner interviews (Chapter 5). Chapter 6 provides a summary of the data collected in the present research and the literature research as well a final summary of all the research findings (Section 6.3).

Chapter 7 proposes an emerging working model for auditing provision, based on all the evidence from the research and the emergent themes and variables. This answers the fourth research question. Chapter 8 discusses the main findings of the research with respect to the research questions. It considers the perceptions of learners and tutors (Section 8.2) and makes recommendations for improving identification and provision (Section 8.3), relating these to evidence from the literature research, the implications of the research (Section 8.4) and limitations (Section 8.5). Section 8.6 discusses the way the present research moves the field of dyslexia support in GFE forward and presents a final vision. Chapter 9 concludes the research by summarising and concluding the main issues.

## **1.6. Significance of the research**

The present research study gives an insight into some of the issues surrounding the concept of dyslexia (Chapter 2) enabling FE colleges to benefit from the knowledge of researchers in the field as well as specialist tutors. It will facilitate them in gaining a deeper understanding of the world of adult learners with dyslexia so they can more readily empathise with them and develop management systems that will allow their needs to be more adequately addressed.

The research also has practical applications. It provides an emerging model for FE colleges to use as part of their review and evaluation process in order to audit their provision for adult learners with dyslexia and highlight areas for development (Chapter 7). It also proposes a way of thinking about and utilising the potential of collaboration and communication, internally and externally, in moving forward development. It will enable colleges to provide quality, teaching environments that will engage and energise all learners, not just those with dyslexia.

Legislation and reform programmes have ensured that provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDDs) is embraced within the general approach to learning for all students, as part of an inclusion agenda (Section 2.2). A whole-college institutional approach, alongside a personalised approach needs to be in place (FE White paper Department for Education and Skills (DfES) 2006 sec.4.15 p.49). There is scant evidence in research of how FE colleges are adapting their organisations to provide for a whole-college approach. This study will provide guidelines to aid colleges in the process of development. A transformational vision exists to develop high quality, innovative and

collaborative provision to meet the individual needs of learners (LSC 2005b; DfES 2006) (Section 2.2.1.5). There is little evidence of research on collaboration. A research study by Dyson, Lin and Millward (DfEE 1998) on inter-agency communication and collaboration between Schools, Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and Health and Social Services in the field of Special Educational Needs (SEN) provided a useful model that was adapted for the present study (Chapter 7). The emerging model could be applied specifically to GFE colleges as well as globally to other learning organisations involved in providing support for learners with dyslexia. It aims to provide a starting point for discussion and can be picked up, modified and adapted by other researchers.

## Chapter 2

# Provision for dyslexia in General Further Education

### 2.1. Introduction to General Further Education

Further Education refers to post-16 education that is primarily taught in FE organisations. FE covers three main types of institutions: General FE and Tertiary Colleges (218)<sup>1</sup>; Sixth Form Colleges (93); Special Colleges (Land-based Colleges (15); Art, Design and Performing Arts Colleges (3); Specialist Designated Colleges (10)). GFE Colleges constitute the largest number; in 2013 there were 218 GFE colleges in England out of a total of 339 FE colleges, comprising 64.3 per cent (Association of Colleges (AoC) 2013). FE is part of the overall FE and Skills sector, which includes: learners who are studying a course in an FE College, training provider or within their local community; and employees undertaking an apprenticeship or other qualification in the workplace (Data Service 2013a p.3). In 2011/12 there were 4,216,600 learners participating in the FE and Skills sector in England, of which 2,077,720 attended GFE and Tertiary colleges (49.3 per cent) (Data Service 2013b) (**Table 1**).

FE Colleges in England provide a mix of academic and vocational education with five main areas of activity (BIS 2012 Sec. 4.8): remedial FE (key skills); community FE (lifelong learning and continuing education); vocational FE (occupational skills); academic studies (up to level 3); HE studies. GFE colleges deliver these five areas of activity in varying proportions. FE Colleges in England differ from those internationally, which focus on occupational skills and vocational education. The term used by UNESCO 'TVET' or 'VET' encompasses a wide variety of learning experiences that are relevant to the world of work. UNESCO (2005) defines TVET or VET as:

“... those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences, and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding, knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life” (Recommendation 1, point 2, p.7)

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<sup>1</sup> Numbers in brackets indicate number of colleges in England in August 2013 (AoC 2013)

According to James (2005) it is widely acknowledged that, until recently, and in comparison to schools and HE, the FE sector received scant attention in educational research (Elliot 1996; Hughes, Taylor and Tight 1996; Hodkinson and James 2003). The present study will help to address this issue and will focus on the provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LLDD) in GFE, especially learners with dyslexia. It will help to bridge the gap that exists within this sector of education and field of knowledge.

## 2.2. Provision for learning difficulties and/or disabilities

Legislation, reform programmes and agendas together with research relevant to provision for LLDDs in FE were examined.

### 2.2.1. Legislation, reform programmes, agendas and research

FE is the main provider of post 16 learning for LLDDs; in 2003/4 there were nearly 400,000 learners who declared themselves as having a LDD, from over three million learners who attended FE colleges (The Foster Report DfES 2005a sec. 2.1.14 p.5). The number and percentage of LLDDs has grown over the years, in 2011/12 there were 563,500 LLDDs in the FE and Skills sector in England, comprising 13.4 per cent of all learners (Data Service 2013d) (**Table 1**). Learners with learning difficulties (LLD) accounted for 7.6 per cent of learners, and those with dyslexia represented the largest in number, 42.9%. The percentage in Yorkshire and The Humber region was slightly higher (Data Service 2013c).

**Table 1** Number of learners FE and Skills Sector, LLDD, LLD, Dyslexia (2011/12)

(Source: Data Service 2013b, c, d)

	Total learners (% total learners in FE & Skills)	LLDDs	Learners with Learning Difficulty (LLD)	Learners with dyslexia	Learners with dyslexia
FE and Skills Sector (% total learners)	4,216,600	563,500 (13.4%)	322,600 (7.6%)	138,500 (3.3% total FE & Skills)	42.9% total LLD
GFE and Tertiary colleges	2,077,720 (49.3%)				
Yorkshire and The Humber (% total learners)	543,300 (12.9%)		41,620 (7.7%)	18,450 (3.4% total FE & Skills))	44.3% total LLD

A search of relevant legislation and reports revealed some key themes: definition of disability; inclusion; individual needs of learners; collaboration; quality provision; and learner voice.

#### **2.2.1.1. Definition of disability**

The Further and Higher Education (FHE) Act (HMSO 1992) (Department for Education (DfE)) first introduced the descriptor 'students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities'. It defines a learner with a disability as having:

“... a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of persons of his age or he has a disability which either prevents or hinders him from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided by institutions within the further education sector for persons of his age” (HMSO 1992 p.1).

The 'Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act' (ASCLA) (HMSO 2009, Chapter 22 Part 2, sec.41: 6) amended the last part of this definition to “... institutions providing education or training for persons who are over compulsory school age.” The ASCLA (HMSO 2009, Ch. 22, Part 2, sec.41: 3) states that the FEFC shall “have regard to ... any learning difficulties the persons may have” in the course of carrying out its general duties to provide full-time and part-time education.

The Equality Act (HMSO 2010, Part 2, Ch.1, 6) states that a person has a disability if:

- The person has a physical or mental impairment, and
- The impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations Enable. 2008 Article 1) mentions barriers to participation. It states that:

“Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (United Nations Enable Article 1).

Dyslexia is regarded as a disability and hidden impairment (DDA HMSO 1995 Sch.1). Since the Tomlinson Report (FEFC 1996) it is also referred to under the umbrella term of 'specific learning difficulty'. This will be discussed further in Sections 2.3.2.1, 2.3.2.2.

### 2.2.1.2. Disability Equality

The DDA (HMSO 1995) placed requirements on employers and service providers not to discriminate against disabled people. The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) (HMSO 2001) extended the DDA (HMSO 1995) to education. Colleges and LEAs have legal responsibilities not to treat disabled learners less favourably for a reason related to their disability and to provide reasonable adjustments for them (SENDA part 4).

The DDA (HMSO 2005) amended the 1995 Act and included a duty on public sector authorities to promote disability equality. The disability equality duty (DED) includes a general and a specific duty. There is a *general duty* to eliminate discrimination and harassment, promote equality of opportunity, and take into account people's disabilities. Positive attitudes towards disabled people should be promoted and their participation in public life encouraged (HMSO 2005, DDA, Chapter 13 sec.3: 49A). FE institutions have a duty to take reasonable steps to encourage students to disclose a disability (**Appendix 3**, Sections 5.2, 5.12.1, 6.2, 8.2). They also have a *specific* duty to draw up and implement a *disability equality scheme* with a number of key themes (Disability Rights Commission (DRC) 2005, Ch.3; 2007a, b; Goddard 2005):

- Involving disabled people - in producing the scheme and developing the action plan.
- Impact assessment - measurement and assessment of the impact of policies and practices on equality for disabled people.
- Data collection and evidence base - colleges need to build up and develop a suitable evidence base, gather and analyse evidence to inform their actions and track progress. Qualitative and quantitative data should be obtained from different sources, such as, retention figures, satisfaction surveys, focus groups, assessments etc.
- The effect of policies and procedures on recruitment and retention, educational opportunities and achievement, and services - data should be gathered on the views of disabled service users, gaps in service provision identified and improvements made.

The DRC (2005 Appendix E, p.126), (2007a p.14) points out that the DED supports the social model of disability (Sections 2.2.1.3, 2.3.2.3), stating in their definition that:

“The poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion experienced by many disabled people is not the inevitable result of their impairments or medical health conditions, but rather stems from attitudinal and environmental barriers” (2005 Appendix E, p.126, 2007a p.14).

In order for people with disabilities to participate fully and effectively, on an equal basis with others, it is necessary to eliminate all barriers. The whole organisation needs to be involved in bringing about change in practices, procedures, plans and policies, driven forward by senior managers (DRC 2007a, sec.2). The present study takes into consideration the key themes in the disability equality scheme, and its recommendations for both qualitative and quantitative research methods, as well as collection of the views of service users, attempting to identify gaps in provision and to suggest improvements.

### **2.2.1.3. Inclusion**

The Salamanca Statement on SEN Education by UNESCO (Framework For Action on Special Needs Education, 1994 Introduction, point 3, p.6) has greatly influenced inclusive practise by proposing that students with SEN be educated together with the majority, helping to develop an inclusive society. Its proposals have been taken on board by FE reports. The National Foundation for Education Research (NFER) (1994) suggested the need to provide support in inclusive environments for students with LDDs in FE, identifying the importance of assessment, learning support, professional development, monitoring and evaluation, quality and achievement, transition arrangements and interagency collaboration. The NFER review led to the Tomlinson Report 'Inclusive Learning' (FEFC 1996) which set out to reconceptualise provision for students with LDDs in order to embrace them "fully and unequivocally within the general approach to learning appropriate for all students" (pp.1-2).

An inclusive learning approach, advocated by the Tomlinson Report, involved a move away from the 'medical model' of disability (Section 2.3.2.3) that had focussed on the disability or deficit itself, viewing the difficulty as within the individual and concentrating on the "location and social aspects of a student's educational experience" (Tomlinson Report FEFC 1996 sec. 2.15). Some may have been excluded from education completely or isolated within it, in separate schools or classes. In contrast, inclusive learning concentrated on the quality of learning, with a shift of responsibility from the student to the college and teachers, who needed to focus on analysing how students learn, through observation, skilled assessment and active intervention (Tomlinson Report FEFC 1996 sec. 2.13). This constituted a move towards a social model of disability and a focus on the environment (Section 2.3.2.3). All students were seen as in need of an individual learning environment that matched their requirements. The term 'learning environment' was used as it came near to the idea of a 'learning eco-system' (Tomlinson Report FEFC 1996 sec. 2.7). There was an emphasis on all students being actively included and fully engaged in

their learning. According to the Tomlinson Report (FEFC 1996 sec. 2.3) 'inclusive learning' means "the greatest degree of match or fit between the individual learner's requirements and the provision that is made for them."

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations Enable 2008 Article 24.1) stresses the need to "ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning". This should aim at:

- a. The full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity;
- b. The development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential;
- c. Enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society" (United Nations Enable Article 24.1).

Article 24.2 states that there is a need to provide "reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements" including effective individualized support in "environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion." 'Reasonable accommodation' refers to modification and adjustments that are necessary and appropriate, without imposing an undue burden. The promotion of 'Universal design' is encouraged (Section 2.7.1.6), this is defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations Enable 2008 Article 2) as "the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design". The preferred term in the United Kingdom (UK) is 'inclusive design' (Centre for Education in the Built Environment (CEBE) 2001).

The report 'Dyslexia in Europe: A pan-European Survey' by Györfi and Smythe (2010) recommends an inclusive dyslexia-friendly approach throughout education, embedded in anti-discrimination policy and processes, with trained staff and accessible learning materials. They propose the need for raising community awareness of dyslexia stating that "social inclusion is not about helping an individual, it is about an individual being able to maintain their rightful place within society" (p.10).

#### **2.2.1.4. Individual needs of learners**

People with LDDs should be seen first and foremost as *learners* (Tomlinson Report FEFC 1996). The focus must be on the learning organisation's capacity to understand and respond to the needs of the individual learner (Tomlinson Report FEFC 1996; Little Report 'Through Inclusion to Excellence' LSC 2005b), in order to achieve a society in which all disabled persons can participate fully as equal citizens (Little Report LSC 2005b).

The Tomlinson Report (FEFC 1996) suggests redesigning the processes of learning, assessment and organisation so as to fit the objectives and learning styles of the students, opening up opportunities for those whose disability means that they learn differently from others. This may mean introducing new content into courses, or differentiated access to the same content, or both. Support for learning is seen as an essential component of the individual learning environment for many students and is envisaged as consisting of: an individual learning programme; a curriculum that promotes progress in learning; effective teaching; entry and exit procedures, for example, initial assessment, counselling and guidance; opportunities for students to discuss and manage their own learning; support for learning; learner support, for example, crèche; procedures for assessing, recording and accrediting achievement; learning materials and resources; technical aids and equipment; learning technology; trained staff; physical surroundings, for example, teaching rooms, canteen, library (Tomlinson Report FEFC 1996 sec.2.7).

The FE White paper (DfES 2006 Sec.4.5 p.46) states that: "Central to ensuring a high quality, personalised experience for all learners will be support for colleges and providers to develop better teaching and learning practice." It proposes teaching and learning more tailored to individual needs with a range of practices to personalise learning, in order to make the system as a whole more capable of responding to individual needs and aspirations. These include: effective use of data to track achievement; individual target setting; linking together teaching and pastoral systems to identify problems and intervene fast. At the heart of personalisation is a proper assessment of the needs of learners at the start of their programme, followed by a learning plan to: reflect the identified needs; shape the teaching and support delivered; and inform decisions to bring in help from other agencies. The FE White paper (DfES 2006) wants all students in FE to become expert learners by developing a range of effective learning styles in order to get the most from their programme and to take responsibility for managing their own learning. The Little report (LSC 2005b p.24) mentions inspection evidence of good practice for learners with dyslexia, in FE Colleges and Adult and Community Learning, which states that support "is

available at all levels and taught by specialists who focus on enabling learners to develop strategies for themselves.”

The issue of learning styles has been disputed. A report by Coffield *et al.* (Learning and Skills Research Centre (LSRC) 2004) provides an alternative view and suggests that the research evidence in favour of metacognition and assessment for learning is more robust and extensive than that on learning styles (p.135). It defines metacognition as “awareness and conscious use of the psychological processes involved in perception, memory, thinking and learning” (p.171). The LSRC report (2004) refers to research by Marzano (1998), who found that:

“Approaches which were directed at the metacognitive level of setting goals, choosing appropriate strategies and monitoring progress are more effective in improving knowledge outcomes than those which simply aim to engage learners at the level of presenting information for understanding and use” (p. 136).

McLoughlin, Leather and Stringer (2003) suggest that people with dyslexia do not appear to automatically develop metacognitive skills. They need help with understanding the nature of their skills, abilities and areas of weakness, to develop independent learning skills. The Rose Review (Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) 2009) supports the need for metacognition.

The LSRC report (2004 p.135) further mentions research on assessment by Black and William (1998a, b) who concluded, “innovations which include strengthening the practice of formative assessment produce significant, and often substantial, learning gains” (Black and William 1998b, p.3-4). Formative assessment is defined by the LSRC as “evaluation carried out in the course of an activity in such a way that the information obtained is used to improve learning and/or instruction” (p.171) (Section 2.7.1.7).

#### **2.2.1.5. Collaboration**

The Tomlinson Report (FEFC 1996) envisaged the FE sector as working in conjunction with other providers to ensure a pattern of provision that maximises participation. The importance of interagency collaboration has been emphasised by a number of reports (NFER Review 1994; Foster Report DfES 2005a; Agenda for Change LSC 2005a; Little Report LSC 2005b; FE White Paper DfES 2006; LSC Report 2006). The Little Report (LSC 2005b) recommends the development of a national strategy for the regional/local

delivery of provision for LLDDs across the post-16 learning and skills sector that is high quality, learner-centred and cost effective, through collaboration with partners. The needs of the individual with a learning disability should be considered in a holistic way through multi-agency working.

#### **2.2.1.6. Quality provision for all**

Access to a better choice of high quality provision to meet the needs of LLDDs is emphasised (The Foster Report DfES 2005a) as well as a high quality, personalised experience for all learners (FE White Paper DfES 2006). The Little Report (LSC 2005b) suggests that quality provision should be measured by three simple measures:

- Consistent and effective learner assessment processes that are rigorous, fit for purpose and match learners' support requirement, with a multi-agency approach
- Effective learning, teaching and support which motivates and engages both learners and tutors in a two-way process
- Effective outcomes for individual learners and clear progression

The proposed measures for achieving higher standards for LLDDs (LSC 2005b) are supported by other reports which suggest the need for: assessment (NFER Review 1994; Tomlinson Report FEFC 1996; FE White Paper DfES 2006); improved teaching, learning and support (Tomlinson Report FEFC 1996; FE White Paper DfES 2006); improved transition arrangements (NFER Review 1994) and planning, both into FE and training and into employment (FE White Paper DfES 2006; LSC Report 2006), with the hope of making learning support continuous and seamless across different institutions (FE White Paper DfES 2006). The Little report (LSC 2005b) stresses the need for clear means to examine the quality of the learning experience of learners, such as developments in value added and distance travelled measures, which measure how much progress individual learners have made by examining their prior educational attainment against their final achievement. Effective use of data to track achievement is emphasised (FE White Paper DfES 2006).

A national strategy for LSC-funded provision for LLDDs across the FE system is provided by the LSC Report 'Learning for Living and Work' (LSC 2006), implementing the vision of the Little Report (LSC 2005b). It sets out a vision of learning for living and work (Sections 15-16 pp.9-10), which includes: equity and parity of experience for all learners; person-centred learning (UNESCO 1994; LSRC 2006); based on the principles of inclusive learning; accessible local and regional provision; challenging, quality programmes for all;

performance measures for providers in supporting learners to achieve their learning aims; recognition of learner achievement; an increased proportion of learners that contribute to LSC targets; improved progression to employment; collaboration and joint funding of programmes; overcoming barriers to accessing appropriate learning; contribution by all delivery partners to delivery of provision; a culture in which all delivery partners fully value and recognise the range and diversity of learners.

#### **2.2.1.7. Learner voice**

Hearing the 'learner voice' is vitally important and has been consistently emphasised in the literature. Learners should be seen as equal and active partners in the learning process (LSRC 2006), the aim is not simply for students to "take part" in further education but "to be actively included and fully engaged in their learning" (Tomlinson Report FEFC 1996 Ch.2 sec.2.3 pp.25-26). College strategies, policies, processes and plans need to be in place, which not only take into account the views of learners with LLDDs, but are also informed by this group (LSC 2006). Persons with disabilities should be consulted and involved in planning and evaluating service provision and issues relating to them (DDA HMSO 2005; United Nations Enable 2008) (Section 2.2.1.2). Colleges need to improve the way they engage and listen to learners, and act on the outcomes (The Foster Report DfES 2005a). The report recommends that FE colleges should be required to: collect learners' views in a consistent and systematic manner as a key way to improving college provision; consult learners on major issues impacting on their learning and the learner environment; publish annually this information in a learner report, together with their plans for addressing the issues.

The Little Report (LSC 2005b) was informed by direct feedback from learners and stresses the importance of 'listening to learners'. It found that learners gave great emphasis to the provision of additional learning support and were very clear that the learning programme had helped them to develop, mature and progress. It supports the view that listening to learners is a process that is not sufficiently utilised, recommending more effective means of capturing and taking account of the views and experiences of people with LDDs. It suggests the creation of a forum for learners as well as qualitative research on the learner experience. This is a point that was taken up for the present research, where it was considered important to elicit the views of learners through qualitative methods.

## **2.2.2. Summary**

Legislation and reform programmes over the last few years have ensured that provision for students with LLDDs is embraced within the general approach to learning for all students, as part of an inclusion agenda. An inclusive learning approach with a range of practices to personalise learning should be established, to make FE colleges more capable of responding to individual needs and aspirations, with high quality, innovative and collaborative provision. This should include: consistent and effective learner assessment processes, effective learning, teaching, support, and outcomes, and transition planning. Support for learners with specific needs, such as dyslexia, should be available at all levels and taught by specialists who focus on enabling learners to develop strategies for themselves. Engaging and listening to learners with LLDDs, and acting on the outcomes are paramount. People with disabilities need to be involved in planning and evaluating service provision.

## **2.3. Conceptualisation and definitions of dyslexia**

In order to address the question of how best to identify and provide for adult learners with dyslexia it is important to understand the key concepts and theories associated with it. This will assist with identification and assessment as well as the provision of appropriate support. The main issues and debates pertaining to the term dyslexia and its current definitions will first be explored in order to identify those relevant to adult learners.

### **2.3.1. Definitions of dyslexia**

#### **2.3.1.1. Term 'dyslexia'**

The word 'dyslexia' comes from the Greek and means 'difficulty with words'. Wagner (1973 p.59) points out that the word 'dyslexia' (Dyslexie) was first coined by Berlin (1887), an ophthalmologist, to imply a condition or symptom, which has as its characteristic a difficulty with reading, and a cause linked with the brain. Some researchers suggest that the use of the term dyslexia is not helpful (Pool 2003; Elliott 2005a, b), as difficulties are wide ranging. It is sometimes avoided in educational practice due to the risks of unequal distribution of public resources (Elbeheri and Everatt 2009), with no reason seen for differentiating between those with dyslexia and other poor readers (Siegel 1992; Elliott 2005a). Nicolson (2001 p.5) suggests that the advantage of the label 'dyslexia' is that it has "... no intrinsic meaning, for it does not in itself provide information on causes or whether it describes visual, phonological, motor or any combination." There is a lack of agreement on a definition of dyslexia (Elliott 2005a; Elbeheri and Everatt 2009) and it has

been considered an enigma (Reid and Fawcett 2004 p.7). Poole (2003) would prefer to replace a definition with wider assessment that considers the whole life-context of the learner in an ecological environment (Sections 2.2.1.3, 2.3.2.3), as identified by Bronfenbrenner (1979). In order to arrive at a practical method of identification and assessment there is a need to integrate accepted concepts, theories and definitions (Kavale 2005) (Section 2.3.2.1).

### **2.3.1.2. Definitions**

Due to the constraints of the present study, a broad understanding of the main issues, concerning definitions of dyslexia, will be presented, with an emphasis on dyslexia in adults. A Causal Modelling Framework (Frith 1997) involves three levels of description: Biological (genetics and neurology); Cognitive (information processing - specific deficit<sup>2</sup>); Behavioural (primary characteristics such as reading, spelling, and specific impairments). Frith (1999, 2002) and Snowling (2005) suggest using the term dyslexia only when referring to a neuro-developmental disorder, implying a causal chain from biology to behaviour. The environment influences the causal pathway at all levels, for example, teaching, family, culture and socio-economic factors, a point recognised by a number of researchers (Poole 2003; Snowling 2005; Pennington 2009; Rose DCSF 2009).

The causal modelling approach has been disputed (Muter 2013) with recent neuroscience research evidence contradicting a simple modular 'cause and effect' way of brain operation (Sections 2.3.2.1, 2.3.2.3). For the purpose of exploring current definitions it was deemed useful to consider these in behavioural, cognitive and biological terms.

### **Behavioural definitions - the discrepancy debate**

Historically, symptom definitions have been based on observed behaviour such as performance on reading, spelling and Intelligence Quotient (IQ) tests, and a discrepancy between test scores. The World Health Organisation (WHO) in the ICD-10 Classification of Mental and Behavioural Disorders (2011) supports this view. Developmental dyslexia is mentioned as a specific reading disorder under the umbrella term of 'specific developmental disorders of scholastic skills' (SDDSS). They define a specific reading disorder as:

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<sup>2</sup> Terms such as 'deficit' and 'impairment' have been linked to a medical or deficit model of thinking, which looks at factors within a person, for explanations (Section 2.2.1.3, 2.3.2.3). Frith (2002, p.49) explains their use in causal modelling, "with reference to normative function, i.e. what is shown by the majority of people in the same cultural context" without prejudice to value. The terms are used to discuss possible causes of persistent impairments that impact on the affected person's daily life.

“a specific and significant impairment in the development of reading skills, which is not solely accounted for by mental age, visual acuity problems, or inadequate schooling. Reading comprehension skill, reading word recognition, oral reading skill, and performance of tasks requiring reading may all be affected” (WHO ICD-10 section F81.0 p.192)

Reading performance should be significantly below the level expected with regard to age, general intelligence, and school placement. Basic requirements for diagnosis include a clinically significant degree of impairment in skills, which must be: specific, as measured by appropriate, individually administered standardized tests of achievement and IQ; and developmental, present during the early years of schooling. The difficulties must not be due to external factors or uncorrected visual or hearing impairments.

Measures of IQ are considered an important element of the assessment and diagnosis of dyslexia, by a number of researchers (Turner and Nicholas 2000; Stein 2001; Thomson 2001). However, some argue that IQ-attainment discrepancy should not be the sole determining criterion for identification and diagnosis (Turner 1997; Mather 1998; Frith 1999, 2002). There are issues about how the discrepancy should be measured and calculated and how much discrepancy constitutes a meaningful discrepancy (Siegel 1992)<sup>3</sup>. McLoughlin, Leather and Stringer (2003) suggest that discrepancy definitions are inappropriate for adults, as obvious discrepancies tend to diminish, as people get older, however, they acknowledge use of the word ‘discrepancy’ in the process of identification due to inconsistencies in performance. Siegel (1992) argues that IQ measures favour diagnosis in more intelligent people and introduce a bias against diagnosing dyslexia in the less able. There is clear evidence that dyslexia occurs independently of intelligence (Durham LSC 2004) and there is support for the view that it occurs across the range of intellectual abilities (Reason 2003; Rose DCSF 2009). This has implications for assessment and provision in FE, which encompasses a wide variety of abilities.

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<sup>3</sup> A discrepancy analysis formula (Reynolds 1990) can be used to identify a significant discrepancy in test scores. According to Wagner, Torgesen and Rashotte (1999, p. 53-54) severe discrepancies worthy of clinical diagnosis occur “when one standard score is below average or the other is average or above, or where both standard scores are in the below average range”. A discrepancy is found where two standard deviations (SDs) (30 points difference) or more exists between two tests. A ‘real’ difference between two test scores is needed, where the margins of error of confidence intervals are clear of each other and do not overlap.

### **Cognitive and biological aspects**

According to Morgan and Klein (2001) almost all definitions are based on identifying one or more deficits in cognitive skills. Morton (2004 p.199) states, "True dyslexia is defined by a cognitive deficit... and has a biological origin". The WHO (2011) also refers to possible cognitive and biological causes of developmental dyslexia. Section F81 suggests that SDDSS:

"...are thought to stem from abnormalities in cognitive processing that derive largely from some type of biological dysfunction" (WHO ICD-10 section F81 p.188).

The WHO (2011) suggests that spelling difficulties can also be present and often remain into adolescence (p.192). It points out that both reading and spelling problems may derive in part from impairment in phonological analysis, a view held by most researchers (Frith (2002). There is evidence that phonological difficulties continue into adulthood (Paulesu *et al.* 1996; Beaton, McDougall, and Singleton 1997; Bishop and Snowling 2004; Durham LSC 2004), and could account for other symptoms (Rack *et al.* 1994; Share 1995; Rack 1997). Researchers who prefer to concentrate on cognitive processes, on strengths and weaknesses include: Feuerstein *et al.* (1981), Frith (1997), Snowling (2000), Reason (2003), Bishop and Snowling (2004), with positive diagnostic indicators suggested (Snowling 2000).

### **Educational definitions**

Reason (2003) states that in educational terminology dyslexia is shorthand for the range of learning difficulties that need to be noticed and acknowledged, for suitable educational action to take place. A working definition of dyslexia by the British Psychological Society (BPS) (Reason *et al.* 1999) refers to identification and intervention:

"Dyslexia is evident when accurate fluent word reading and/or spelling develops incompletely or with great difficulty. This focuses on literacy learning at the "word level" and implies that the problem is severe and persistent despite appropriate learning opportunities. It provides the basis for a staged process of assessment through teaching" (p.18).

This definition does not rely on causal factors; it is not based on IQ discrepancies and is 'culture-fair' (Morgan and Klein 2001). It eliminates exclusionary criteria and reliance on any one theoretical explanation. Reason (2002) argues that it enables early identification, so needs can be responded to, without waiting for failure or formal labels of disability.

Many definitions of dyslexia now include accuracy and fluency components, with a developmental aspect (Siegel and Smythe 2005), for example, the working definition by Rose (DCSF 2009), which includes symptoms, causes and prognosis (Tønnessen 1995); it recognises dyslexia as a continuum, occurring across the range of intellectual abilities. Rose (DCSF 2009 p.10) states that:

- “Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling.
- Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed.
- Dyslexia occurs across the range of intellectual abilities.
- It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut-off points.
- Co-occurring difficulties may be seen in aspects of language, motor co-ordination, mental calculation, concentration and personal organisation, but these are not, by themselves, markers of dyslexia.
- A good indication of the severity and persistence of dyslexic difficulties can be gained by examining how the individual responds or has responded to well founded intervention” (p.10).

The British Dyslexia Association (BDA) (2012a) definition starts with describing symptoms and then causes, ending with a suggestion as to intervention, it is not related to one age group as it mentions the life-long aspect:

“Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty that mainly affects the development of literacy and language related skills. It is likely to be present at birth and to be life-long in its effects. It is characterised by difficulties with phonological processing, rapid naming, working memory, processing speed, and the automatic development of skills that may not match up to an individual’s other cognitive abilities. It tends to be resistant to conventional teaching methods, but its effect can be mitigated by appropriately specific intervention, including the application of information technology and supportive counseling” (BDA 2012a).

McLoughlin (2004 p.179) argues that the term ‘learning difficulty’ is inappropriate for many adults with dyslexia as theirs is a “performance difficulty” rather than a learning difficulty. He suggests that a description in terms of information processing would be more helpful to employers. This is a point taken up by the BDA (2012a) Code of Practice for Employers.

Definitions of dyslexia support the view that there is a broad range of difficulties associated with literacy and learning but these are only part of the overall picture (Reid 2002).

Individual differences will be present with positive attributes. Research also suggests that dyslexia exists in literate adults and there is a need for recognition of problems that go beyond literacy. Rack (1997) refers to phonological processing as *narrowly defined* dyslexia (developmental phonological dyslexia), however he found that some adults displayed weaknesses in visual-motor co-ordination, suggesting a broader concept of dyslexia (*broadly defined* dyslexia).

### **Adult dyslexia**

There has been little attempt to acknowledge real differences between children and adults (McLoughlin, Fitzgibbon and Young 1994; Reiff, Gerber and Ginsberg 1997; Morgan and Klein 2001). Adult dyslexia should be studied as a distinct condition and the different needs of adults acknowledged (McLoughlin, Fitzgibbon and Young 1994). Developmental disorders, such as dyslexia, are dynamic, behavioural manifestations change with time, and in different contexts (Snowling 2000, 2005; Frith 2002; Ramus *et al.* 2003; McLoughlin 2005). Pennington (2009) argues that brain development is an open process and continues throughout a person's lifespan. Different symptoms emerge as different development tasks are encountered. Rack (1997 p.75) supports the notion of a life-long "dyslexia syndrome" with underlying cognitive strengths and weaknesses (Section 2.3.2.2).

Dyslexia in adults affects the individual's ability to learn in the conventional way and concerns the effective processing of information in general (Jameson 2001; Reid and Kirk 2001), with difficulties in short-term memory (Morgan and Klein 2001) and working memory (Rack 1997; County Durham LSC 2004). This may affect speed of processing (Reid and Kirk 2001), automaticity (Durham LSC 2004), and sometimes visual processing (Durham LSC 2004). It may cause organisational difficulties and have implications for how material is presented, learnt and recalled. Snowling *et al.* (1997) suggest that verbal short-term memory difficulties characterize adults with dyslexia, even when their reading problems are fully compensated (Paulesu *et al.* 1996) (Section 2.3.2.3).

Brayton (1997) found that FE students identified four major problem areas: spelling, writing, reading and mathematics. Other research supports this finding and identifies a wider range of difficulties: writing and spelling (Singleton 1991; Klein 1992; Everatt 1997; WHO 2011); written expression (Morgan and Klein 2001); numeracy (Jameson 2001); organisation (Morgan and Klein 2001); personal organisation (Jameson 2001); planning

skills (Jameson 2001; Morgan and Klein 2001); social skills (Jameson 2001); and co-ordination (Jameson 2001). Reading problems may still persist, especially speeded non-word reading and naming under conflict situations (Everatt 1997). Rose (DCSF 2009) points out that slow reading and idiosyncratic spelling may continue throughout life.

Reid and Kirk (2001 p.6) suggest that dyslexia in adults should be viewed in a “functional and situational manner, which includes literacy, communication skills, visual skills, processing speed and self-esteem.” McLoughlin, Fitzgibbon and Young (1994) distinguish between *primary* features, which may stem from deficits in working memory and *secondary* problems with emotional adjustment and self-esteem, resulting from years of frustration and failure. Rack (1997 p.68) states that “a secondary symptom arises as a consequence of the primary difficulty and it may go on to complicate the primary ‘cause’ or mask its nature.” Secondary symptoms may arise with increasing age; the more secondary difficulties there are the harder it becomes to detect the dyslexia (Rack 1997). It is suggested that definitions of dyslexia need to be broader and remain flexible in order to adequately encompass the difficulties seen in adults (Rack 1997; Morgan and Klein 2001). This is a relevant viewpoint for the purposes of the present research, which favours the definition by the BDA (2012a).

### **2.3.1.3. Summary of definitions**

Historically, definitions of dyslexia have included observed behaviour such as performance on reading, spelling and IQ tests, and differences between them. Recent definitions refer to the symptom, the causality, and prognosis, recognising dyslexia as a continuum, occurring across the range of intellectual abilities. Most researchers tend to agree that dyslexia is a difficulty with literacy and a phonological disorder. Others argue that difficulties in adults go beyond literacy. Almost all definitions are based on identifying one or more deficits in cognitive skills, with a biological origin. In order to adequately encompass the symptoms in adults it is argued that definitions of dyslexia need to be broader and remain flexible awaiting further research. This broader perspective is favoured for the purpose of this study.

## **2.3.2. Concepts and Theories of dyslexia**

### **2.3.2.1. Introduction**

It is acknowledged that a range of theories needs to be considered in order to understand the causes of dyslexia (Reid and Fawcett 2004 p.4). Neuroscience research has recently

influenced thinking about SpLDs (which includes dyslexia)<sup>4</sup>, with a move away from a single deficit<sup>5</sup> model to multiple deficit models of learning disorders (Pennington 2009; Muter 2011, 2013) (Section 2.3.2.3). Muter (2013 p.14) points out that this change “has considerable implications for the assessment, treatment and general management of these difficulties”. Kavale (2005) talks about the ‘multifaceted’ nature of Specific Learning Disability (SLD) and suggests an approach which:

“integrates accepted concepts about SLD with theories about cognitive and academic functioning to generate a comprehensive and systematic assessment framework that provides an inherently practical method for SLD identification” (p.558).

The main concepts and theories of dyslexia will be examined in order to consider a practical method for identification and assessment (Section 2.7.1.7), as well as the provision of appropriate support, as specified in the research aims and questions. The constraints of the present study prevent going into each in detail.

### **2.3.2.2. Concepts of dyslexia**

There are different views on how concepts of dyslexia should be modelled. Siegel and Smythe (2005) suggest using what Wittgenstein refers to as family resemblances, with a network of overlapping and criss-crossing similarities. Wittgenstein (1978 section 66, 67, p.32e) compares this to resemblances in a family, between its members, for example: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. He also uses the analogy of number, as different numbers form a family and can have direct and indirect relationships with each other; he suggests that such a concept can be extended, as in spinning a thread, whose strength lies in the continuous overlapping of many fibres. He points out that it can be difficult to define boundaries of concepts. We can see what is common to concepts but they can have blurred edges and one person’s boundary is not the same as another person’s but akin to it (section 76).

In contrast, Rice and Brooks (National Research and Development Centre (NRDC) 2004) are critical of the notion of ‘overlapping categories’ and suggest that individual differences occur along many dimensions, a view supported by Rack, Snowling and Olson (1992) and

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<sup>4</sup> The British Psychological Society (BPS) (Reason *et al.* 1999 Appendix B p.95) proposed using the word ‘dyslexia’ either “synonymously with ‘specific learning difficulties’ or as a subset of ‘specific learning difficulties’ concerned with literacy”.

<sup>5</sup> The original word ‘deficit’ used by many researchers will be adhered to (see footnote Section 2.3.1.2), although this has been disputed (Herrington 2005b), with the term ‘differences’ preferred.

Reason (2002). Dyslexia is also thought of as a continuum from mild to severe (Turner 1997; Rose DCSF 2009), or as a syndrome (Miles 1995; Rack 1997; Turner 1997; Frith 2002), “a combination of signs and/or symptoms that forms a distinct clinical picture indicative of a particular disorder” (Oxford Concise Medical Dictionary) (Oxford University Press 2003). Backhouse (2005) argues against the concept of a ‘pure’ syndrome due to the co-morbidity of difficulties, such as dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia (Section 2.3.2.3), and prefers to use the concept of ‘specific learning difficulties’ (Sections 2.2.1.1, 2.3.2.1). Muter (2011 p.8) suggests that “co-morbidity with other disorders is the rule rather than the exception” and supports the fact that these occur along a dimension of severity. Assessment needs to consider the dimensional/continuity factor, which explains the extent of the impairment, as well as co-occurring difficulties (Muter 2011). In order to assess and identify causes, it is important to understand the development of literacy skills and cognitive functions (Backhouse 2005).

### **2.3.2.3. Theories of dyslexia**

The main cognitive and biological theories will be examined, with particular reference to the difficulties mentioned in the BDA definition (BDA 2012a) and those experienced by adults, discussed in the previous section (Section 2.3.1.2), as well as alternative theories that have implications for adult learners with dyslexia. The main hypotheses or theoretical approaches include: *cognitive* - phonological delay/deficit, working memory, temporal processing, skill automatisisation, and visual processing; *biological* - genetic linkage theory, language areas of the brain, cerebellar impairment/deficit hypothesis, magnocellular/transient systems; *social interactive theory*.

#### **Cognitive theories**

The ***Phonological Delay/Deficit Hypothesis***: provides the main focus because of the “broad empirical support that it commands” (BPS1999 p.44). Many researchers consider phonological processing difficulties as fundamental to dyslexia, but views on their causes vary (DfES 2004a). Phonological processing is the way that phonemes, or sounds in words, are processed. A cognitive level weakness can affect the acquisition of literacy skills (Frith 1997). Despite adequate hearing, individuals may have difficulty with phonological awareness, identifying, sequencing and reproducing sounds within a word. Weaknesses could include rhyme, sound blending and non-word repetition. Other short-term verbal memory tasks may be affected, as they are dependent on the processing of incoming verbal information, by phonological storage and retrieval. Theorists include Paulesu *et al.* (1996), Shaywitz (1996), Frith (1997, 1999), Goswami (1997), Stackhouse

and Wells (1999), Snowling (2000), Morton (2004), Szenkovits and Ramus (2005). Ramus *et al.* (2003) challenge the phonological theory of dyslexia, as it does not explain sensory (auditory, visual), motor or learning processes in individuals with dyslexia, with difficulties more wide-ranging. Research by Ramus *et al.* (2003), however, indicates that phonological deficit occurs without auditory, visual and motor impairments.

**Working Memory Hypothesis theory** points to an inefficient working memory as an underlying causal factor in dyslexia. There are differences between working memory and short-term memory (STM): “working memory is more dynamic and focuses on processing and storage demands whereas STM focuses on storage demands” (BPS 1999 p.33-34). Rack (1994) sees STM difficulties are one of the main characteristics of developmental dyslexia. STM and phonological processing difficulties at the cognitive level can manifest as memory problems and difficulty with reading, phonological tasks, spoonerisms and naming, at the behaviour level (Section 2.3.1.2). Researchers include McLoughlin, Fitzgibbon and Young (1994), McLoughlin, Leather and Stringer (2003), Mortimore (2003).

**Temporal Processing Hypothesis** or timing difficulties theories focus on speed of processing and suggest that a specific brain circuit (magnocellular), that handles rapidly flowing auditory information, may be defective, accounting for dyslexia (Miller and Tallal 1995; Tallal *et al.* 1997). Naming speed can also be affected (Wolf 1996; Wolf and O’Brien 2001). Adults with dyslexia may continue to experience a difficulty with information processing, speed of processing and slow naming speed (Section 2.3.1.2). Ramus *et al.* (2003) point out inconsistencies in research with regard to rapid auditory processing. It is also argued that phonological deficits are not caused by temporal or auditory deficits (Share *et al.* 2002). On the other hand, Ramus *et al.* (2003) found that phonological skills were significantly affected by auditory performance.

**Skill Automatisation Hypothesis:** Automaticity is the ability to automatically perform an action without having to focus on it (Mortimore 2003). Individuals with dyslexia, who lack automaticity, especially in literacy and numeracy skills, may have difficulty carrying out new or complex tasks due to processing overload. It may affect a wide range of skills, including motor skills (Fawcett and Nicolson 2001). There can be difficulties with phonological processing, balance and time estimation (Nicolson and Fawcett 1995).

**Visual Processing Hypothesis theory** concerns the processing of fast-incoming sensory information and may account for visual difficulties in some individuals with dyslexia,

resulting in visual confusion of letter order, leading to a weakness in memory for the visual form of words (Stein and Walsh 1997, Stein, Talcott and Witton 2001). Difficulties are linked to disruption in the magnocellular pathway in the brain. *Visual distractions* theory involves perceptual distortions of text or excessive glare (scotopic sensitivity or Irlen syndrome), which can be reduced by using a particular page colour, tinted overlays or Irlen lenses (Irlen 1991; Wilkins 1995). *Visual tracking theory* suggests a high incidence of right to left tracking in individuals with dyslexia, who may have difficulty reading, which involves left-to-right tracking (Pavlidis 1990). Ramus *et al.* (2003) identify inconsistencies in research on visual deficit, with other stimuli involved as well as the magnocellular system.

### **Biological theories**

***Genetic linkage theories*** suggest that certain genes can make some individuals more vulnerable to dyslexia, and it can run in families. Researchers have located gene markers for dyslexia on particular chromosomes (Fisher *et al.* 1999; Pennington 1999; Grigorenko 2001). Family history has been viewed as a risk factor rather than a cause of dyslexia (Morris 2005), and is considered during an initial interview with learners (Section 2.7.1.7).

***The language areas of the brain:*** Research indicates differences in the structure of the brains of individuals with dyslexia, showing an atypical symmetry, with smaller language areas (Frith 1997; Brunswick *et al.* 1999; Galaburda 1999; Paulesu *et al.* 2001). People with dyslexia tend to have a 'processing style' that uses the right hemisphere (Galaburda 1999), and many experience their dyslexia as a difference in how they think and learn (DfES 2004a). They may be holistic thinkers who benefit most from 'right brain' approaches to learning and teaching, with skills in creativity and visual thinking, putting them at an advantage in some situations (West 1997).

***Cerebellar impairment/deficit hypothesis theory*** suggests that acquisition of language dexterity involves the cerebellum and impairment in the cerebellum affects speech processing, organisation and pronunciation of unfamiliar words, more general motor control processes as well as time estimation, balance, handwriting and automaticity (Nicolson and Fawcett 1999). It is argued that sensory disorders are not accounted for in cerebellar theory (Ramus *et al.* 2003). It is also suggested that motor problems are found only in individuals with the co-occurring difficulty of ADHD alongside dyslexia (Wimmer, Mayringer and Raberger 1999), however, research by Ramus *et al.* (2003) contradicts this.

**Magnocellular/transcient systems theory** of developmental dyslexia proposes that when the development of a system of large neurones in the brain (magnocells), responsible for timing, sensory and motor events, is impaired, it affects visual, auditory and tactile modalities as well as motor and phonological aspects, leading to literacy difficulties, visual confusion of letter order and poor visual memory for the written word. An auditory weakness can be responsible for auditory confusion of letter sounds and weak phonology. Theorists include Stein and Walsh (1997), Stein and Talcott (1999), Stein (2001). The prevalence and importance of sensory deficits is questioned, and it is suggested that a weakness of the magnocellular theory is its failure to explain a lack of sensory and motor problems in a large number of people with dyslexia (Ramus *et al* 2003).

### **Criticisms of cognitive and biological theories**

An examination of the main theories of dyslexia has shown that the phonological deficit hypothesis provides the strongest causal evidence although it does not explain all the symptoms identified by researchers. Other theories can help to account for difficulties experienced by adults with dyslexia (Section 2.3.1.2), however further research is needed in order to substantiate their causal function, they may well be co-occurring difficulties but these, by themselves, are not viewed as markers of dyslexia (Rose DCSF 2009). Muter (2013) argues against a single deficit model of SpLDs, which suggests a particular cognitive skill is located in one specific brain region, preferring, instead, a multiple deficit model, as “cognitive functioning seems to depend on the connections and interactions that a specific brain region has with other brain regions” (Muter 2013, p.14), taking into account co-occurring difficulties. The interaction of multiple cognitive risks is involved (Pennington, 2006, 2009), and dyslexia will be expressed differently according to the degree of severity of these. A particular disorder is produced through the combination of multiple genetic and environmental risk factors, some of which will be shared by another disorder, resulting in comorbidity. Developmental pathways partially overlap at the cognitive level leading to comorbidity at the symptom level. It is suggested that assessment and diagnosis, needs to take into consideration the multiple deficit model (Pennington 2009) (Section 2.7.1.7).

It is contended that most cognitive theories are not designed to cope with individual variation but address the prototypical case (Frith 2002) and on the other hand, that biological theories are too diverse to reach a consensus regarding the biological basis of dyslexia (Beaton, McDougall and Singleton 1997). The neuroscientists argue that individuals operate at neural, cognitive and social levels, with interactions between processes and levels (The Royal Society, 2011 sec.3.1 p.17).

### **Alternate theories**

***Social interactive theory*** suggests that social perceptions and values can change the differences that people with dyslexia experience into a disability. Those who lack skills in some areas, such as literacy, or speed of information processing, can be perceived as unintelligent or uneducated (DfES 2004a). Researchers challenge the deficit or medical model of dyslexia and its emphasis on the individual, in favour of the social model (Cooper 2006; Györfi and Smythe 2010). The social model, developed by Oliver (1983), views disability as a social state and focuses on the barriers to social inclusion created through disabling environments, attitudes and cultures, in everyday life (Oliver 1983, 1989; Barnes and Mercer 2005; BRAIN.HE 2006). It hands over the issue to society, which needs to find ways of adjusting and reducing barriers to include disabled people in mainstream social structures and activities, enabling them to “live life to the full” (Oliver 1989 p.31) (Section 2.2.1.3). Oliver (1990) suggests that people with disabilities can be empowered through organisational and administrative machinery that facilitates co-operation and power sharing, working with them to meet their needs, within the social model of thinking about disability. This model has proved a very useful tool in considering support provision for learners with dyslexia in FE (Section 7.3.2). It is important that the whole organisation is aware of their responsibility in meeting the needs of all learners (Sections 2.2.1.2, 9.3.2).

Oliver (1990) argues that there is no such thing as the medical model and prefers to talk about an individual model of disability, of which medicalisation is one significant component. He still sees specific individual interventions as important for people with a disability, but suggests that these are not on their own, sufficient to achieve full inclusion in society. This is relevant for the present study as the evidence suggests that individual provision for adult learners with dyslexia is essential (Sections 2.4.2, 2.4.3, 2.5.1, 2.7.1.2). In contrast, some researchers argue for ‘total inclusion’ with no need for individual provision (Lipsky and Gartner 1998; O’Brien 1998). Macdonald (2009) points out that a broader approach is needed with a social model used alongside a medical and educational one. This would move the focus from the individual to the barriers within the organisation that prevent full inclusion.

An ecological perspective, as put forward by Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Vasta, Haith and Miller (1999), is preferred by Pool (2003), with a focus on individual assessment, teaching to individual differences and social and cultural factors. This involves valuing individuality and creativity, while meeting the needs of all learners. Bronfenbrenner (1979 p.22) suggests that the ecological environment is like “a nested arrangement of concentric

structures, each contained within the next”. These are referred to as the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems. The microsystem is the inner-most level and consists of the immediate setting in which a person develops, such as the home or classroom. The mesosystem comprises the social interconnections between settings. The exosystem is the third level and consists of settings further afield, for example parental employment. The macrosystem refers to consistencies, in the three previous systems, at the level of the subculture or culture, belief systems or ideologies. Bronfenbrenner (1979) also talks about ecological transition due to a change in role, setting or both, which causes a person’s position in the ecological environment to alter. This occurs throughout the lifespan. He suggests that human beings have a great potential “to respond constructively to an ecologically compatible milieu once it is made available” (p.7). This enables human capacities and strengths to be developed. Ecological transition is particularly important for learners with dyslexia especially at the level of micro- and mesosystems and as they move between settings. The influences of the ecological environment need to be considered in assessment. Morton (2004) suggests that in order to exclude all other possibilities, which may account for the cause of the problem, social, economic, cultural and medical factors need to be considered in a full diagnosis (Section 2.7.1.7).

It is important not to lose sight of individuals, their needs and their strengths (Reid 2001; Reason 2002; Cooper 2004a). The National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE) Report (1999 Part 1 sec. 2.47 p.39) states “When children discover their real strengths, there can be a dramatic change in their overall motivation in education.” It leads to an enormous increase in self-esteem, confidence and achievement as a whole.

#### **2.3.2.4. Summary of concepts and theories**

A range of theories needs to be considered in order to understand the causes of dyslexia in adult learners due to its multifaceted nature. It is included within the concept of SpLDs due to co-morbidity with other types of difficulty. There is a move away from thinking about SpLDs as a single deficit model to multiple deficit models of learning disorders. This has important implications for assessment, treatment and general management of the difficulties experienced. The complex nature of dyslexia suggests a thorough diagnosis so as to identify strengths and weaknesses and establish that a disability exists. A broader approach, with a social model used alongside a medical and educational one is needed.

## **2.4. Dyslexia in adults**

### **2.4.1. Introduction**

Dyslexia affects 10% of the general adult population and 4% severely (DfEE 2000 sec.52). This figure is far higher amongst those lacking in basic skills (DfEE 2000; Jameson 2001; Durham LSC 2004), many of who attend courses in GFE colleges. These learners could be at considerable risk of underachievement unless they are able to access specialist support (Durham LSC 2004). The Freedom to Learn Report (FLR) (DfEE 2000) found strong anecdotal evidence that there are large numbers of undiagnosed adults with dyslexia. It perceived provision as uneven and inadequate.

### **2.4.2. Needs of adults with dyslexia**

Previous learning experiences may present a barrier for adult learners with dyslexia. Many were not identified as dyslexic at school and school education was humiliating and damaging (Edwards 1994; Brayton 1997; DfEE 2000; Durham LSC 2004; Bell 2010). They were reluctant to risk more failure through adult basic education classes (DfEE 2000). Adults with dyslexia prefer classes exclusively for them; they do not want to follow courses at levels below their intellectual and practical abilities (DfEE 2000). Adequate provision is needed (Durham LSC 2004), where adult learners with dyslexia would like specialist diagnosis and teaching (DfEE 2000) and individual specialist tuition (Call for Evidence, Adult Dyslexia Organisation (ADO) 2001). Students were positive about the support at college (Brayton 1997).

Bell (2009) suggests that a self-help group for adults with dyslexia can provide much needed support by raising awareness and enabling inclusion in the workplace and community. It is important to listen to the voices of adults with dyslexia in order to break down barriers to inclusion in education and employment. There is a gap in research in documenting the experience of inclusive education from the viewpoint of the students. The voice of the learner has to be heard with their views taken into consideration (Skill 1996; Ash *et al.* 1997; Brayton 1997; Ward and Thomson 1997; ADO 2001; Jameson 2001; Farmakopoulou and Watson 2003; Anderson *et al.* LSDA 2003; Richards 2004; Herrington 2005b) (Section 2.2.1.7).

Support for adult learners needs to be developed in consultation with them (Jameson 2001) (Section, 2.2.1.7, 2.7.1.5). As argued earlier, they will have different learning needs, with their own individual profiles of strengths and weaknesses and will have developed

compensatory strategies to deal with these (Rack 1997; Jameson 2001; DfES 2004a) (Section 2.3.1.2). Strengths or range of abilities can include: an intuitive understanding of how things work, good problem solving and trouble-shooting abilities, heightened perception and skills of visualisation and creativity (Jameson 2001). Creativity has been highlighted by researchers (Reid 1996b; Everatt, Steffert and Smythe 1999; NACCCE 1999; Morgan and Klein 2001; Pool 2003; Robinson 2011a, b) and can be the foundation and stimulus for learners with dyslexia to develop learning skills (Reid 1996b). Robinson (2011 a, b) suggests that creativity is at the heart of making education effective. Everatt, Steffert and Smythe (1999) found that adults with dyslexia were more creative on tasks that required insight or innovative approaches.

Barriers to access to continued education (Oliver 1983, 1989; Barnes and Mercer 2005; Macdonald 2009) (Section 2.3.2.4) include: complex enrolment procedures; limited availability of diagnostic assessment; lack of understanding by basic skills tutors and managers; a lack of specialist expertise, suitable classes (DfEE 2000; Durham LSC 2004), funding for specialist teaching (DfEE 2000). Tutor training in awareness of dyslexia was the single biggest factor needed to improve literacy classes (ADO 2001). Training is needed for basic skills tutors and managers (DfEE 2000). Very few work-based providers felt they had adequate provision for learners with dyslexia (Durham LSC 2004). Bell (2010) advocates dyslexia awareness training for all stakeholders: teachers, careers guidance staff, employers, human resources personnel, workplace trainers, union officials, and jobcentre staff.

Rice and Brooks (NRDC 2004) found no evidence from research to support a policy of differentiating students with dyslexia from non-dyslexic students in adult literacy, numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). They point out that: both groups of learners need to acquire the same knowledge and skills; structured and explicit tuition is appropriate for both groups.

### **2.4.3. Recommendations for provision**

An examination of research (DfEE 2000; ADO 2001; Durham LSC 2004; NRDC 2004; Rose DCSF 2009; Bell 2009, 2010) has highlighted a number of themes for improvement in provision for adults with dyslexia, recommendations include: policy, identification, assessment, specialist staff, support, teaching methods, resources, accommodation, awareness training and advice, voices of learners, on-going support, further research:

### **Policy**

- An explicit policy on admissions, enrolment, assessment and marking for learners with dyslexia
- A Policy and Code of Practice for working with learners with dyslexia; an explicit dyslexia policy as part of all basic skills strategies

### **Identification**

- Improved screening and identification

### **Assessment**

- Access to fully-funded specialist diagnostic assessment

### **Specialist staff**

- Access to specialist support for all adult learners with dyslexia
- Support by specialist tutors A dyslexia advisory group for specialists

### **Support**

- Individual tuition or small group work
- Flexible provision reflecting individual skills and learning profiles
- Opportunities for learning without attending classes

### **Teaching methods**

- Dyslexia-specific and flexible teaching
- Multisensory teaching and learning
- Development of effective learning strategies
- Use of specialist methods of teaching with all learners
- A curriculum which allows learners to achieve in a variety of ways

### **Resources**

- Access to multisensory resources and technology

### **Accommodation**

- Quiet and private areas for diagnosis and study

### **Awareness training and advice**

- Staff awareness training and advice in working with learners with dyslexia
- Awareness and identification as part of training for all basic skills tutors
- Dyslexia awareness training for all stakeholders: teachers, careers guidance staff, employers, human resources personnel, workplace trainers, union officials, jobcentre staff

### **Voices of learners**

- Listening to the voices of learners and responding to them (Section 2.4.2)

### **On-going support**

- On-going support for adults with dyslexia
- Breaking down barriers to inclusion in education and the workplace by the establishment of adult dyslexia groups

### **Further research**

- Further research into dyslexia and basic skills learners

### **2.4.4. Summary**

There is anecdotal evidence that large numbers of adults with dyslexia are undiagnosed; many lack basic skills and previous learning experiences may deter participation. Barriers to access include: complex enrolment procedures; shortage of diagnostic assessment; lack of understanding by basic skills tutors and managers; a lack of specialist expertise, suitable classes, funding for specialist teaching. Recommendations for improvement to support provision are related to different themes: policy, identification, assessment, specialist staff, support, teaching methods, resources, accommodation, awareness training and advice, voices of learners, on-going support, further research. It is suggested that methods used to support adult learners with dyslexia can be used with all learners.

## **2.5. Further Education and dyslexia**

### **2.5.1. Research into dyslexia in FE**

A survey by the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) (FEFC 1997a) indicates a high percentage of learners with dyslexia in FE. It is the fastest growing learning difficulty in FE in terms of increase in number of self-reported learning difficulties (Fletcher and Munoz 2006). Some of the learners had unmet needs due mainly to a lack of: specialist teachers (BDA 1981; FEFC 1997a); one-to-one support (BDA 1981); physical resource constraints (FEFC 1997a) and funding (FEFC 1997a). Additional Learning support (ALS) support has been found to be effective in raising the retention and achievement rates of learners (Fletcher and Munoz 2006).

Research by the London Language and Literacy Unit (LLLU) (2002) provides guidelines for supporting students with dyslexia in FE. It makes a number of recommendations for best practice to do with: publicity, transition, identification, assessment, support, policy and management, staff, resources and accommodation:

**Publicity:**

- A range of publicity for the dyslexia service

**Transition:**

- Liaison and links with outside agencies and schools prior to admission
- Support with progression: in-college; into HE and/or employment; careers advice; liaison with HE, other agencies and employers

**Identification:**

- A system for early identification and referral with a range of routes and opportunities: self-referral; tutor referral; referral throughout the course
- An effective cross-college screening system

**Assessment:**

- Confidential specialist assessment by a qualified practitioner: partnership with student; diagnostic screening and interview; full diagnostic assessment and report

**Support:**

- Variety of support according to need: one-to-one; in-class; support with examinations; library or learning centre support; technological support; resources; study buddies; group support; counselling; student support groups
- Specialist one-to-one support: flexible support; an individual learning plan and programme; student involvement in planning; focus on strengths; long and short-term goals; development of self-confidence and independent learning; monitoring and recording of tuition; regular reviews; contacts with parents, tutors, examination boards, and other agencies

**Alternative assessment methods:**

- Variety of routes to achievement; college-wide marking policies; explicit written feedback, special arrangement in tests and examinations; negotiation of extra time for assignments

**Policy and management:**

- A policy of inclusiveness: equal access to specialist assessment, support, resources and services; a sympathetic and enabling environment; teaching to address individual learning styles, taking into account strengths and weaknesses
- Quality arrangements: to include dyslexia support; student involvement in evaluating the service; performance indicators, objective and quantifiable measures; course tutors to monitor specialist support and liaise with support staff; relevant data kept; dyslexia support co-ordinator/manager to monitor the service; self-assessment and action planning to take into account dyslexia support

- Monitoring and evaluation of all systems by senior management
- Management structures and systems: to include dyslexia support in strategic plan; cross-college policies; job descriptions to include responsibilities towards all students with disability; a dyslexia support co-ordinator; strong links between dyslexia support, additional learning support and basic skills departments; a delegated budget or access to identified funding

**Staff:**

- Appropriate number of qualified specialist staff employed; qualified staff to carry out assessments; salaries to reflect specialist qualifications and level of work; reader; scribes; at least one specialist tutor in basic skills; staff awareness training for all staff; encouragement for staff to undertake specialist training; Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for specialist staff
- Administrative staff

**Resources:**

- Policy for evaluating and investing in new software and hardware for learners with dyslexia; range of appropriate technological resources available for loan by learners; training in use of resources; technological support; range of non-technical resources, coloured overlays; staff updates on knowledge of resources

**Accommodation:**

- Dedicated accommodation for diagnostic assessments and support of students with dyslexia or shared bookable accommodation; privacy, natural light, quiet, good ventilation; located in main part of college

The main recommendations include: a total commitment from senior management with a range of effective cross-college policies; dyslexia awareness training for all staff; an adequate team of qualified specialists; an individualised, adult approach; appropriate environment for adult learners with dyslexia. The research by the LLLU (2002) supports the social model proposed by Oliver (1990) (Section 2.3.2.3).

### **2.5.2. Summary**

Research indicates a high percentage of learners with dyslexia in FE and numbers are increasing. Some of the learners had unmet needs due mainly to a lack of: specialist teachers, one-to-one support, physical resource constraints, funding. Research by the LLLU (2002) recommends: a total commitment from senior management with effective

cross-college policies; dyslexia awareness training; qualified specialists; an individualised, approach; appropriate environment for adult learners with dyslexia.

## **2.6. Effectiveness in post-16 education and training OFSTED**

### **2.6.1. Introduction**

The OFSTED Guidelines for inspecting Post-16 Education and Training, and the implementation of the Common Inspection Framework (CIF) (OFSTED 2006) have been taken into account in proposing a model of support provision (Chapter 7). Colleges need to consider five outcomes: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, achieving economic well-being.

### **2.6.2. Identification and provision for additional learning needs**

The 'Handbook for inspecting colleges' (OFSTED 2006, section 208, p.63) advises accurate identification of an individuals' learning needs, including their additional needs. Learners should have access to effective additional support throughout their studies or training. Initial assessment of the learning and support needs of learners during induction should enable dyslexia to be identified with the results reported to learners without delay. The nature and level of support required needs to be determined through discussion between learning support staff, the learner and the learner's personal tutor. The support and teaching of the main programme should be integrated. Individual learning plans (ILPs) need to be realistic, suitably demanding and understood by the learners, with records clearly indicating the progress learners are making towards the objectives. Suitable individual learning programmes should include clear targets for achievement, with progress of learners relative to their prior attainment and potential evaluated.

Opportunities should be available for tutors to refer learners for support and for learners to request support, which needs to be in place soon after the start of the course. Most learners assessed as requiring support should receive it and the take-up and impact analysed. The arrangements for learning support should be free from any negative connotations on the part of learners. Communication with parents and employers needs to take place as well as effective links established with other organisations that promote the well-being of learners. Advice and guidance on progression to appropriate further learning and employment needs to be available.

### **2.6.3. Leadership and management**

Equality of opportunity should be promoted so that all learners achieve their potential. This requires clear statements of college values, supported by policies and measures. Additional support policies and procedures need to provide evidence of the effectiveness of learner support activities and numbers receiving support. Provision should be designed to take into account the specific needs of LLDDs with data on participation, retention and achievement rates available. The learners' views of the college and the extent to which they feel that they are effectively guided and supported are important as well as opportunities for learners to influence the course (for example, focus groups, perception surveys) (OFSTED 2006, section. 67, p.20). Response to the views of learners needs to be evident. Course teams should regularly review both quantitative data and qualitative information about their teaching and learners' achievements (section 249, p.81). The reviews should inform the college's self-assessment report (SAR) and lead to comprehensive action plans.

A sufficient number of specialist teachers, with appropriate professional qualifications, training and experience, should be appointed to support LLDDs. An adequate amount and range of suitable specialist equipment, learning resources and accommodation needs to be available and used by teachers to promote effective learning. Resources should include: specialist equipment; modern computers with appropriate specialist software; and relevant up-to-date books (OFSTED 2006, section 278, p.91), with feedback from learners on these sought. Suitable accommodation should be available for learning support, to provide a healthy and safe environment.

### **2.6.4. Summary**

The individual learning needs of learners, including their additional needs, should be accurately identified with access to effective additional support throughout their studies or training. ILPs should be devised and reviewed with records of progress towards objectives kept. Communication should take place between learning support staff, the learner, their personal tutor, course tutors, parents, employers and other organisations. Qualified specialist tutors need to be employed with appropriate resources and accommodation provided. Management should have policies in place and suitable review systems to evaluate provision. These should inform the college's SAR leading to comprehensive action plans. The learners' views need to be taken into consideration with opportunities to influence the course.

## **2.7. Effective practice in teaching adults with dyslexia in FE**

At any stage of education, not to recognise talents that are obscured by dyslexia, or any disability, is an unnecessary waste of human resources (Pumfrey 1998). FE funding and philosophy facilitate individualised help with learning, which is tailored to need (Klein 1993, 2005; Martin 1998; Murphy 2005). According to the LSC Funding Guidance (LSC 2008) costings should relate to 'direct learning support for individual learners' (section 655). Careful assessment is needed with regular review and monitoring (FEFC 1997b).

### **2.7.1. Current research**

#### **2.7.1.1. Introduction**

An analysis of current research on effective practice in teaching adults with dyslexia identified some main themes, these included: support provision, referral and identification, support; staff, collaboration, staff training; individual needs, cognitive processing; teaching methods, coping strategies, skills, use of methods with other learners; accommodation and resources; assessment; learner well-being, learner voice; evaluation.

#### **2.7.1.2. Support provision**

Students should have access to effective learning support (Hunter-Carsch 2005) and be aware of the provision available (Palfreman-Kay 2005).

#### **Referral and identification**

Appropriate management policies and plans should be in place (Klein 2005) to include referral procedures (Murphy 2005; Palfreman-Kay 2005) and fast initial identification and screening using a variety of methods (Martin 1998; Morris and White 2005). Researchers stress the importance of an initial interview (Klein 1993; Martin 1998; Rack 2002; Brady 2004; Murphy 2005), which could include the use of a questionnaire, structured questions and discussion, to gather background information (Kindersley 2005; Morris and White 2005). Awareness of the effects of prior experience on learners' attitudes and approaches to learning support is necessary (Herrington 2005b; Hunter-Carsch 2005; Palfreman-Kay 2005).

#### **Support**

Adequate support is needed to enable students to pass their course (Klein 1993; FEFC 1997b; Obeng 1997; Martin 1998; Rack 2002; Hunter-Carsch 2005; Klein 2005; Murphy 2005). A specialised individual programme of support is recommended (Krupska and

Klein 1995; Rack 2002; Klein 2005; LSC 2008), based on careful assessment (Martin 1998; Rack 2002). Support provision should include: individual one-to-one tuition (Klein 1993, 1995; Obeng 1997; Rack 2002; Durham LSC 2004; Murphy 2005; Walker 2005); small group support (Rack 2002; Palfreman-Kay 2005); in-class support (Murphy 2005); support from peers (Palfreman-Kay 2005); technological support (Durham LSC 2004; Murphy 2005) (Section 2.7.1.6); assessments (2.7.1.7).

### **2.7.1.3. Staff**

Qualified specialist tutors are required (Krupska and Klein 1995; Rack 2002; Murphy 2005; LSC 2008) who are flexible, creative and sensitive to adult learners with dyslexia (Rack 2002; Murphy 2005), taking on a variety of roles (Singleton 1999). Collaboration and communication needs to be developed with parents (Brayton 1997; Herrington 2005a; Palfreman-Kay 2005), learning support and curriculum staff (Klein 1993), course tutor (Murphy 2005) and employers (Rack 2002; Bell 2010). Staff development and awareness of dyslexia for all staff, including managers, is vital (Brayton 1997; Klein 2005, Murphy 2005, Palfreman-Kay 2005).

### **2.7.1.4. Individual needs**

Researchers suggest that support should be tailored to learners' need (Klein 1993; Martin 1998; Rack 2002; Palfreman-Kay 2005), to their unique pattern of strengths and weaknesses (Klein 1993, 2005; Krupska and Klein 1995; Martin 1998; Jameson 2001; Reid 2001; Rack 2002) with realistic and achievable objectives (Klein 1993; Rack 2002), identified by the learner (Klein 1993). Targets should be negotiated with learners and need to be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-related (SMART) (Morris and White 2005). Students with dyslexia learn in different ways to suit each individual (Davis 2004; Krupska and Klein 1995; West 1997; Everatt, Steffert and Smythe 1999; Galaburda 1999; Morgan and Klein 2001; Mortimer 2003).

### **Cognitive processing**

Learners with dyslexia need to be aware of cognitive processes (Spafford and Grosser 1996; Hunter-Carsch 2005). The brain remains 'plastic' throughout life and changes constantly as a result of learning (The Royal Society 2011 p.v). Behaviour and the neural structure of the brain can respond positively to environmental stimulation (Posner 1993; Bakker 1994; Tallal 1997; Small, Kendall Flores and Noll 1998; Travis 1998; Robertson 2000). An awareness of metacognition is needed (Spafford and Grosser 1996; Marzano 1998; LSRC 2004; Herrington 2005b; McLoughlin 2005; Dee *et al.* LSRC 2006; Bell 2009,

2010; Rose DCSF 2009; Burns and Bell 2010), as well as learning styles (Given and Reid 1999; Cooper 2004; Herrington 2005b; Murphy 2005) (Section 2.2.1.4).

#### **2.7.1.5. Teaching methods**

A wide range of appropriate teaching methods are recommended by researchers (Rack 2002): multisensory methods (Goulondris 1985; Obeng 1997; Robertson 2000; Rack 2002; Brady 2004; Durham LSC 2004; Herrington 2005a; McLoughlin 2005; Murphy 2005; Walker 2005; Dee *et al.* LSRC 2006; Rose DCSF 2009); a structured programme (Krupska and Klein 1995; Rack 2002; Herrington 2005a; Walker 2005); life skills (Rack 2002; Hunter-Carsch 2005; Walker 2005); and coping strategies (see next paragraph). Teaching programmes need to be relevant to the learner, with methods and resources discussed with them and age-appropriate (Kime and Waine 2005; Morris and White 2005).

#### **Coping strategies**

Coping strategies have been identified as important: self-empowerment (Oliver 1990; McLoughlin 2005; Dee *et al.* LSRC 2006), self-awareness, understanding and control (Gerber, Ginsberg and Reiff 1992; Spekman, Goldberg and Herman 1992; Walker 2005), self-advocacy (Dee *et al.* LSRC 2006), learner autonomy (Rack 2002; Klein 2005; Murphy 2005), enabling learners to take charge of their own learning (Klein 1993 2005; Spafford and Grosser 1996; Rack 2002; Herrington 2005b; Murphy 2005; Palfreman-Kay 2005).

The learner needs to understand dyslexic difficulties and build up their self-esteem (Rack 2002; Herrington 2005a; Palfreman-Kay 2005; Walker 2005). This involves the development of self-belief, self-confidence and feelings of self-worth (Rack 2002; Murphy 2005; Palfreman-Kay 2005; Walker 2005), and self-determination (Dee *et al.* LSRC 2006). A positive approach to mistakes should be encouraged (Rack 2002). A number of researchers emphasise the importance of motivation (Spafford and Grosser 1996; Hunter-Carsch 2005; Palfreman-Kay 2005), which is regarded as the energy within the learning process (Wlodkowski and Ginsberg 2010).

#### **Skills**

Skills that have been identified include: the nature of language, learning and writing (Rack 2002; Herrington 2005a); literacy teaching (Rack 2002; Hunter-Carsch 2005; Walker 2005); study skills (Entwistle, Thompson and Tait 1995; Rack 2002; Herrington 2005b; Palfreman-Kay 2005); memory skills (Rack 2002; Hunter-Carsch 2005; McLoughlin 2005; Walker 2005); IT skills (Palfreman-Kay 2005); mathematical skills (Hunter-Carsch 2005);

applying skills, strategies and techniques in day-to-day work-related activities and employment issues (Rack 2002). A great deal of over learning has to take place due to problems in developing automaticity or fluency (Durham LSC 2004) (Section 2.3.2.3). Learners should be encouraged to become aware of their own strategies (Rose DCSF 2009). Advice on learning and support is needed (Singleton 1999; Palfreman-Kay 2005).

### **Use of methods with other learners**

All staff should be working towards a learning environment that is suitable for a wide variety of learners with their differences understood and communicated (Wlodkowski and Ginsberg 2010). A dyslexia friendly learning environment would enable appropriate strategies to be used by all learners (Klein 2005) (Sections 2.2.1.3, 2.7.1.6).

### **2.7.1.6. Accommodation and resources**

Researchers suggest the use of a wide range of resources (Entwistle, Thompson and Tait 1995; Rack 2002), including technology (Rack 2002; Herrington 2005a; Hunter-Carsch 2005; Murphy 2005; Dee *et al.* LSRC 2006; The Royal Society 2011), and learning aids (Brady 2004; McLoughlin 2005; Walker 2005). Methods and resources should be appropriate to age and learning style (Morris and White 2005).

Teachers and education providers are responsible for the universal design of curricula, materials and environments, making them suitable for all students to access and use (Bowie 1999) (Section 2.2.1.3), this may include:

- Presenting information in a number of different ways, for example, written, visual, spoken, on disks, web pages
- Providing different ways for students to interact with, and respond to curricula and materials, for example, tape recording, changing font, background colour, using adaptive technologies, computer software
- Providing different ways for students to derive meaning from material and demonstrate knowledge and skills, for example, applying principles to other activities, using e-mails, working individually or in a team, group activities, portfolios
- Providing interactive, accessible web pages, distance learning, e-books
- Physically accessible rooms

Rose (DCSF 2009 p.110) proposes a multisensory classroom and teaching environment “one where there is active and interactive integration of visual, auditory, kinaesthetic and tactile elements”.

Technological support has been mentioned in reports (Sections 2.2.1.4, 2.4.3, 2.5.1, 2.6.3). Stansfield (2008) suggests the use of a personal laptop or notebook, talking wordprocessor, screen reader, talking books, reading pens, Mp3 players, iPods, digital recorder and camera, mobile phone, speech recognition and mindmapping software, assistive tools, such as spellcheckers, dictionaries. Tablet Personal; Computers (PCs) and Audio Notetakers or Digital recorders can help with note-taking (James 2012). Useful facilities for dyslexia can also be found on mainstream hardware, such as desktops, laptops or netbook computers and small portable devices: scanning pens and scanners, personal digital assistants (PDAs) and electronic organisers, electronic book readers (BDA 2012b). Assistive Technology (AT) support software also includes: prediction software, text-to-speech software, e-books, planning software. The BDA (2013a) stresses the importance of new technology and IT equipment for students with dyslexia, however, Györfi and Smythe (2010) argue that rather than providing technology for individual learners with dyslexia, universal access to text electronically helps all people with dyslexia. It is considered that both are required to meet the needs of learners.

Students were very positive about the equipment they received as part of the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) (Draffan, Evans and Blenkhorn 2007; Dooley 2013). This included: general- purpose hardware (a desktop or laptop computer, scanner, PDA); and special-purpose hardware (a minidisk recorder or digital recorder, handheld spellchecker, portable notetaker) (Draffan, Evans and Blenkhorn 2007). They were also positive about the general-purpose software: Microsoft Office, speech recognition, typing tutor; and only slightly less positive about special-purpose software: text-to-speech software, talking dictionary, concept mapping. However, Dooley (2013) found that there was insufficient technical support in learning how to use this, resulting in underutilisation. Technicians lacked awareness in how to support learners with dyslexia.

#### **2.7.1.7. Assessment**

Assessment is crucial in the teaching of adults with dyslexia (Rack 2002; McLoughlin 2005; Siegel and Smythe 2005) (Sections 2.2.1.4, 2.2.1.5). It enables the cause of the difficulty to be investigated as well as the extent of the impairment (mild to severe) and the likelihood of co-occurring difficulties (Muter 2013). It could involve self-assessment, an

initial interview (Klein 1993; Martin 1998), checklists such as Vinegrad (1994) (Martin 1998), identification of strengths and weaknesses (Rack 2002; McLoughlin 2005), assessments for exam arrangements (Murphy 2005) and full diagnostic assessment (Krupska and Klein 1995).

Morris and White (2005) suggest that in the FE environment all learners should be initially screened in their subject groups during induction. Assessment should include: note-taking skills, reading, spelling and punctuation, summarising, brainstorming/mindmapping, past teaching and learning. Further in-depth diagnostic assessment needs to be available, especially for exam access arrangements. Kindersley (2005) provides useful guidance for the structure of diagnostic assessment in HE, which can be applied to assessments in FE, it includes: collecting background information on family history, general health, speech and language, motor development, educational history, school experience, current difficulties; observation during testing; formal and informal tests to assess literacy attainment (single-word and non-word reading, reading of continuous text, reading speed, comprehension, single-word spelling, timed free writing), general intellectual ability (verbal and non-verbal), cognitive processing (phonological skills - segmentation, blending, short-term verbal memory, working memory, speed of processing), other areas (SpLDs, motor and co-ordination skills, perceptual and spatial skills).<sup>6</sup> In-depth assessments can be used to develop teaching programmes for those learners who require them. Teamwork with other professionals could include: course managers, subject tutors, ALS manager, examination secretary, speech and language therapists, educational psychologists, occupational therapists, and support teachers for attention and/or behaviour problems (Watson and Morris 2005).

On-going assessment during learning has been identified as important (Entwistle, Thompson and Tait 1995; Krupska and Klein 1995 p.74; Martin 1998; Rack 2002; Siegel and Smythe 2005). Formative assessment can produce learning gains (Section 2.2.1.4). Regular review and monitoring is suggested (Martin 1998).

#### **2.7.1.8. Learner well-being**

The well-being of learners needs to be considered (DfES 2004b; OFSTED 2006). The 'Climate' of the institution can facilitate or hamper learning (Hunter-Carsch 2005).

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<sup>6</sup> The SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines (DfES 2005b), PATOSS website and the PATOSS Guide (Backhouse & Morris 2005, Jones and Kindersley 2013) provide updates of appropriate tests that are available.

Research suggests the need for a place to feel welcome, with a friendly, relaxed atmosphere (Palfreman-Kay 2005). Students have expectations of tutors and want to be listened to and treated as equal (Palfreman-Kay 2005). A comfortable emotional environment is important (Spafford and Grosser 1996; Palfreman-Kay 2005) with warmth and rapport between student and tutor (Spafford and Grosser 1996), trust and respect (Walker 2005). There may be a need for help with emotional support (Rack 2002; Herrington 2005b; Hunter-Carsch 2005), management of stress and anxiety (Rack 2002). The Informal social interaction of a group can provide mutual support and encouragement (Murphy 2005; Walker 2005), enabling students to express their opinions (Murphy 2005).

Awareness, self-understanding and control are key factors for success (Gerber, Ginsberg and Reiff 1992, Spekman, Goldberg and Herman 1992). Learners need to develop an understanding of the nature of dyslexia (Herrington 2005a; Palfreman-Kay 2005) and their difficulties (Klein 1993; Martin 1998; Rack 2002; Hunter-Carsch 2005; Klein 2005). They need to feel that their needs are being met (Spafford and Grosser 1996). Learning differences should not be perceived as deficits (Herrington 2005b). There is a need for development of awareness in other students (Brayton 1997).

### **Learner voice**

Herrington (2005b) suggests there is a need to build learner self-confidence so they are not afraid to make their voices heard. Tutors need to understand the importance of individual perspectives and motivations for effective learning, and the articulation of these in the learner's own voice. They can help learners to develop their own voices by treating them as equal, taking them seriously and listening to them, learners can also teach tutors a lot, helping them to gain power (Herrington 2005b).

### **2.7.1.9. Evaluation**

Delivering effective support involves a constant cycle of evaluation, planning and adjusting the focus and emphasis of the programme (Rack 2002, Morris and White 2005).

Opportunities for feedback from students on their experiences should be available (Entwistle, Thompson and Tait 1995; Murphy 2005).

### **2.7.2. Summary**

Research on effective practice in teaching adults with dyslexia suggests a need for appropriate policies and plans, with fast referral and identification procedures using a variety of methods, as well as adequate support and resources. An individual programme

is recommended, based on careful assessment and one-to-one tuition by qualified specialist tutors. Staff development in dyslexia awareness as well as communication and collaboration are emphasised. Support should be tailored to learners' need, strengths and weaknesses using a wide range of methods and strategies. All staff should be working towards a dyslexia friendly learning environment. A variety of assessments should be in place as well as regular review and monitoring with a constant cycle of evaluation and planning. The voices and opinions of learners must be heard and acted upon.

The findings from the literature review on effective practice in teaching adults with dyslexia in FE were combined with the guidelines from OFSTED (2006) and the FLR (DfEE 2000) and tabulated. The combined criteria for determining effectiveness were used as a guide for forming detailed research questions and a questionnaire.

## Chapter 3

# Research design and methodology

### 3.1. Introduction

In planning the research design the notion of 'fitness for purpose' was considered (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2002 p.73). The purposes of the research and specifically the research questions, determined its methodology and design. The aim of methodology is to help us understand the process of scientific inquiry whilst methods refer to techniques and procedures used in the process of data gathering (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2002). A broad overview of terms associated with research methodology will initially be examined in order to provide a rationale for the choice of research design.

### 3.2. Methodology

Robson (2003 p.549) defines methodology as "the theoretical, political and philosophical backgrounds to social research and their implications for research practice, and for the use of particular research methods." Greene (2006) puts forward a broad view and proposes four domains that need to come together to create a methodology for social inquiry: philosophical assumptions and stances, inquiry logics, guidelines for practice, and sociopolitical commitments in science. This can include issues concerning methods of data collection (questionnaires, interviews), methods of research (experiments, ethnography), and philosophy. This broader view of methodology is useful for the present study, as the problem decided the methodology (Niaz 2008); the purposes of the research and research questions determined its design and the methods used to collect data.

Approaches to educational research have traditionally involved two main paradigms: quantitative and qualitative research. Mixed methods research has now gained acceptance as a separate methodological or research paradigm (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner 2007). Researchers suggest using a mixture of quantitative and qualitative approaches in educational research (Yin 2006; Fraenkel and Wallen 2008), accepting a broad variety of 'mixes', including mixing qualitative methods alone or quantitative methods alone (Yin 2006), thus moving away from the notion of paradigms. Yin (2006) highlights that the most important issue is to focus on a single study to produce converging evidence (Section 3.4.1).

Mixed methods research is connected to a philosophy of pragmatism, bringing together different methods, perspectives and approaches to answer research questions through epistemology<sup>7</sup> and logic (Onwuegbuzie and Leech 2005; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner 2007; Leech *et al.* 2010). According to Teddlie and Tashakkori (2003 p.20): “Pragmatist researchers consider the research question to be more important than either the method they use or the paradigm that underlies the method.” Methods are viewed as tools for answering research questions (Erzberger and Kelle 2003). The central priority should be the research questions (Creswell 2003, 2009; Bryman 2006), with appropriate methods or approaches chosen that will best answer the question and fulfill the purpose of the research. Bryman (2006) found that a clear sense of purpose is needed for mixed-methods research, the quality of which could be assessed by its nature and goals.

Smeyers (2006) favours a pluralistic interpretive approach to educational research involving a variety of methods. Pluralistic methods can tap into different dimensions of participants’ lived experience, enabling flexibility (Creswell 2003; Frost and Bowen 2012), they were used in the present research in order to obtain a diversity of viewpoints and provide richer and thicker data (Section 3.4.1). A review by Bryman (2006), of how studies combine quantitative and qualitative research in practice, found that quantitative survey methods in the form of self-administered questionnaires and qualitative semi-structured interviews were the most favoured methods used in multi-strategy research. These were the main methods used in the present study (Sections 3.4.1, 3.5).

Greene, Caracelli, and Graham (1989) identify five purposes of mixed methodological studies: triangulation (convergence and corroboration of results); complementarity (elaboration, enhancement, illustration, clarification of the results); development (results from one method helping inform the other method); initiation (finding paradoxes and contradictions that result in reframing of the research question); and expansion (of the breadth and range of inquiry). Bryman (2006) found that complementarity and expansion were the most numerous primary rationales in multi-strategy research studies, with complementarity being the most common primary approach to integrating quantitative and qualitative research. Gardner (2008 p.564) states that in good mixed-methods research, qualitative and quantitative methods: “should either complement each other or address different sub-questions related to the larger research question addressed by the study.”

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<sup>7</sup> Nature of knowing through objective findings (quantitative methods)

Triangulation has been defined as the “cross-checking of data using multiple data sources or multiple data-collection procedures” (Fraenkel and Wallen 2008 p.G-9) and “the mixing of data or methods so that diverse viewpoints or standpoints cast light upon a topic” (Olsen 2004 p.3). Denzin (1978, p.291) defines it as: “the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon.” He proposed the use of between-method triangulation which involved using mixed methods in order to cancel bias in data sources, investigators and methods, resulting in convergence on the truth. However, it can be argued whether bias can be cancelled completely or just minimized. Fraenkel and Wallen (2008) state that complete objectivity (a lack of bias or prejudice) may never be attained.

In mixed methods sequential designs (Creswell *et al.* 2003) the initial stage involves the gathering of qualitative or quantitative data, with the other data type collected in a second stage. The findings of one method can be elaborated or expanded on by the other method. For example, a sequential explanatory design would involve collecting and analysing quantitative data first followed by qualitative data, whilst, in contrast, a sequential exploratory design would involve the collection and analysis of qualitative data first, followed by quantitative data. The two methods are integrated during interpretation.

Frameworks designed by Morrison (1993) and Creswell (2003, 2009), for planning a research design, proved very helpful in providing an initial structure and framing the work, they were adopted to incorporate the aims and questions of the present study. The research issues involved orienting decisions, research design and methodology, data analysis and the presenting and reporting of results.

### **3.3. Orienting decisions**

Orienting decisions involve making strategic decisions, which set the boundaries and general nature of the research (Morrison 1993). These involve thinking about who the research is for, its general aims and purposes, the main priorities and constraints, time scales, ownership, ethical issues and resources.

My professional interests combined with my emerging role as a researcher influenced the general nature of the research and its title. A need was identified for research into the most effective ways of organising provision for learners with dyslexia in GFE colleges. As I have illustrated in the previous chapter (Chapter 2), there is a lack of such research in the rapidly expanding field of FE. In particular, it was considered of paramount importance to

give a voice to learners, who were the clients, at the receiving end of provision. It was also important to give a voice to the specialist tutors, working at the roots of the organisation, delivering the provision. These voices would aid and facilitate management in making decisions that would lead to growth in effective provision. Tutors would be able to draw from the findings of the research and be enabled to improve their practice.

In planning the research design the purposes of the research were considered by examining the main research aims and questions (Chapter 1, Sections 1.2, 1.3). The overall aim of the research was to investigate the extent and effectiveness of GFE college systems in identifying and providing for learners with dyslexia. A set of research questions was prepared in order to meet the aims and purposes of the research (Sections 1.3, 3.5.2, 3.5.3.3). These were informed by the existing literature (Chapter 2) and were designed to balance all interests and focus on the minimum necessary areas. A list of sub-questions was also devised taking into consideration all elements of the criteria for determining effectiveness of dyslexia provision in GFE colleges, derived from the literature; these were broken down into a series of issues that would lend themselves to being investigated. Specific, concrete questions were established to which specific answers could be provided, in order to cover all the research purposes and address the scope of the main research questions.

The focus of the research was threefold. Firstly, to find out what provision is currently available in GFE colleges for learners with dyslexia, secondly, to elicit information and opinions from tutors on provision, and thirdly, to find out about the perceptions of the learners themselves. The foci of the research sub-questions involved: the identification and screening of learners, provision available and accessed, staffing, accommodation and resources, teaching methods, assessment, learner well being, reviews and evaluation of provision (Chapter 2). Care was taken to make sure the specific questions were answered with appropriate instruments to gather the data, demonstrating construct and content validity (Sections 3.4.2, 3.5). The research questions enabled the present situation in GFE colleges to be examined, the views of the learners and their tutors to be expressed and an emerging working model to be derived, based on the emerging themes and variables.

The research needed to be done within the time restraints of a Doctor of Education (EdD) study. Methods were considered that enabled data to be gathered efficiently from an appropriate sample of participants (Sections 3.4, 3.5). The number of colleges included in the sample was limited to twenty four (Section 3.4.6), so that the data collected was

manageable for a single researcher within the time limit. The cost of the research was taken into account, in terms of time, resources and people, for example, the cost of: interviewing in terms of the time to administer and transcribe interviews and any additional personnel; sending postal questionnaires and letters; phone calls, incentives, travel; and the cost to others (in relation to time as a resource and the duty of beneficences to the sample of colleges).

### **Ethical Issues**

Ownership of the research and ethical issues were considered. The research was carried out as part of an EdD study at the University of Leeds and gained ethical approval from the University of Leeds Ethics Committee. Participants were made aware of the purpose of the research and given choices as to whether they wanted to take part or not. Informed consent and co-operation was obtained from learners, tutors and significant others in the colleges providing the research facilities, through a letter to principals, section on a questionnaire, e-mails, phone calls and verbally (**Appendix 1, 2**) (Sections 3.5.2.1, 3.5.3.1, 3.5.3.4, 3.5.3.5). The students had a learning disability, dyslexia, but this did not affect their ability to consent. Participants were able to withdraw at any time. Their dignity, privacy and interests were respected and they were assured of confidentiality, anonymity and non-traceability. The identity of participants and that of the individual colleges was protected, by substituting names with letters and numbers in the data analysis and reporting of results. Interviews were conducted in a non-stressful, non-threatening manner and interviewees treated with humaneness, compassion and respect. Interviews were recorded, with the verbal consent of the interviewees. All recordings, written transcripts and data have been kept secure and confidential and will be destroyed after the completion of the study, according to Research Council UK (RCUK) guidance.

## **3.4. Research Design and Methodology**

### **3.4.1. Introduction**

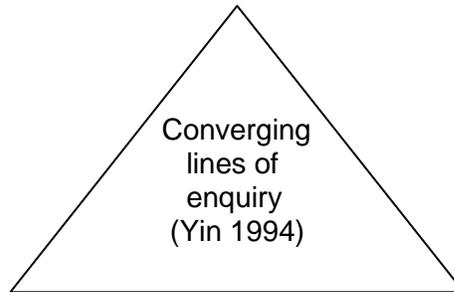
The research design and methodology chosen as most appropriate for meeting the aims of the present research and answering the research questions was that of a two-phase sequential, mixed methods approach, collecting data sequentially using pluralistic methods. This was selected to provide both structure and flexibility (Creswell 2003, 2009). It involved employing both quantitative and qualitative research strategies, in order to reveal different aspects of reality, enabling: complementarity (elaborating, enhancing and clarifying the results of one method by those of another); expansion (extending the breadth

and range of enquiry) (Greene, Caracelli, and Graham 1989; Bryman 2006); breadth and depth of understanding; as well as corroboration, validating and expanding on findings from other methods (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner 2007).

The multi-strategy research approaches (Layder 1993; Bryman 2001, 2006) involved gathering data in two phases. The first phase, which is considered more fully in Section 3.5.2, enabled the first research question to be answered (Section 1.3). It involved a quantitative method, using an initial survey strategy, a questionnaire, to gather data on provision for learners with dyslexia, from a sample of all GFE colleges in Yorkshire and Humberside (The Humber). Documentary, background, evidence was also collected, which included OFSTED reports on the colleges and available data from the LSC/Data Service. This phase served two purposes: first, it located the research in the wider context, and second, it helped to identify the colleges involved in the second phase. The second phase, in which a qualitative, research strategy was used, will be more fully considered in Section 3.4.3. Firstly, this involved semi-structured telephone interviews, with colleges who responded to the questionnaire, with the intent of verifying, clarifying and elaborating on data obtained from the questionnaire, supporting the first research question (Section 1.3). Secondly, semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews were used with a few individuals, to probe and explore the data in more depth, and to gain understanding of the lived experiences of a small number of participants (Creswell 2003). These enabled the second and third research questions to be answered (Section 1.3).

It was planned to corroborate and converge research findings from different methods through the use of triangulation, in order to provide greater validity. Consideration was given to a number of advantages of triangulation: allowing more confidence in results; creating new ways of data collection; enabling thicker and richer data to be obtained; revealing contradictions (Jick 1979). Yin (1994 p.92) sees the main advantage of using evidence from multiple sources as the development of “converging lines of enquiry” (**Figure 1**). Combined levels of triangulation were used, for example, data from individuals, groups, organizations, as well as methodological triangulation (Patton 1987; Guion, Diehl and McDonald 2011), using different methods to answer the same research questions, which Denzin (1978) refers to as between-methods triangulation. Within-methods triangulation (Denzin 1978) was also used, with different methods answering different research sub-questions (Gardner 2008). Data triangulation, using a variety of sources (Patton 1987; Guion, Diehl and McDonald 2011) provided a form of comparative analysis (Jick 1983).

*Statistical Data, facts and figures*  
**Questionnaire** to all 24 GFE colleges  
Yorkshire and Humberside (The Humber)  
**Documentation**



*Data from tutors*  
**Individual interviews** (Tutors)  
Dyslexia tutors (3 colleges)  
**Telephone interviews**  
Tutors/managers who replied  
to questionnaires (13 colleges)

*Data from learners*  
**Focus Group interviews** (3 colleges)  
(Small group of students)  
**Dyad interviews**  
**Individual interviews**

**Figure 1** Levels of triangulation used in present research

(Adapted from Yin 1994 p.93 'Convergence of Multiple Sources of Evidence – single study'. Source: COSMOS Corporation)

### 3.4.2. Validity

In quantitative research validity is essentially a demonstration that a particular instrument in fact measures what it purports to measure (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2002; Fraenkel and Wallen 2008). Fraenkel and Wallen (2008 p.G-9) define validity as: “the degree to which correct inferences can be made based on results from an instrument.” It will depend on the instrument, instrumentation process and study group characteristics. In quantitative data, validity might be improved through careful sampling, appropriate instrumentation and appropriate statistical treatments of the data. In qualitative research, validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation, the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher (Creswell 2009). Gibbs (2010 p.152) defines validity as: “The extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomenon to which it refers.” He distinguishes between internal validity and external validity. *Internal validity* is: “the degree to which the research provides a true picture of the situation and/or people being studied.” In the present study the use of different research methods enhanced internal validity, enabling different views to be expressed, facilitating complementarity, expansion, breadth and depth of understanding; as well as corroboration (Section 3.4.1).

*External validity*: “refers to the extent to which the data collected from the group or situation studied can be generalised to a wider population” (Gibbs 2010 p.152). The information from the present study could be generalised to other colleges in the region, and other regions. It could also prove useful for schools and higher education.

A distinction can be made between construct validity and content validity (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2002; Fraenkel and Wallen 2008). *Construct validity* makes sure that the researcher’s construct of a particular issue agrees with other constructions of the issue. A wide literature search was carried out in order to tease out the meaning of particular constructs and their constituent elements (Chapter 2). It was important to balance confirming and refuting evidence, given that terms such as, ‘effective support’ and ‘dyslexia’ are contested. Care was taken to make the categories and language used in the different research instruments meaningful to the tutors and learners (Eisenhart and Howe 1992), trying to view the situation through their eyes.

In order to demonstrate *content validity* the instrument must show that it fairly and comprehensively covers the domain or items that it purports to cover. This was done by making sure the questions in the questionnaire and interviews covered the research questions and sub-questions (Sections 3.5.2.1, 3.5.3.1, 3.5.3.4, 3.5.3.5). Fraenkel and Wallen (2008) suggest obtaining content-related evidence of validity by getting an individual, who knows enough about what is to be measured, to make an intelligent judgment about the adequacy of the instrument. In response to this advice, two measures were put in place, the questionnaire was scrutinised by a retired specialist dyslexia tutor in order to provide further checks. Additionally, it was piloted with a specialist dyslexia tutor in a GFE College outside the sample area of research. The pilot enabled ambiguities to be revealed, poorly worded or unclear questions and instructions (Fraenkel and Wallen 2008) and helped to increase the reliability, validity and practicability of the questionnaire (Oppenheim 1992; Morrison 1993; Wilson and McLean 1994). For example, a question on staff training undertaken in the past academic year, it was not clear whether it meant staff training conducted by the dyslexia team for other college staff or staff training attended by the dyslexia team.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2002) point out that greater validity can be achieved by minimising the amount of bias. Gibbs (2010 p.147) defines bias as: “Any influence that systematically distorts the results of a research study”. Sources of bias could be the researcher or data collecting procedures and sampling. In an interview situation it could

be due to the different characteristics of the interviewer and the respondent as well as the content of the questions. Interviewers have their own set of attitudes, opinions and expectations and may tend to see the respondent in their own image. They may tend to seek answers that support their preconceived notions and may have misperceptions of what the respondent is saying. The respondent may also misunderstand what is being asked. Interviewers and interviewees bring their own, often unconscious, experiential and biographical baggage with them into the interview situation.

Researchers need to monitor closely and continually their own reaction, roles, biases and any other matters that might bias the research (McCormick and James 1988; Gibbs 2010). As a specialist dyslexia tutor, the researcher had a particular affinity towards learners with dyslexia and held opinions on what was important for them. Care was taken not to allow these views to influence the respondent. In order to increase validity and minimise bias on the part of the researcher a younger research assistant was used to conduct the learner interviews. This enabled students to feel more relaxed in talking to someone nearer their own age whom they did not know and did not perceive as a tutor. They were less afraid of expressing opinions that they may not have been able to divulge to a tutor or someone they knew. The research assistant had experience of interviewing learners and had previously acquired the skills involved. She was given preliminary training, by the researcher, on focus group interviewing and the prepared questions and prompts. She took care not to allow her own bias to influence the research.

### **3.4.3. Reliability**

Gibbs (2010 p.151) defines reliability as: “The degree to which different observers, researchers, etc. (or the same observers, etc., on different occasions) make the same observations or collect the same data about the same object of study.” According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2002) reliability is essentially a synonym for consistency and replicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents. It is concerned with precision and accuracy. For research to be reliable it must demonstrate that if it were to be carried out on a similar group of respondents in a similar context, then similar results would be found, for example, similar research could be carried out in another region with other GFE colleges, tutors and learners. In order to build reliability into the research consideration was given to the instruments used and the sample.

The questions to be asked and the methods used were considered carefully, so each respondent could be given the same opportunity to respond. A balance of both open-ended and closed questions was used (**Appendix 1**) (Sections 3.5.2.1, 3.5.3.1, 3.5.3.4, 3.5.3.5). Open-ended questions can capture the specificity of a particular situation and are less structured, allowing the respondent more freedom to express their own views and opinions. Closed questions gather specific information that can be used to observe patterns; they prescribe the range of responses from which the respondent may choose.

#### **3.4.4. Reflexivity**

Gibbs (2010) suggests that reflexivity:

“refers to the view that researchers inevitably, in some way or another, reflect the views and interests of their milieu. It also refers to the capacity of researchers to reflect upon their actions and values during research, whether in producing data or writing accounts” (p.151).

Reflexivity recognizes that researchers are part of the social world that they are researching, which is already interpreted by the actors, undermining the notion of objective reality. It suggests that researchers shall acknowledge and disclose their own selves in the research. As a practitioner working in the field of teaching and supporting learners with dyslexia in a GFE College it was necessary to consider how to make this public and how to address the issue in the research. This was made explicit in the letters sent to the tutors in the colleges and before all the interviews. The research assistant who conducted the learner interviews also disclosed herself.

#### **3.4.5. Sampling**

In determining the criteria for sampling, consideration was given as to from whom the data would be gathered. A list of GFE colleges in England and Wales was examined; these were divided into regions. Due to the large number of colleges, it was decided to restrict the research to colleges in Yorkshire and Humberside (The Humber) (twenty four in total). This was in line with national initiatives, which envisage regional and local delivery of high-quality provision for learners in the FE system with regional strategic delivery plans for its development (Sections 2.2.1.5, 2.2.1.6). Colleges were selected for further research based on a number of criteria: the quality of provision for learners with dyslexia, the size of the college, location, compliance and convenience (Section 3.5.3.2).

## **3.5. Methods**

### **3.5.1. Introduction**

The most appropriate methods of gathering the data were determined so as to answer the research questions. The strengths and weaknesses of each method were considered as well as their suitability for different issues. The main methods chosen were: a questionnaire, scrutiny of documents, telephone interviews, semi-structured individual interviews, and focus group interviews. These will be considered separately according to a two-phase sequential design.

### **3.5.2. Phase One**

The first phase was designed to answer the first research question.

#### **Research question 1**

*What is the present position in GFE colleges in Yorkshire and Humberside (The Humber) with respect to systems for identifying and providing for learners with dyslexia?*

A quantitative method was selected as most appropriate for answering the first research question; this involved using an initial survey strategy, a questionnaire (**Appendix 1**), to gather data on provision for learners with dyslexia in GFE colleges in Yorkshire and Humberside (The Humber).

#### **3.5.2.1. Questionnaire**

##### **Reason for choice**

A questionnaire was chosen as it was possible to send it to the specialist dyslexia team in a number of colleges all at once enabling a great deal of background data to be gathered in a short space of time. Data collected would also help to answer the other research questions. The questionnaire questions were based on the more specific and concrete research sub-questions. In devising the questionnaire suggestions by Davidson (1970), Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2002) and Fraenkel and Wallen (2008) were considered. In order to encourage a greater response, care was taken to keep the questionnaire as short and simple as possible with both closed and open-ended questions. The design, layout and format of the questionnaire were carefully thought out so as to make it clear and minimise potential errors. It was made to look easy, attractive and interesting in order to engage the interest of respondents, plenty of space was left for questions and answers. It started with a short and clear instruction and used clear wording in the questions, so that

respondents could provide answers as close as possible to the truth. A section was added at the end for them to consent to further contact and to put their name and contact details.

### **Advantages and disadvantages**

A particular strength of the questionnaire is that it can be administered without the presence of the researcher, and is comparatively straightforward to analyse (Wilson and McLean 1994). A great deal of information can be obtained from quite a large sample. It is important to make sure questions are clear and do not mislead. There can be a difficulty in getting respondents to answer questions honestly and thoughtfully. Another weakness is that the response rate can be low (Fraenkel and Wallen 2008). This could be due to lack of opportunity to build rapport and clarify instructions.

I addressed the problem of non-response by: using strategies for maximising the response rate to postal questionnaires and increasing reliability, for example, personalising letters where possible, sending out questionnaires with an addressed envelope, stressing the importance of benefits to the group targeted; follow-up contact with non-respondents by means of a letter and phone call, checking whether the letters arrived at the targeted teams or individuals and trying to resolve any difficulties they were having (Hudson and Miller 1997; Fraenkel and Wallen 2008).

### **Research process**

A cover letter was devised to accompany the questionnaire, in order to explain its purpose and motivate a response (Fraenkel and Wallen 2008). The letter, together with a copy of the questionnaire, was sent to all the principals of the GFE Colleges in Yorkshire and Humberside (The Humber), in order to obtain permission for the research and for the name of a contact person to whom it could be sent (**Appendix 2**). The questionnaire was sent to the contact people in the colleges where permission was granted. Letters were personalised, where possible, and stamped, addressed envelopes were enclosed, in order to maximise the response rate. Non-respondents were contacted by means of a letter, phone-call or e-mail, so as to check whether the letters had arrived at the targeted teams or individuals, and to try to resolve any difficulties. Fourteen questionnaires were returned. The returned questionnaires were read through and any answers that were unclear were checked, by means of a phone call, for example, meaning of abbreviations.

### **Processing and analysis of data**

Data from the questionnaire were explored, analysed and interpreted. In processing the data consideration was given to data analysis, reduction, display and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles and Huberman 1994) (Section 3.6). In order to process the data from the questionnaire replies, the information collected was first written out on a word document, separately for each college, using the headings from the questions. The data were coded using these headings as themes and any new ones sought. Different colours were used for the different themes. In order to display the data a table was then compiled with each question and its separate parts. The data obtained from each college were added into a separate column on the table. Each college was represented with a different letter of the alphabet so it could not be readily identified. The data were reduced to a minimum until the information from all fourteen colleges could be fitted across one page. This enabled analysis of the data obtained for each question across all the colleges. Data was displayed using tables, figures and graphs (Chapter 4).

#### **3.5.2.2. Collection of documentary evidence**

Documentary evidence was initially collected on each college through an Internet search, for example, OFSTED reports, size of college, learner numbers, range of courses, dyslexia support provision. Other additional data for each GFE College in Yorkshire and Humberside (The Humber) were obtained from the LSC and the Data Service. Content analysis was used to analyse these and some of the data were added to the background information on the table. Support policies (if available) were obtained as part of the questionnaire data.

#### **3.5.3. Phase Two**

Phase one was followed by a second phase in which a qualitative research strategy was used. Firstly, this involved semi-structured telephone interviews, with colleges who responded to the questionnaire, with the intent of verifying, clarifying and elaborating on data obtained from the questionnaire. Secondly, semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews were used with a few individuals, to probe and explore the data in more depth, and to gain understanding of the lived experiences of a small number of participants (Creswell 2003). The planned use of interviews helped to increase validity and reliability enabling more comprehensive data to be obtained by different methods (**Figure 1**).

### **3.5.3.1. Telephone interviews**

#### **Reason for choice**

Telephone interviews were chosen in order to help personalise the research and assess the situation in colleges. It was planned to select ten to fifteen colleges for these, based on the criteria for determining effectiveness. In the end thirteen telephone interviews were conducted with all colleges who consented to further research, the duration of these ranged from eight to thirty five minutes, dependent on the time available by the interviewees and depth of information provided (**Table 2**) (Section 3.5.3.3). The telephone interviews enabled specialist tutors to answer more open-ended questions designed to draw out their opinions and views. They facilitated the gathering of more explicit information such as, evaluation approaches used, other staff in the team, something the college was doing that was different or work the college was most proud of. Although the telephone interviews were mainly devised for elaboration of data, they also helped to clarify and verify information obtained from the questionnaire.

#### **Advantages and disadvantages**

Consideration was given to a number of advantages of telephone interviews pointed out by researchers (Dicker and Gilbert 1988; Nias 1991; Oppenheim 1992; Borg and Gall 1996; Fraenkel and Wallen 2008): they are cheaper than face-to-face interviews and provide a higher and more rapid response rate; they enable selection of colleges from a more dispersed area; they allow the researcher to clarify questions and ask follow up questions; it is possible to make frequent call-backs thus enhancing reliability and contact; busy people can be reached at times more convenient to them; they enable the collection of more comprehensive or sensitive data.

The disadvantages of telephone interviews include: difficulty of access to a telephone; one telephone may be shared by several people making it difficult for them to talk about certain issues in private; withholding or not disclosing information because of uncertainty about confidentiality; absence of non-verbal cues; responses are difficult to write down or record during the interview. These were taken into consideration when planning the interviews.

#### **Planning for effective telephone interviews**

In planning for effective telephone interviews a number of points were considered (Harvey 1988; Oppenheim 1992; Miller 1995): a preliminary call was made in order to fix a time for a longer call, it was arranged to ring at a time that was convenient for the interviewee; prompts and probes were prepared, including more than usual closed questions and less

complex questions, in case the respondent 'dries up'; preparation in advance of the interview for its potential to be realized; the sample to be interviewed was considered carefully based on evidence of good practice and provision as well as any innovative practices (effectiveness criteria, data from questionnaire and documentary evidence). Prompts enabled clarification of topics or questions, whilst probes enabled the interviewer to ask respondents to extend, elaborate, add to, provide detail for, clarify or qualify their response (Morrison 1993; Creswell 2009).

### **Research process**

The questionnaires contained a final section to enable respondents to agree to further contact, colleges that consented were approached for conducting telephone interviews. The contacts were e-mailed or telephoned in order to arrange for a suitable time to speak to them, it was attempted to ring them at this time whenever possible. Replies to the questionnaire were checked to see whether there was anything in particular that needed expanding on or discussing with that college, as well as OFSTED reports for the college, to seek information on dyslexia support. The questions and prompts were annotated during the interview and any further notes made. There was a need to be versatile in order to re-adjust to each individual interviewee. Before each interview the interviewees were again told about the purpose and procedure of the research and their consent was obtained. The interviews were recorded so as to concentrate on what was being said and to avoid the loss of data. The telephone interview was piloted with a specialist dyslexia tutor in a college outside the area and in a GFE college that was readily accessible.

### **Processing and analysis of data**

The information from the telephone interviews was written out and analyzed according to the same themes as the questionnaire replies. It was then added to the data obtained from the questionnaires for each college. A different colour was used so it would be easy to distinguish by which method the data had been obtained. Some of the data obtained from the telephone interviews backed up that obtained from the questionnaire, helping to clarify and verify the information, increasing reliability and validity. More in-depth, new information was also obtained through the use of this method, which helped to expand and elaborate on the data obtained from the questionnaire. The data collected were reduced and any additional data from the telephone interviews were added, onto a revised table, under appropriate themes, together with the questionnaire data. It was then possible to proceed to the next step of analysing all the data from the questionnaire, telephone

interviews and Data Service, presenting this in graphical form where possible. The analysis enabled decisions to be made as to which colleges to select for further research.

### **3.5.3.2. Selection of colleges for further research**

The purpose of this stage in the data collection was to widen the range of stakeholder perspectives and to allow for greater elaboration of the views. The selection criteria for further research included:

- The quality of provision for learners with dyslexia - colleges which met the most number of criteria for determining effectiveness and any with innovative practices which warranted further investigation.
- The size of the college - based on learner numbers and provision accessed, different sized colleges with the most effective provision were selected
- Location - colleges from different parts of the region
- Compliance - colleges that were willing to participate in the research
- Convenience - colleges that were convenient to visit with regard to date, time, and those that could provide a suitable focus group/tutor interview

The data from the questionnaire and insights gained through telephone interviews were examined and analysed for each theme across all the colleges, according to the criteria for determining effectiveness of dyslexia provision in GFE colleges. Five colleges were identified as suitable for further research, selected from different regions and of different sizes. One of the colleges was used due to ease of access by the researcher. Five of the colleges were contacted and three of these were able to participate in further research. Letters and e-mails were sent to the colleges in order to organise a suitable time for a visit. Interviews were conducted with tutors and supported learners who were willing to participate in the research (**Figure 1**).

### **3.5.3.3. Face-to-face-interviews**

Face-to-face interviews have a number of advantages: they have a higher response rate than questionnaires as respondents become more involved and motivated, it is possible to establish rapport, clarify questions, and follow up unclear or incomplete answers (Fraenkel and Wallen 2008). Disadvantages include: a higher cost than other methods, they are more time consuming, they require staff training, and can be prone to subjectivity and bias on the part of the interviewer (Section 3.4.2). Face-to-face interviews enabled the second and third research questions to be answered.

**Research question 2 & 3**

*What are the different perceptions by specialist tutors and learners of effective practice in the identification and provision for learners with dyslexia?*

*What opinions do tutors and learners have concerning improvements that could be made for making identification and provision more effective?*

In order to answer the second and third research questions further data gathering activities were undertaken, to widen the range of perspectives and to allow for greater elaboration of views. They facilitated triangulation of data and methods verifying and expanding on the data collected by the questionnaire (**Figure 1**). The main methods planned for this were semi-structured tutor interviews and focus group interviews with learners. In the end, due to the difficulty of organising for learners to attend at a specific time as a focus group, dyad interviews and individual interviews were also conducted with learners. Five individual tutor interviews took place in three colleges, the times of these varied from eighteen minutes to thirty-eight minutes (**Table 2**). The duration of the learner interviews ranged from seventy-two minutes (five learner focus group) to six minutes (individual learner).

**Table 2** Interview duration

Interview type	Times of Interview (in minutes)			
	College A	College K	College M	Other colleges
Telephone interview (n = 13)	26	14	20	8, 8, 10, 12, 13, 15, 15, 20, 23, 35
Tutor Interview (n = 5)	38 20	31 18	30	
Learner Interview n = 6 interviews, 12 learners	72 n=5 (learners)	20 n=2 19 n=1 6 n=1	57 n=2 20 n=1	

Key: n = number

**3.5.3.4. Semi-structured interviews**

*Semi-structured interviews* (Bogdan and Biklen 1992; Morrison 1993; Robson 2003) were used with dyslexia tutors. These allowed the respondents views and feelings to emerge but also gave the interviewer some control (Fontana and Frey 2000). A semi-structured interview is a way of combining a concern for structure, freedom and individuality. It ensures that the interview makes good use of time and resources, enabling the data gathered to be relevant to the study’s objectives, making sure that opportunities to collect data, essential to its successful outcome, are not lost (Verma and Mallick 1999). In order to achieve greater validity it was planned to minimize the amount of bias (Oppenheim 1992) by good rapport with the interviewee and not changing the question wording or

sequence. Care was taken by the interviewer to establish a suitable atmosphere, by active listening, so the participants felt relaxed, secure and comfortable to talk freely and express views and opinions, without influence. Non-verbal communication and the dynamics of the situation were also taken into consideration. The interviews were conducted with respect for the individual and culture of those being interviewed (Fraenkel and Wallen 2008). The structure enabled the interview, as far as possible, to be the same for each respondent. It was important to be natural, viewing the interview as a social, interpersonal encounter, not merely a data collection exercise. The everyday, easy-going and colloquial language of the interviewee was used in order to generate rich descriptions and authentic data. A favourable interview environment was sought, such as a quiet room free from distractions.

The sequence and framing of the interview questions was considered, with easier, less threatening questions addressed earlier in the interview, in order to put respondents at their ease (Patton 1980). In framing the questions for the semi-structured interviews, prompts and probes were used (Morrison 1993; Creswell 2009) (Section 3.5.3.1), based on the research sub-questions. This added to the richness, depth of response, comprehensiveness and honesty that, according to Patton (1980), are some of the hallmarks of successful interviewing.

### **Research process**

One college was chosen, due to convenience of access, in order to pilot the tutor interview. The pilot enabled amendments to be made. Letters were sent to the selected colleges asking them for permission to participate in further research. These were followed up by e-mails and telephone calls. Three colleges were used in the end and five tutor interviews were conducted in all. The prepared set of questions, prompts and probes was available and used as a guide. Before each interview the interviewees were again told about the purpose and procedure of the research and their consent was obtained verbally. The interviews were recorded so as not to miss any information, enabling the interviewer to concentrate on the interviewee and what they were saying. The semi-structured interviews enabled the participant's views and feelings to be expressed through the more open-ended questions, allowing for more comprehensive, in-depth, qualitative data to be collected.

## **Processing and analysis of data**

The tutor interviews were transcribed, verbatim, by the researcher. This enabled an in-depth knowledge to be gained of all the data and issues. In transcribing the interviews care was taken to minimize data loss and distortion. Any additional notes made were also included. The data were collated, initially using the headings in the effectiveness criteria and adding any additional ones that emerged (Section 3.6). The data were tabulated for all of the themes that emerged against the data obtained from the five tutors, for each theme. The data for all the tutors could then be viewed across one page and analysed.

### **3.5.3.5. Focus group interviews**

*Focus group interviews* were chosen in order to gain the opinions of a homogeneous group of learners about the dyslexia provision. One of the benefits of using a focus group is that data emerges from the *interaction* of the group, yielding insights that might not otherwise have been available in a straightforward interview (Morgan 1988; Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2002; Robson 2003). The members of the group can hear other people's views and consider their own. Focus group interviews tap a different realm of social reality from that revealed by one-to-one interviews or questionnaires. However focus groups have their limitations, one of which is difficulty with recording data. This is because the interviewer is concentrating on the interview itself and may not have time to deal with the technical aspects, such as switching on and changing tapes. It would also be difficult to identify who is speaking on the recording. In order to help overcome the difficulties it was planned to have two people present in the focus group interviews, one to conduct the interview and one to deal with the technical aspects.

The age and background of the interviewees were taken into consideration. The help of a younger research assistant, who was also dyslexic and unknown to the interviewees, was enlisted, in order to conduct the interviews. This enabled the respondents to identify with the research assistant and feel more relaxed in talking with someone nearer their own age who understood their difficulties. A prepared set of questions, prompts, and probes were provided for the interviewer to refer to (**Appendix 3**). The interviewer concentrated on keeping the session going well by making the interview open-ended but to the point. Learners were made to feel as comfortable as possible so as to allow them to express their views, thoughts and feelings at ease. If they started to go off track the questions, prompts and probes were used to steer them back. The interviewer made sure all learners had a chance to contribute by not allowing for one person to dominate the discussion.

Another difficulty is that focus groups explore collective phenomena and there may not be a consensus in attitudes. Generalization from data is problematic. To help overcome this it was attempted to concentrate on the nature and range of participants' views.

It was planned to conduct focus group interviews with a small group of learners with dyslexia in each of the three individual colleges visited. The initial plan to have two people in the room to help with the interview, become a flexible arrangement, in order to incorporate different situations. In two of the interviews only two learners arrived at the start, it was decided that the research assistant should start the interview. After setting up the tape recorder the researcher had to leave the room to contact learners who had not arrived and to search for latecomers. In one focus group interview the researcher was also in the room together with the interviewer, dealing with the recording and making notes and observations. In order to minimise the affect on the respondents, of another person in the room, the researcher tried to remain as inconspicuous as possible, so as not to distract the interviewer and interviewees.

### **Research process**

A pilot focus group interview was organised in one college, chosen through convenience of access. Learners who had been receiving support by the specialist dyslexia tutors were sent a letter inviting them to attend, at a particular time, in order to take part in a focus group interview. Students were asked to send back a reply slip to say they could attend, a few students were also asked individually. The response was very low, only two learners arrived at the time of the interview, but the decision was made to go ahead. At the end of the interview another learner arrived who was interviewed separately. The interviews were taped, with the permission of the interviewees, so that the interviewer could concentrate on the interview without having to make notes.

After the pilot some amendments were made. In order to encourage more learners to attend the next focus group the timing was changed to an hour before lunch. A lunch was made available to the learners after the interview. The college organised for an appropriate group of learners, who had received tuition or support with the dyslexia tutors, to be present. The focus group was very fruitful, a group of five learners attended and all contributed to the discussion. Another focus group was again different, because of the nature of the support in the college. A peripatetic dyslexia tutor came into college two days per week; interviews took place on a morning when the tutor was in college. Support was organised on a 'drop-in' basis and the learners were interviewed as they attended.

This enabled a dyad group of two learners to be interviewed, as well as one learner who came with a friend who supported them in class, and another individual learner. A total of twelve learners were interviewed from three colleges, one focus group of five learners and two groups of two learners. Three individual learners were also interviewed.

### **Processing and analysis of data**

All the learner interviews were transcribed, in verbatim by the researcher. The information collected was grouped into existing themes and any new ones that emerged (Section 3.6), for example, 'past experiences at school' and 'views on the term dyslexia'. The information from all the learners was analysed and collated under these themes, including a lot of quotations and examples. Omitting most of the quotations and just including one or two key ones for each theme reduced the information.

#### **3.5.3.6. Summary**

The semi-structured tutor interviews and learner interviews enabled a broader view of effective practice in the identification and provision for learners with dyslexia in GFE Colleges. They also enabled tutors and learners to express their own opinions concerning improvements that could be made. The information obtained enabled verification, validation and triangulation of data (Sections 3.4.1, 3.4.2). The first research question was addressed through the questionnaire, telephone interviews and scrutiny of documents. Telephone interviews also helped to answer the second and third research questions, although these were mainly addressed through face-to-face tutor interviews and learner interviews. In order to compare the data collected from the different methods a table was compiled with the main themes and the three different analyses of the data: questionnaire/ telephone interviews/tutor interviews and learner interviews. It was then possible to study and compare the data collected from all the methods across each theme.

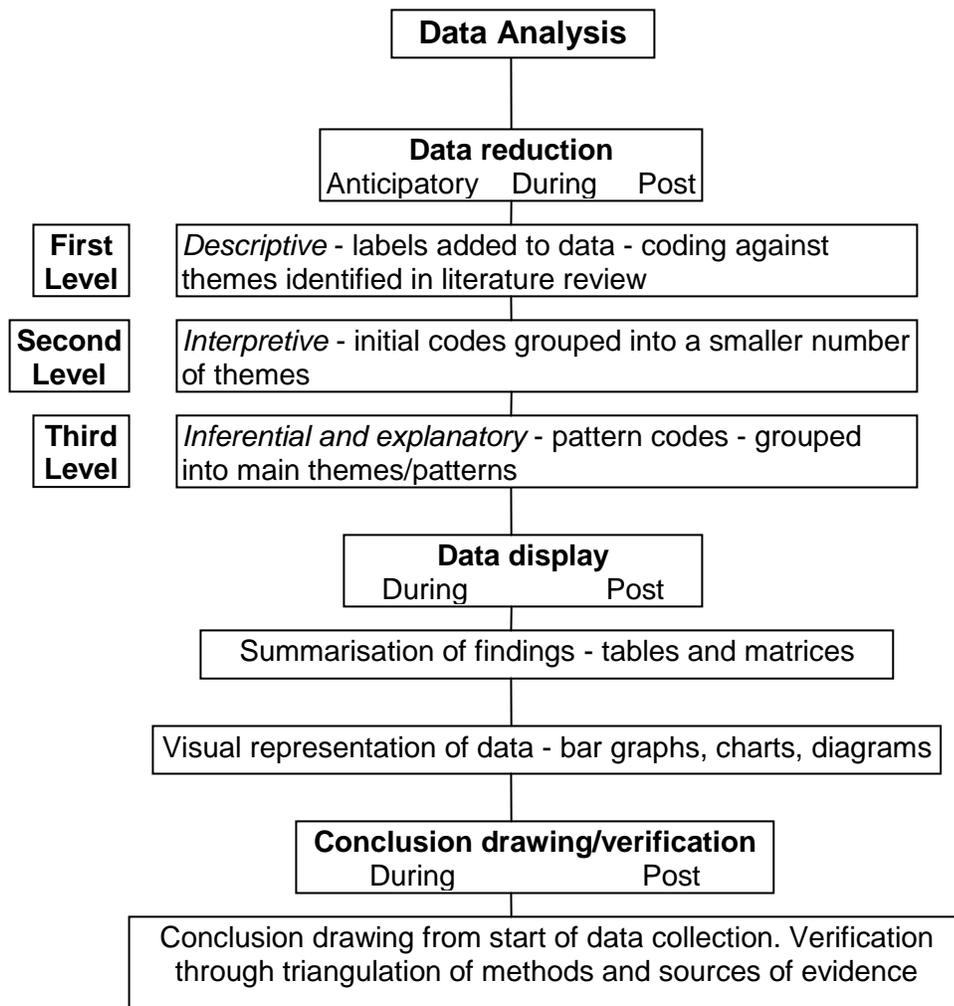
## **3.6. Data Analysis**

### **3.6.1. Introduction**

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2002) data analysis involves organising, accounting for, and explaining the data. This means making sense of the data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities. The form of data processing and analysis had to be appropriate for the kinds of data gathered and needed to serve the research purposes. Data analysis was carried out on the range and depth of both quantitative and qualitative data in a sequence of steps

and was on-going throughout the research. The results from the different methods were analysed separately, in three main groups: questionnaire and telephone interview data; tutor interview data and learner interview data. The data from the questionnaire, telephone interviews and tutor interviews were then merged together and analysed again. The results of all interviews were integrated in a final summary and conclusion.

A model of analysis proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994 p.10) was adapted for the purpose of the present study (**Figure 2**). They define analysis as consisting of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification. They suggest that it takes place before (anticipatory), during and after data collection (post). These activities provided a useful guide for analysing the data.



**Figure 2** The data analysis process

(Adapted from Miles and Huberman 1994 p.10. 'Components of Data Analysis: Flow Model')

### 3.6.2. Data reduction

Miles and Huberman (1994 p.11) state that “data reduction is a form of analysis that sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards and organizes data in such a way that ‘final’ conclusions can be drawn and verified”. Anticipatory data reduction occurs before the study, as the researcher plans the research. Data reduction continues during the research, for example, in summarizing and coding data. It also takes place after data collection, post fieldwork, up until the final report is written. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that ‘coding’ is concerned with attaching meaningful labels to data chunks. The codes define categories and pull together material into some order or structure and maintain the context specificity. Coding helped to organise and manage the data; it enabled the researcher to focus their thinking on the text and ways of interpreting it (Gibbs 2010). Pre-existing ideas and concepts guided and framed analysis. Initial codes in the research were related to the research questions, concepts and themes identified in the literature review. During the course of analysis these were modified and added to.

Miles and Huberman (1994) state that codes: can be at different levels of analysis, they can happen at different times during analysis and are astringent as they pull together a lot of material. They make the distinction between first, second, and third level coding (**Figure 2**). First level coding is descriptive and is concerned with attaching labels; usually single terms, to groups of words. It is used for summarizing segments of data. Second level coding is interpretive and involves grouping initial codes into a smaller number of themes. Third level codes are more inferential and explanatory. These are ‘pattern’ codes, which identify an emergent theme, configuration or explanation.

The findings were summarised during the data collection stage (Miles and Huberman 1994; Gibbs 2010). This was done in two main steps; firstly, after the questionnaire data was collected and secondly, after the telephone interviews. This enabled a check to be made as to whether adequate data concerning the research questions had been collected and helped to modify subsequent research. Data from the questionnaire were explored, analysed and interpreted. Cross-tabulation was used to look for patterns and make comparisons (Gibbs 2010). Many questions were pre-coded into different categories in advance, so each response could be directly converted into these labels. Although there were pre-existing categories other new categories emerged, as the work was unique. This process enabled patterns and themes to be detected and generalizations to be made.

A composite summary of all the interviews was written, to accurately capture the essence of the research phenomenon (Section 6.1). Hycner (1985 p.294) makes the point that “such a composite summary describes the *world* in general, as experienced by the participants. At the end of such a summary the researcher might want to note significant individual differences.”

### **Analysis of research methods**

The different research methodology enabled a broad range of perspectives to be gathered on provision in GFE colleges for learners with dyslexia. The main themes are listed in **Table 3**; some of the themes were shared with all the research methods, whilst others involved particular ones, for example, information on learner well-being was obtained from tutor and learner interviews. The questionnaires facilitated the gathering of figures and data on the main issues encompassed by the themes, whilst the tutor interviews verified, supported and expanded on the data from the questionnaires and telephone interviews, providing more in-depth and broader information. They enabled tutors to express personal viewpoints and opinions providing a variety of perspectives. The learner interviews verified, confirmed and expanded on the information obtained from the other methods and provided a wider viewpoint with additional, broader data. They enabled learners to express their views and opinions and talk about their personal experiences.

Use of the different methods enabled complementarity, expansion, breadth and depth of understanding, as well as corroboration (Section 3.4.1). For example, all the research methods provided information on the theme of staffing. The questionnaire and telephone interviews enabled data to be gathered on the nature and numbers of staff, their qualifications, student contact hours, collaboration with outside agencies, dyslexia awareness training. The tutor interviews provided more in-depth details, such as other responsibilities held by dyslexia tutors, flexibility of tutors, LSAs, the views of a peripatetic tutor, collaboration with other staff in college, additional information on dyslexia awareness training and CPD training for specialist tutors. The learner interviews enabled a wider viewpoint on staffing to be gathered, such as the actual support received in lessons and awareness of dyslexia by subject tutors.

A wealth of information was obtained on suggested improvements to practice using all the research methods. The questionnaire and telephone interviews highlighted themes such as: transition, support provision, staff capacity, training, time, accommodation, resources, assessment and management. As well as these themes, new themes emerged from tutor

interviews, such as: development of local skills, identification, screening, learner issues, management awareness and tutor voice. The learner interviews added a broader viewpoint on improvements, with themes such as: support in class, awareness of dyslexia, teaching methods, tutor delivery, and provision.

**Table 3** Information gathered through different research methods

Theme	Questionnaire Telephone interviews	Tutor Interview	Learner interview
Background	✓		
Referral	✓	✓	
Identification	✓	✓	✓
Screening	✓	✓	
Support	✓	✓	✓
Support services	✓	✓	✓
Staff	✓	✓	✓
Collaboration	✓	✓	
Staff training	✓	✓	
Teaching Methods	✓	✓	✓
Accommodation	✓	✓	✓
Resources	✓	✓	✓
Assessment	✓	✓	✓
Reviews	✓	✓	✓
Learner well-being		✓	✓
Evaluation	✓	✓	✓
Barriers	✓	✓	
Suggestions for improvement	✓	✓	✓
Previous experience			✓
Opinions on dyslexia			✓

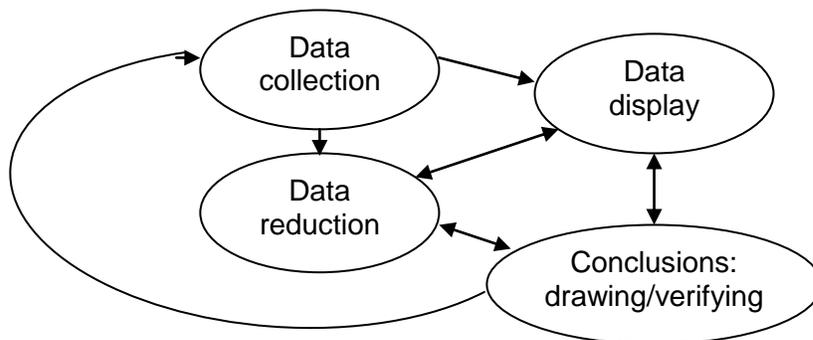
### 3.6.3. Data display

Data reduction led to ideas on how the data may be displayed which helped to form tentative conclusions. Miles and Huberman (1994 p.11) define display as “an organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action”. Data display was carried out using two of their central techniques, matrices and tables, to summarise the data. Matrices are two-dimensional arrays of information and help in comparing, contrasting and cross-referencing data. Visual representations were also used, for example, bar graphs, organizational charts and diagrams. These provided useful tools helping to crystallize and display complex information. Written analysis also took place. Forms of display were determined by the data collected and emerging themes.

### 3.6.4. Conclusion drawing/verification

Conclusion drawing and verification began from the start of data collection as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). This involved deciding what things mean, noting regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causes, propositions. Miles and Huberman (1994) point out that, conclusions become more explicit as the research proceeds, and are verified. Meanings, emerging from the data are tested for their validity. Verification was built into data collection through triangulation of methods and sources of evidence. It was important to seek out both confirming and disconfirming cases in order to set the boundaries and modify any theory that was being developed.

Miles and Huberman (1994) portray data analysis as an interactive cyclical process with the researcher moving between different 'nodes' (**Figure 3**). Although they concentrate on qualitative analysis they point out that the three activities of analysis are also a useful way of analysing quantitative data, which tends to be more sequential than cyclical.



**Figure 3** Components of data analysis: Interactive model  
(Miles and Huberman 1994 p.12)

### 3.7. Presenting and reporting the results

The writing up of the research report was on going. It was written in a way that would be appropriate for the audience. It was attempted to make it short, clear and complete, with summaries where possible, enabling evaluation and fair critique. The most appropriate form of reporting was used to ensure everyone understood the language and the statistics, respecting the confidentiality of the participants. Multiple perspectives were presented. The results were presented in tabular and written-out form as well as non-verbal forms such as figures (Chapters 4, 5, 6).

### **3.8. Developing a working model**

Gibbs (2010 p.150) defines a model as: “A mapping device, often expressed in a chart or diagram, designed to represent the relationship between key elements in a field of study.” He views it as a framework: “that attempts to explain what have been identified as key aspects of the phenomenon being studied in terms of a number of other aspects or elements of the situation.” (p.86). This provided a useful definition for the present research, in devising a framework to represent the key elements that emerged from the data.

After the research information had been gathered and analysed, and based on the emerging themes and variables, a possible model of working was proposed, that was appropriate to the present situation in colleges. The findings from the research and data obtained from the different methods will be examined in two steps: questionnaires, telephone interviews and tutor interviews (Chapter 4) and learner interviews (Chapter 5). The results from all the methods will then be integrated and summarised (Chapter 6), with a final emerging model presented (Chapter 7).

## Chapter 4

### The research findings 1

#### Questionnaire, telephone interviews and tutor interviews

##### 4.1. Introduction

The research findings will initially be considered separately according to the different methodologies used and research questions. Firstly, the research findings from the questionnaire, telephone interviews and tutor interviews (Chapter 4), addressing research questions one, two and three. Secondly, the learner interviews (Chapter 5), which address research questions two and three. The final summary of all the research findings will be considered in chapter 6.

Fourteen GFE colleges returned the Dyslexia Questionnaire and thirteen telephone interviews were conducted with these colleges. Five individual tutor interviews took place in three colleges (**Table 2**) (Section 3.5.3.3). The data obtained from these methods were combined, and the results will be presented in different subsections; these will be linked to the original questions in the questionnaire (**Appendix 1**) and additional information obtained from tutor interviews.

##### 4.2. Background information

The data from the questionnaires and telephone interviews were tabulated against the original themes and any new ones that emerged. The colleges were randomly assigned a letter of the alphabet (A to N) in order to preserve confidentiality. The size of the colleges ranged from approximately 600 to 35,000 learners in 2006/7. Further statistics for full and part-time learner numbers were obtained from the LSC and the Data Service. According to these figures for 2006/7 learner numbers in the colleges involved in the research ranged in size from 3,623 learners to 26,946 learners. Nine colleges had below 10,000 learners. Four colleges had between 10,000 and 20,000 learners and one college had over 20,000 learners (**Table 4**). There was discrepancy between the figures, as data provided from the questionnaire replies did not match figures provided by the LSC.

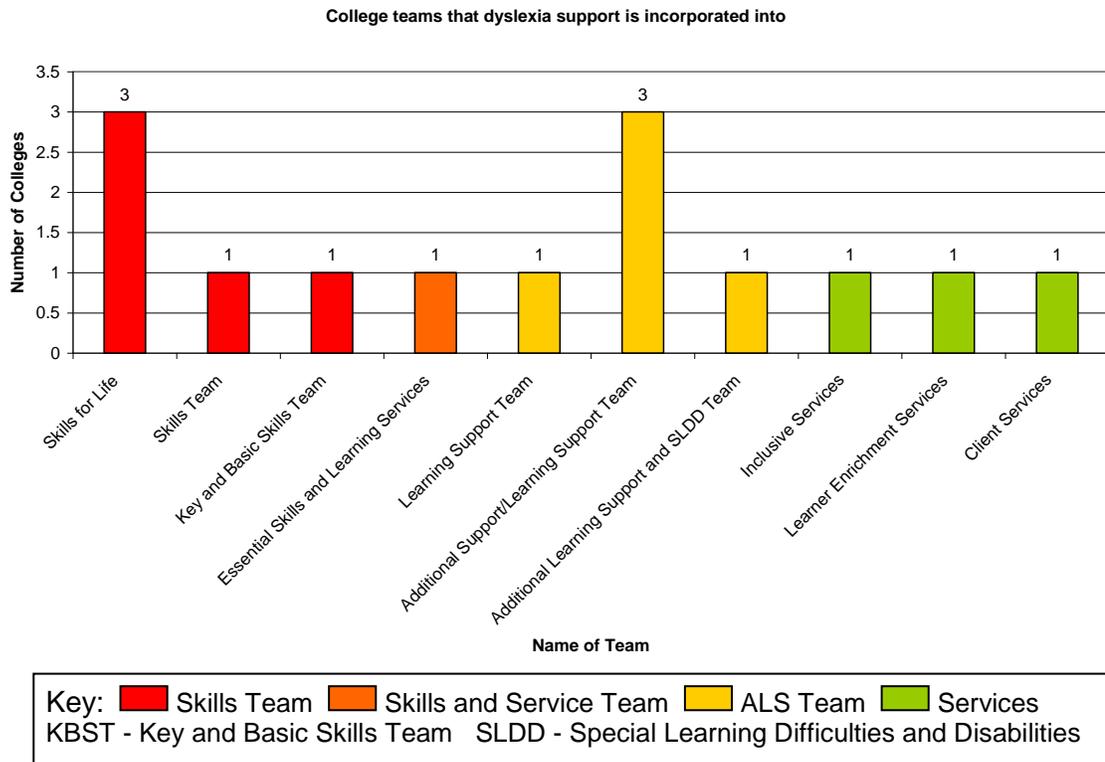
**Table 4** Size of college - Number of learners

(n = 14)

College	Size of College (LSC Data 2006/7)	Size of College (Research data)
C	26,946	35,000
E	17,420	26,095
D	14,618	26,000
L	14,057	19,192
M	10,546	21,882
F	6,788	12,000
J	5,545	Approx. 8,000
N	5,255	1,500 - 4,000
H	4,519	7,000
K	3,965	600
I	3,866	6,956
B	3,863	16,422
A	3,744	5,266
G	3,623	4,000

**4.2.1. Placement of dyslexia team**

**Question 17: What college department is the dyslexia team part of?**



**Figure 4** Graph to show the college teams that incorporate dyslexia support

(n = 14)

The dyslexia teams in all the colleges were included in other teams (**Figure 4**). The most frequent were the Skills for life Team (3)<sup>8</sup> and Additional Support/Learning Support Team (3). The dyslexia teams were placed in three groups according to the terminology used in their titles: Skills Teams (6), ALS Teams (5) and Services (Learning, Inclusive, Learner Enrichment, Client) (4). One college was included in two groups as it was both a skills team and a learning service.

#### 4.2.2. Policy

##### **Question 1: Is there a policy for dyslexia support?**

**Table 5** Dyslexia Support Policy

Dyslexia Support Policy	Number of colleges (n = 14)
Yes	4 (G, K, L, M - Dyslexia support aims and objectives - part of learner Support Policy) 1 (D - part of overall policy for FE) 1 (H - part of ALS policy)
No	5 (A, B, C, I, N) 1 (E - not specifically for dyslexia) 1 (F - information in a Disability Statement and Equality and Diversity policy) 1 (J - Quality Improvement Plan (QIP))

Six colleges had a policy for dyslexia support (**Table 5**); in three of these it was part of another policy. Eight of the colleges did not have a specific policy but three of these mentioned that it was part of another policy or plan. In summary, four colleges said that they had a policy for dyslexia support, five were part of an overall or another policy and five had no policy.

#### 4.2.3. Summary

The figures provided by the LSC for 2006/7 showed that the majority of the colleges that replied to the questionnaire had below 10,000 learners (9); five colleges had over 10,000 learners, one of which had over 20,000. The dyslexia teams in the fourteen colleges were located in the Skills Teams, ALS Teams and Services. Nine colleges had a policy that included dyslexia support.

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<sup>8</sup> Number in brackets represents number of colleges



colleges (13) used more than one method to refer students (**Figure 5**): four methods (5), three methods (4), two methods (4), and one method (1). Other referrals included: Initial assessment and screening during enrolment, student advisors, mentors, learning support assistants (LSAs), Connexions advisors, transition programme and Entry to Employment (E2E) training providers.

#### **4.3.2. Summary**

Learners with dyslexia were referred through a number of methods; the two main ones were self-declaration and referral by tutors, as well as schools and parents. Most colleges used more than one method to refer students.

#### **4.4. Initial identification**

***Question 3: How does the college initially identify learners with dyslexia?***

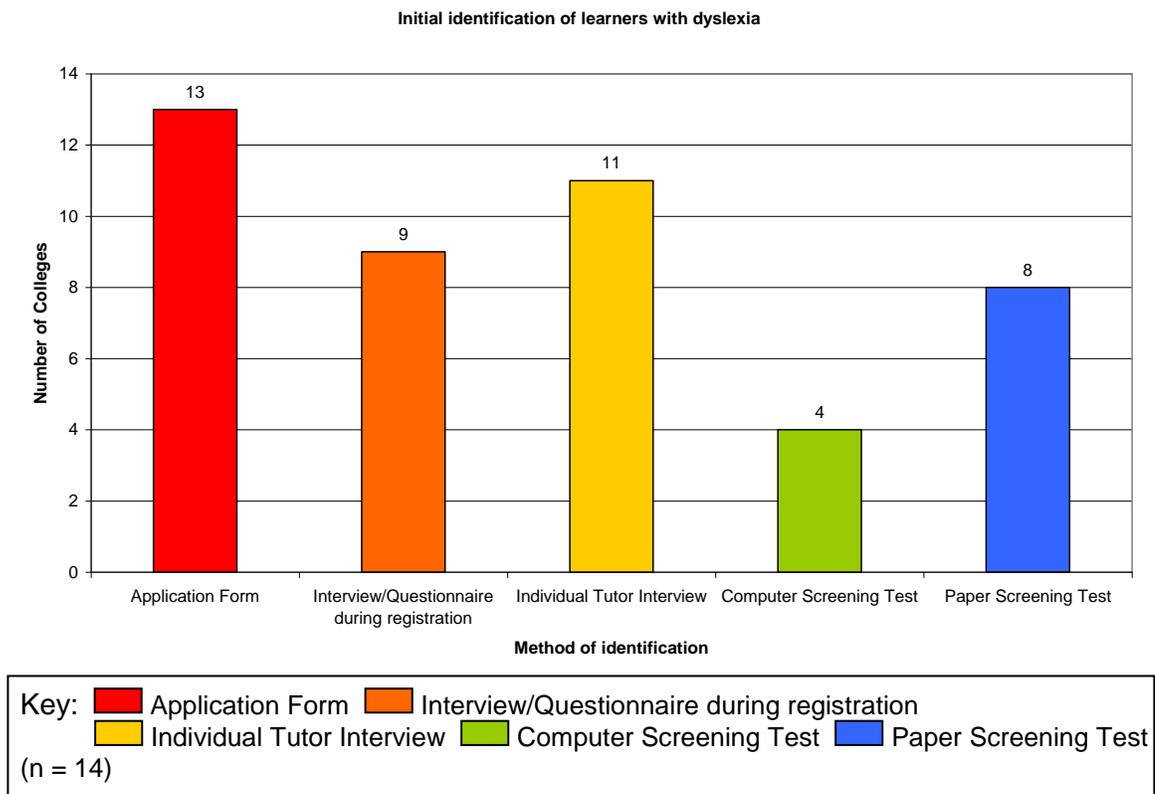
##### **4.4.1. Methods of initial identification**

The most common methods of initially identifying learners with dyslexia (**Figure 6**) were the application form (13) and individual tutor interviews (11). An interview or questionnaire during registration was also used by a number of colleges (9) as well as a paper-screening test (8) and a computer-screening test (4). Other methods included information from schools or an Educational Psychologist, initial assessment and free writing.

One tutor elaborated that initial identification at registration was through the SENDA process (SEN Disability Act). Relevant data were passed on to the dyslexia team who invited students by letter to come for an interview. Two tutors, from the same college, mentioned that an initial paper-based screen or assessment was given to all full time students and included literacy, numeracy, elements of IT as well as a dyslexia questionnaire. The skills support coordinator made support recommendations and considered whether learners needed testing for dyslexia. Dyslexia tutors interviewed the students and set up the support. In another college, the specialist support tutor went into lessons at the start of the course and talked to most vocational areas and their students, this was termed the 'hearts and minds' approach. It had a very positive effect and resulted in many referrals. One of the tutors was critical of on-line testing:

*'On-line testing for initial assessment can't be done affectively. You need to hear the person speaking and see elements of their writing as they produce it, because then you start to get a far better general indication of their abilities and where the problems lie.'* (2A)<sup>9</sup>

The majority of colleges (13) used more than one method to identify learners with dyslexia (**Figure 7**), with ten of these using three methods or more. Two colleges used five methods, four used four methods, four used three methods, three used two methods and one used one method.

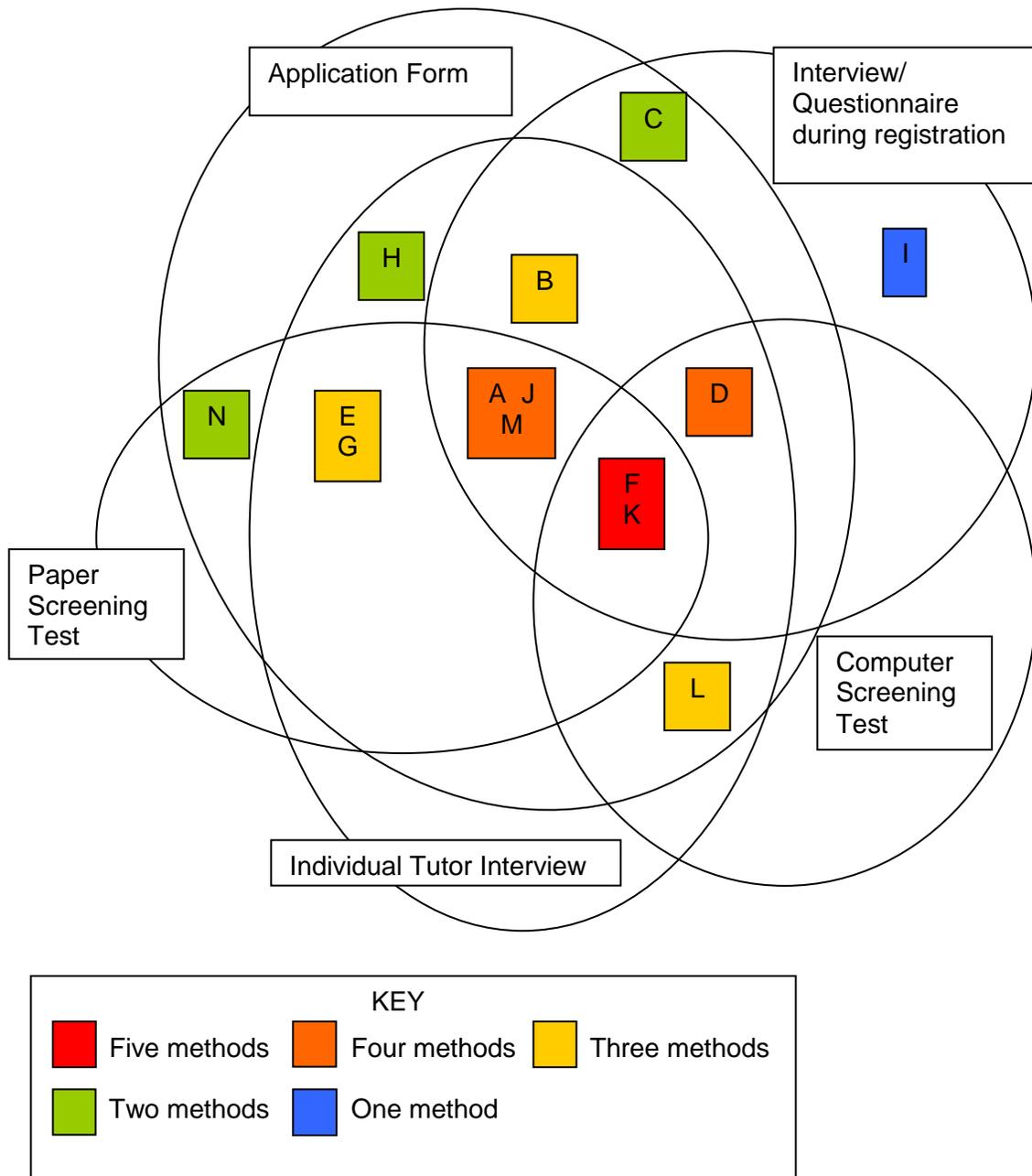


**Figure 6** Graph to show how learners with dyslexia were initially identified

#### 4.4.2. Summary

A number of methods were used to identify learners with dyslexia, the most common being the application form and individual tutor interviews. Other methods included an interview or questionnaire during registration, a paper-screening test, a computer-screening test, information from schools or an Educational Psychologist, initial assessment and free writing. Thirteen colleges used more than one method to identify learners.

<sup>9</sup> Each tutor has been allocated a number 1-5, the letter represents the college A-N

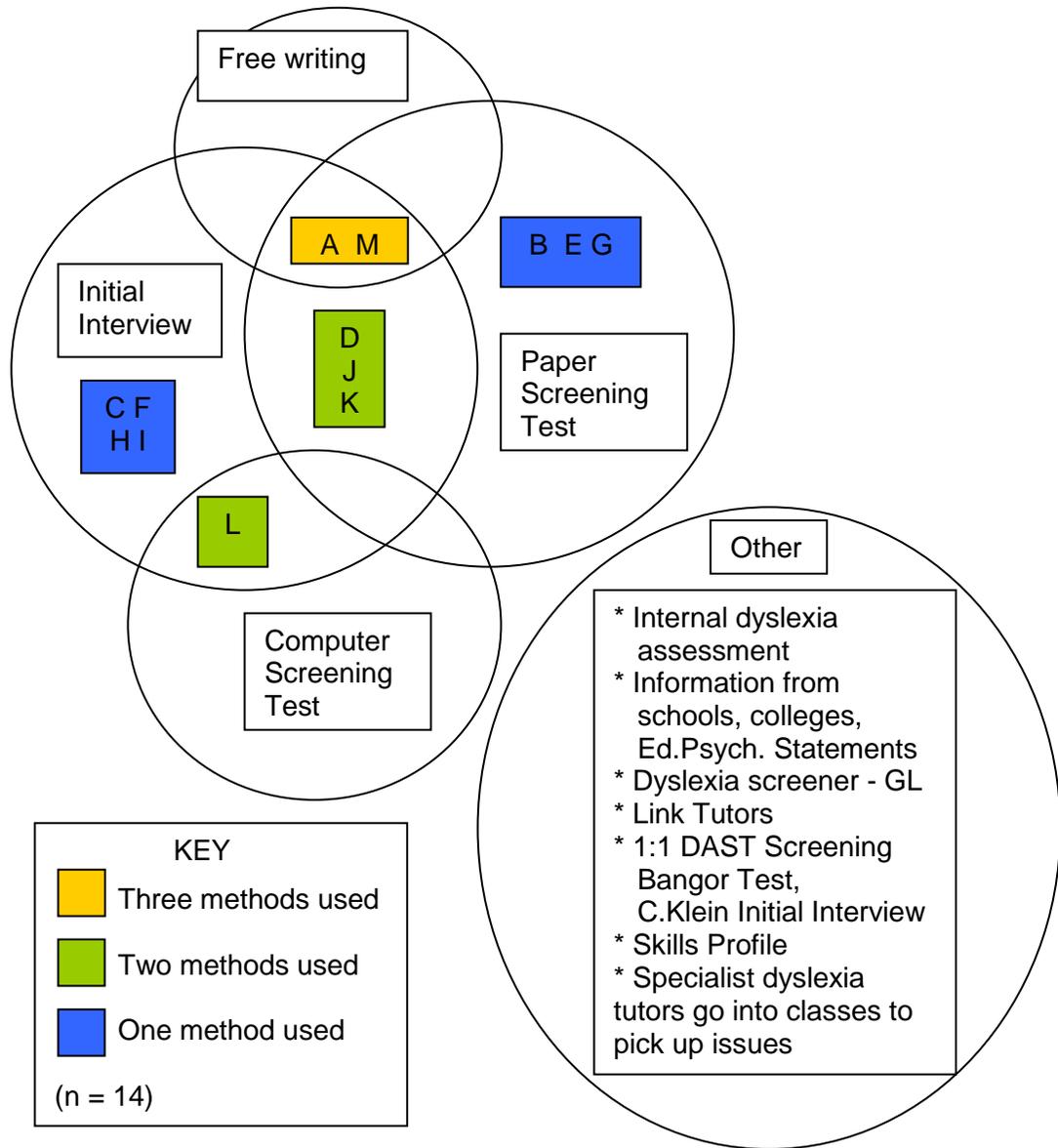


**Figure 7** Methods of initial identification of learners with dyslexia in 14 GFE colleges

## 4.5. Screening

**Question 4: What screening process is in place for learners who have self-declared as having dyslexia or have been referred by tutors?**

### 4.5.1. Methods of screening



**Figure 8** Methods used in screening learners for dyslexia

The main methods for screening learners with dyslexia were an initial interview (10) and a paper-screening test (8) (**Figure 8**). A free writing task was also used (2) as well as a computer-screening test (1). Six colleges used more than one method to screen learners:

three methods (2), two methods (4). Seven colleges used one method. A variety of other methods were also mentioned by colleges, such as, their own assessment, particular screening tests, information from course tutors, and outside agencies. For those who self-declared previous schools or colleges etc. were contacted for supporting evidence, such as statements, Educational Psychologist reports etc. One college mentioned its intended use of a GL Assessment Dyslexia Screener (GL Education Group 2012) and the use of link tutors. In another college the Dyslexia Adult Screening Test (DAST) (Fawcett and Nicholson 1998) and Bangor tests (Miles 1997) were used to screen learners. One college used the Bangor test and the Cynthia Klein Initial Interview (Klein 1997) together (Section 4.14.2, **Table 9**). One college said that if students had a previous test then they would go straight to a full test, if needed, for exams. One college used a skills profile, an assessment of strengths and weaknesses rather than diagnosis as such. In one college specialist tutors went into classes to pick up issues.

#### **4.5.2. Number of Learners**

##### ***Question 12: Numbers of learners with dyslexia and provision accessed: 2006/7***

The main method of referral of learners with dyslexia was by self-declaration during registration (9) (**Table 6**). In two of the colleges this was the main method of referral to the dyslexia team. In seven colleges learners both self-declared and were referred by tutors. In two of the colleges only tutors referred learners. Figures provided for learners who were screened for dyslexia ranged from 1,000 to 27 learners, the majority of colleges (6) screened below 90 learners. The number of learners referred by tutors ranged from 15 to 426 learners, in the majority of colleges (7) tutors referred below 90 learners. Figures for initial interviews conducted with learners with dyslexia ranged from 27 to 126 learners, in the majority of colleges (4) there were below 90 learners interviewed. Self-declaration at registration ranged from 50 to 637 learners, in the majority of colleges (7) there were 300 or below learners who self-declared.

#### **4.5.3. Summary**

The main methods used to screen learners with dyslexia were an initial interview and a paper-screening test. Six colleges used more than one method to screen learners and seven colleges used one method. The two main methods of referral to the dyslexia team were self-declaration and tutors. Learner figures indicate a wide variation between colleges in number of learners who were referred, initially identified and screened.

**Table 6** Learner numbers: referral, identification and screening  
(GFE colleges where approximate figures were provided n = 14)

College	Size of College (LSC Data) 2006/7	Size of College No. of learners (research data)	No. of learners who self-declared at registration	Percentage of Total Intake (LSC Data)	No. of learners referred by tutors	No. of learners screened for dyslexia	No. of Initial Interviews
A	3,744	5,266	99	2.64	15	27	27
B	3,863	16,422	637	16.49	15	60	
C	26,946	35,000	300 full/sub p/t	1.11			
D	14,618	26,000				All f/t some p/t (BKSB)	
E	17,420	26,095	619	3.55	Most of the 426	426	
F	6,788	12,000	50	0.74	20	45	45
G	3,623	4,000				55	55
H	4,519	7,000	119	2.63			119
I	3,866	6,956			83	84	
J	5,545	Approx 8,000					
K	3,965	600	160	15.13	24		
L	14,057	19,192			86	86	86
M	10,546	21,882	300	2.84	50	130	126
N	5,255	1,500 - 4,000	100	1.90	100	1,000	

KEY: f/t = full time p/t = part time BKSB = Basic Key Skills-Builder Test

## 4.6. Support

### *Question 5: How are learners selected for specialist support?*

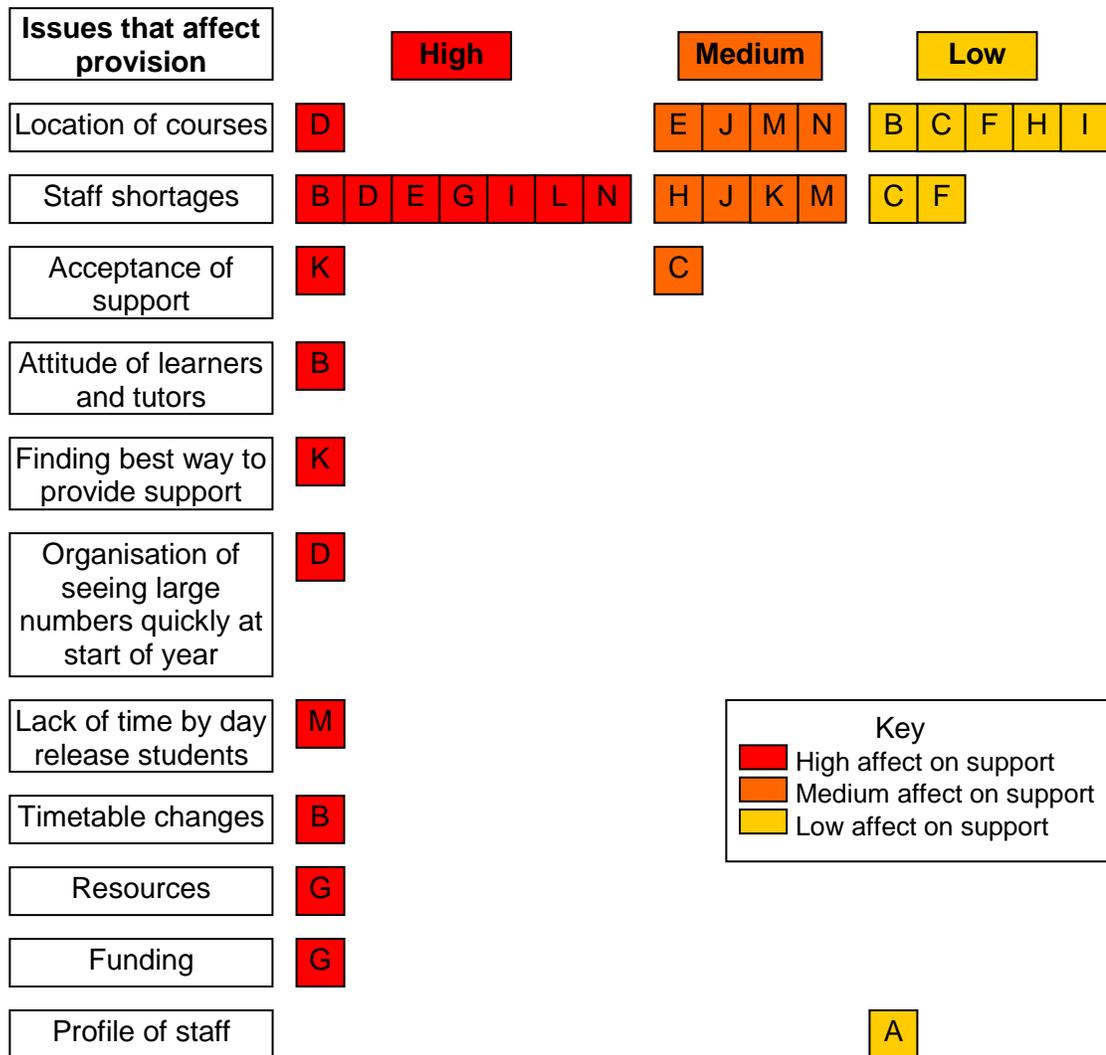
#### 4.6.1. Criteria for support

Both full time and part time learners were selected for support (6) and all learners with dyslexia or with an identified need (6). One of these colleges said that all learners identified with dyslexia who requested support were supported. Selection for support was also determined by: the course followed (2), the severity of need (6) a first come first served basis (1). Another criterion mentioned was the impact on the learner. One college said that all students with dyslexia have the chance of attending a workshop for support. They had specialist workshops on various days and tried to place learners in one of those, depending on their timetable restrictions; otherwise a literacy workshop would be offered. One college said that five criteria were taken into account following assessment, through ALS, these included: full time students, part time students, the course followed, severity of

need, first come first served. One tutor said that a lot of students take-up support because they recognise that they have this issue, they are open with it and they are quite prepared to address it and accept help to get through their course.

#### 4.6.2. Issues that affect provision

**Question 6: What issues affect the provision of support and to what extent?**



**Figure 9** Issues that affect provision (n = 14)

A number of issues affected support to a different degree; high, medium and low (**Figure 9**). The main issues were staff shortages (13) and location of courses (10). Other things that had a high affect on support included: acceptance of support by students, the attitude of learners and tutors, finding the best way to provide support, the organisation of seeing large numbers quickly at the beginning of the year, day release students lacking the time

for support, timetable changes, resources and funding. The profile of staff in the department had a low affect, due to the amount of teaching experience and experience of dyslexia, especially amongst the newer members of staff. One tutor said that wherever possible, students were allocated to the experienced and specialist members of staff. Additional issues mentioned by tutors included: lack of understanding of dyslexia in the area, particularly in school, leading to a stigma about dyslexia; the specialist tutor working part-time hours; and reluctance by course tutors to let the students out of class.

#### **4.6.3. Summary**

Both full time and part-time learners with dyslexia and those with an identified need were selected for support, other criteria included: the course followed, severity of need, first come first served. The main issues that affected support were staff shortages and location of courses.

### **4.7. Support services provided**

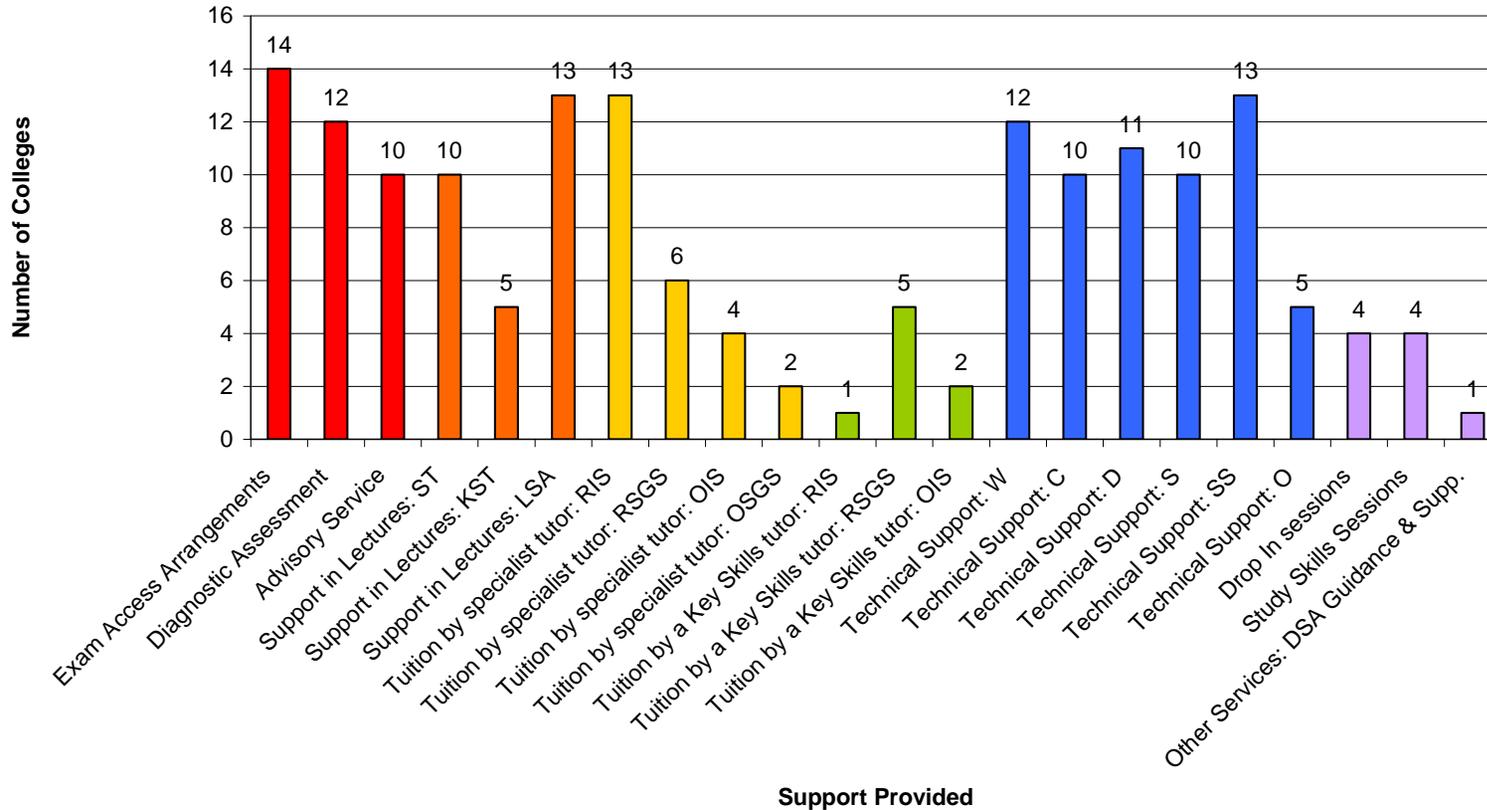
***Question 7: What services are currently provided for learners with dyslexia?***

***Question 12: Numbers of learners with dyslexia and provision accessed: 2006/7***

#### **4.7.1. Services provided**

All fourteen of the colleges provided exam access arrangements for learners and twelve colleges had available full diagnostic assessments (**Figure 10**). Ten colleges also included an advisory service for learners with dyslexia; one college mentioned that this was informal via tutors. Support in lectures was mainly done by LSAs (13); however, specialist tutors and key skills tutors also supported learners. One college said that the specialist tutor supported the learners if they attended a dyslexia workshop. In the majority of colleges (13) learners with dyslexia were provided with regular individual support from a specialist tutor. Other support by the specialist tutor included: occasional individual support, regular and occasional small group support. Key Skills tutors provided regular and occasional individual support as well as regular small group support. The majority of colleges provided a wide range of technical support for learners with dyslexia, this consisted of: a word processor (12), computer (10), Dictaphone (11), spellchecker (10), specialist software (13). Other technical support (5) included coloured overlays or filters (4), coloured paper (1), and reader pens (2). Other support and services mainly consisted of drop-in sessions and study skills sessions. One college provided individual guidance and support with the DSA application process, for learners progressing onto HE.

Services Provided for learners with dyslexia in GFE Colleges in Yorkshire and Humberside (n = 14)



**Key** ■ Assessment and advice ■ Support in Lectures ■ Tuition by specialist tutor ■ Tuition by Key Skills tutor ■ Technical Support ■ Other support and services; ST - Specialist Tutor; KST - Key Skills Tutor; LSA - Learning Support Assistant; RIS - Regular Individual Support; RSGS - Regular Small group Support; OIS - Occasional Individual Support; OSGS - Occasional Small Group Support; W - Wordprocessor; C - Computer; D - Dictaphone; S - Spellchecker; SS - Specialist Software; O - Overlay; Supp - Support

Figure 10 Graph to show services provided for learners with dyslexia in GFE colleges

One tutor elaborated that students can be supported very promptly and one said that they increase the support if students ask for it. One tutor initially started with individual one-to-one sessions; however, to get over the problem of students not turning up, this was changed to drop in sessions, for spelling, punctuation, proofreading, mindmapping and assignments.

Eight colleges stated that specialist tutors conducted assessments for Exam Access Arrangements; approximate figures for these ranged from 20 to 74 learners (**Table 7**). In seven colleges specialist tutors also carried out full diagnostic assessments, the number of learners assessed ranged widely, from 19 to 168. Educational Psychologists conducted full diagnostic assessments in seven colleges, numbers ranged from 1 to 30 learners: below ten learners (4), between ten to thirty learners (3).

#### **4.7.2. One-to-one tuition**

Twelve of the colleges provided figures for one-to-one tuition. Learners with dyslexia supported in this way ranged from 9 to 300. The majority of colleges supported 60 or below learners through one-to-one support: below 20 learners (3), between 21 to 40 learners (3), between 41 to 60 learners (4), over 60 learners (2). One of these colleges said that not all of this was regular support. Two of the colleges mentioned that one-to-one tuition was the preferred way of supporting learners with dyslexia. Specialist dyslexia tutors, four of whom favoured one-to-one sessions for supporting learners with dyslexia, backed this up, representing five colleges in total.

#### **4.7.3. Other support**

Three colleges gave numbers of students involved in small group support, this ranged from 6 to 35. One of the tutors occasionally supported three learners with dyslexia at the same time, but found this very demanding as it took a lot of organisation. Other support included: additional support or support in small classes with support workers, on-course support, support in vocational areas, LSAs, out of class support, technical aids, computer software such as Texthelp, as well as Scotopic Sensitivity tests, exam and assessment concessions. One of the specialist tutors had the Adult Literacy Programme (ALP) and Units of Sound on portable laptops. Another of the tutors mentioned that course tutors look out for students who do not want support and use dyslexia friendly teaching methods in lessons.

**Table 7** Support provided for learners with dyslexia in 14 GFE Colleges

College	<i>Specialist Tutor Assessment Exam Access Arrangements</i>	<i>Specialist Tutor Full Diagnostic Assessment</i>	<i>Educational Psychologist Full Diagnostic Assessment</i>	One-to-one Tuition	Small group support	Other support	Total number of learners supported
A			27	40		2	42
B	33	19	3	15	6	15	34
C			30	300 - not all regular			300
D	Done by specialist tutors	Figs. not available	Figs. not available	Figs. not available	Figs. not available	Figs. not available	Figs. not available
E		168		15 - HE (DSA) or WBL (LSC)	35 (nearer 50 if include all literacy workshops)	Additional support or in small classes with support workers	
F	22	23	6	33	12	On-course support	45
G				58 preferred		32 - LSA, Dictaphone, out of class support	90
H	All done by specialist tutor		25	119			119
I	20	83	1	21+		4 - learning mentor	25
J				preferred			
K				9		5 - laptop, Texthelp	
L	60	60	3 or 4	60		Support in vocational area, LSA	60
M	74	21		51		Technical Aids, W, D, Overlays, Scotopic Sensitivity Test	111
N	30	50		50			50

**KEY:** WBL (Work Based Learning)

#### 4.7.4. Learners supported

Ten colleges included figures for the total number of learners supported in the different ways; these ranged from 25 to 300 learners (**Table 8**), the majority supported below 100 learners: 50 or below learners (5), between 51 and 100 learners (2), over 100 learners (3). The percentages of learners supported who self-declared and were referred by tutors ranged widely, from 5.2 per cent to 100 per cent. There does not appear to be a link

between these figures and the size of the college, although in the two colleges with the largest number of learners supported, 100 per cent of these self-declared or were referred.

**Table 8** Percentage of learners supported

(GFE colleges where figures were provided n = 10 out of 14)

College	Size of College (LSC Data)	Size of College (Research data)	No. of learners supported	Percentage of those who self-declared or were referred
C	26,946	35,000	300	100%
H	4,519	7,000	119	100%
M	10,546	21,882	111	31.7%
G	3,623	4,000	90	
L	14,057	19,192	60	69.8%
N	5,255	1,500	50	25%
F	6,788	12,000	45	64.3%
A	3,744	5,266	42	36.8%
B	3,863	16,422	34	5.2%
I	3,866	6,956	25	30.1%

#### 4.7.5. Summary

A wide range of services for learners with dyslexia was provided in the colleges, these included: exam access arrangements, full diagnostic assessments, advisory service for learners, support in lectures, dyslexia workshop. Support sessions mainly consisted of individual support from a specialist tutor (preferred way) and small group support. Other support included: technical support, computer software, overlays, coloured paper, drop-in sessions, study skills sessions, individual guidance, support with the DSA application, and testing for Scotopic Sensitivity. Colleges varied widely in the total number of learners supported. Full diagnostic assessments were carried out by Educational Psychologists, as well as specialist tutors, who also assessed students for Exam Access Arrangements.

#### 4.8. Staff

**Question 13: Do you have a specialist team of dyslexia tutors?**

**Question 14: How many specialist tutors do you employ? Full time equivalent**

##### 4.8.1. Specialist tutors

Ten colleges said they had a team of specialist dyslexia tutors and four colleges did not have a team. Two colleges bought in specialist tutors from outside providers: the Local Authority and Dyslexia Action (part time for eight hours per week). In one college without a team the specialist tutors had other responsibilities, and in one college support tutors

within another team, with responsibilities for other departments, taught the students with dyslexia. Thirteen colleges employed specialist tutors, numbers ranged from less than one to six tutors (full time equivalent); less than two tutors (6), two or more tutors (7).

#### **4.8.2. Qualifications**

##### ***Question 15: What specialist qualifications do these dyslexia tutors have?***

Qualifications held by dyslexia tutors included: a Certificate in SpLDs (7), a Diploma in SpLDs (9), higher degrees (4), with one tutor working towards a higher degree in SpLDs (1). Three colleges had tutors working towards or with other qualifications. Two tutors were working towards the Certificate of Competence in Educational Testing (CCET) and one tutor had the Post-Graduate Certificate in Dyslexia and Literacy. **Appendix 4** gives an indication of the levels and meanings of courses.<sup>10</sup> One of the tutors, who sorted out the support, tried to match the tutors and the students carefully, believing that if tutors had a good relationship that was almost as important as having a lot of experience in working with students who have dyslexia.

#### **4.8.3. Contact hours**

##### ***Question 16: How many learner contact hours are required from the specialist tutors?***

The weekly contact time for tutors supporting learners with dyslexia ranged from 8 hours to 26 hours, with 24 hours being the most frequent (4). Annual contact time ranged from 300 to over 900 hours; below 500 hours (3), between 500 to 900 hours (6), over 900 hours (1). One college pointed out that the contact time was not all with learners who had dyslexia. One specialist tutor worked for a dyslexia organisation and travelled all over the area. The tutor was in the college two mornings a week, and believed that in an ideal world they would be in college all the time. The tutor was very versatile and taught all the age ranges working with learners in the Dyslexia Action Centre, in college, in schools, at the Central Library, and was also starting to do some work based coaching.

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<sup>10</sup> A Practising Certificate in SpLD Assessment is required in order to carry out full diagnostic assessments; this includes membership of a professional body, although there is an alternative route through Accreditation of Prior Learning and Experience (SpLD Working Group 2005/ DfES Guidelines - DfES 2005b). Postgraduate courses at level 7 are usually needed for teaching and assessing learners with dyslexia.

#### **4.8.4. Other staff**

Six colleges mentioned other staff employed to support learners with dyslexia; these were mainly LSAs, although one college mentioned a dyslexia mentor and one a learning mentor. In three of the colleges the LSAs were part of the ALS team or the key skills and basic skills team. One tutor said that the ideal would be to have an LSA in every class across the college, which would take away any kind of notion of stigma or difference for people, because it would become the norm. In one college Guidance and Support Tutors (GSTs) monitored and dealt with attendance very successfully.

#### **4.8.5. Summary**

Ten of the colleges had a team of qualified specialist tutors, two colleges brought in specialist tutors from outside. The weekly and annual student contact hours varied between the colleges, the most frequent was 24 hours per week and between 500-900 hours per year. Other staff included LSA's, Mentors and GSTs. One tutor said that the ideal would be to have an LSA in every class across the college, as the norm.

### **4.9. Collaboration**

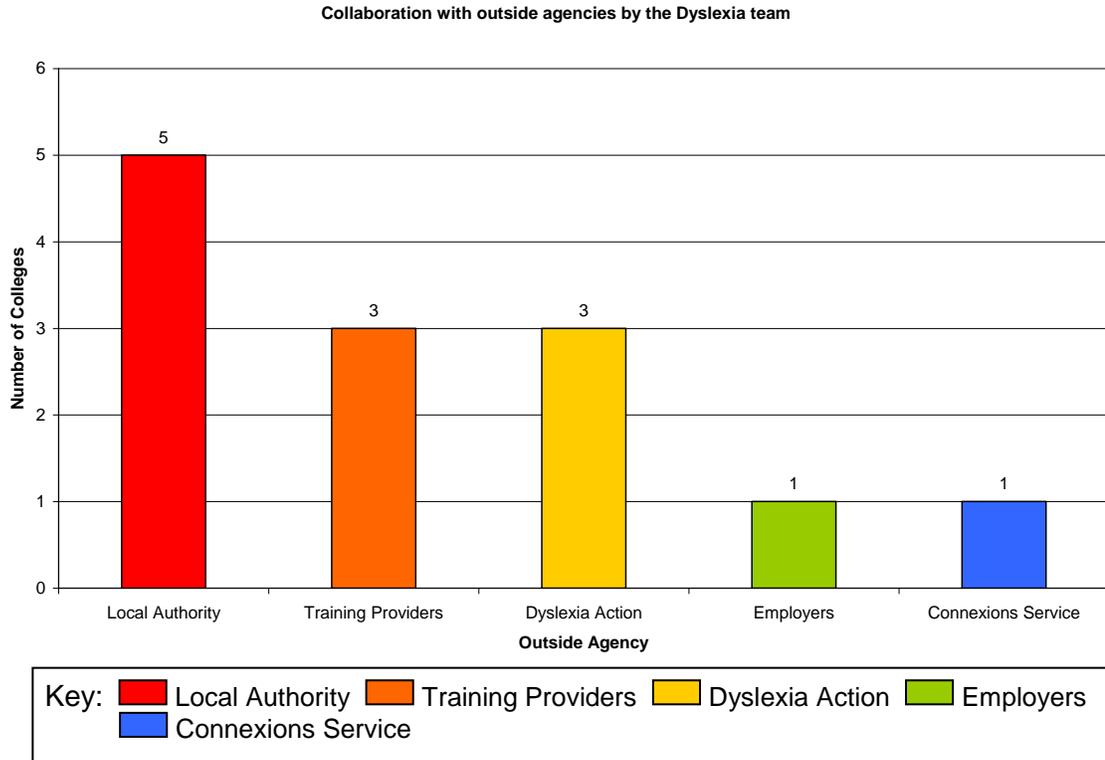
***20. Have the dyslexia team collaborated with other agencies to provide support for learners? If yes, which agencies?***

#### **4.9.1. Collaboration with other agencies**

Nine colleges said that they collaborated with outside agencies (**Figure 11**); these consisted mainly of the Local Authority (5), Training Providers (3) and Dyslexia Action (3), as well as Employers (1) and Connexions Service (1).<sup>11</sup> Two specialist dyslexia tutors mentioned collaboration with course tutors. One tutor mentioned that after an initial interview, if the student had a learning need, a support profile would be sent to the course tutor, as well as a dyslexia booklet, providing guidance for support provision in the class. One tutor talked to most vocational areas at the start of the course and sent a skills profile to the support coordinator and course tutors, outlining strengths and weaknesses of learners, with recommendations and strategies for support.

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<sup>11</sup> The literature review identified the importance of collaboration with other agencies in supporting learners (Chapter 2 Sections 2.2.1.5, 2.5.1, 2.6.2, 2.7.1.3). These included employers and organisations that promote the well-being of learners. The literature also mentioned communication with learning support staff, learners, parents, personal tutors, course tutors and examination boards as important. Details of the methods of collaboration were not asked for in the present study.



**Figure 11** Collaboration with outside agencies by the Dyslexia team  
(GFE colleges where information was provided n = 9 out of 14)

#### 4.9.2. Summary

Nine colleges said that they collaborated with outside agencies these mainly included: the Local Authority, Training Providers and Dyslexia Action, as well as Employers and the Connexions Service. Two specialist dyslexia tutors also collaborated with course tutors.

#### 4.10. Staff Training

**Question 18: Does the specialist dyslexia team provide training to other college staff?**

**Question 19: If so please enclose details of training provided in the past academic year by the dyslexia team**

##### 4.10.1. Staff training provided by dyslexia tutors

Thirteen colleges said that the dyslexia team were involved in providing staff training; this mainly consisted of dyslexia awareness training (10). Other training mentioned included: identification of dyslexic traits in written work (support team), multi-sensory learning and brain gym (college staff), dyslexia and ESOL, dyslexia training for Information and

Communication Technology (ICT), dyslexia training for Post Compulsory Education and Training (PCET), dyslexia Awareness and Resources, Use of assistive technology - Texthelp etc., strategies to support literacy and numeracy. The range of staff that benefited from the training included cross-college staff, support staff, Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and Certificate in Education (Cert. Ed) students.

One tutor said that the majority of members of staff had been given the opportunity to have dyslexia awareness training from the dyslexia team, most were quite well informed and knew who the dyslexia team were. One tutor made the point that not everybody turns up for CPD sessions on dyslexia awareness, and they tended to see the same faces. One of the tutors found staff development with the teaching assistants especially useful, for example, mindmapping.

#### **4.10.2. Specialist tutor training**

Two tutors felt that they had not been sufficiently supported in their own training. One tutor said that training was not encouraged sufficiently well by the manager, the tutors tended to prompt their own training requirements. The specialist teachers in the college were all members of the Professional Association of Teachers of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties (PATOSS). They had a practising certificate with various conditions and training requirements. One tutor did not have a specialist dyslexia qualification, and was looking at possibly funding it, as it was very expensive and college did not have the funds. The tutor was trained very well, when first starting, and had a very good understanding about what was involved. The tutor had a lot of experience and mentioned doing as good a job as someone with the qualification, however, they thought that a qualification would enable them to do more of the testing, and it would add professional gravity. One tutor attended CPD sessions, with two specific hats, ESOL and dyslexia support.

#### **4.10.3. Summary**

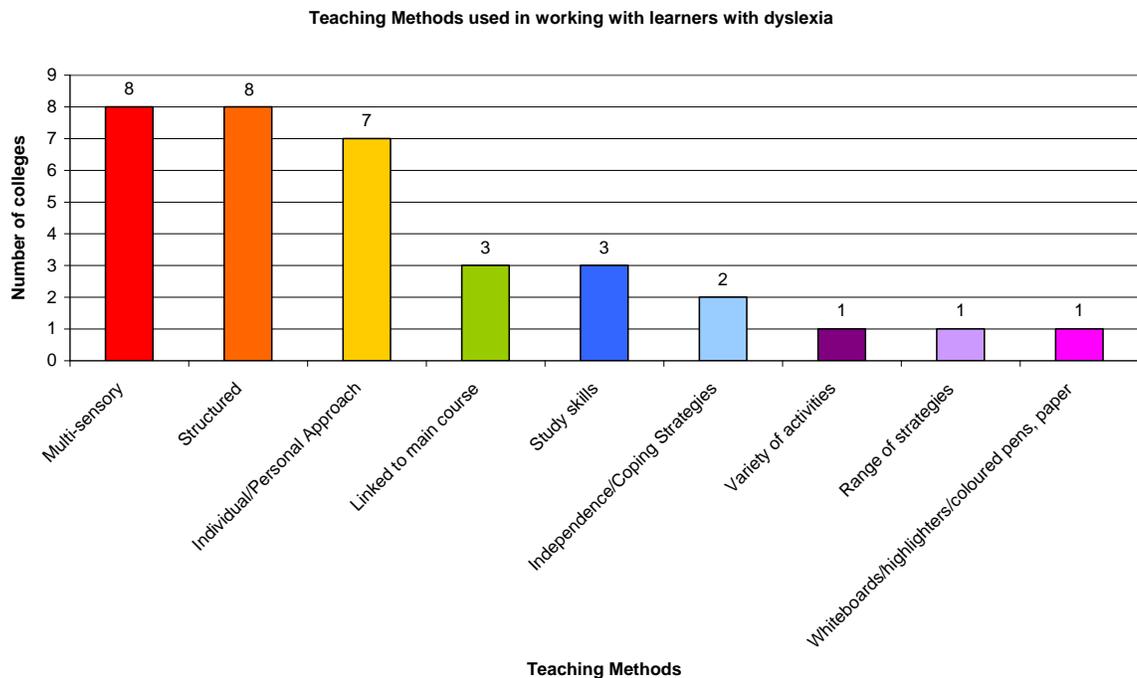
The dyslexia team were involved in providing staff training in thirteen colleges; this mainly consisted of dyslexia awareness training. Cross-college staff, support staff, PGCE and Cert.Ed students benefited from the training. Two tutors felt that they had not been sufficiently supported in their own training, due to lack of encouragement by the manager and lack of funding.

## 4.11. Teaching Methods

**Question 8: Are any specific approaches/methods of teaching/learning used?**

### 4.11.1. Methods used

The most popular methods used to teach learners with dyslexia were multi-sensory methods (8) and a structured or cumulative approach (8) (**Figure 12**). Programmes available included: Alpha to Omega spelling programme, the Dyslexia Action Structure (A literacy programme that uses a particular sequence to teach the letter-sound links for reading and spelling, as well as spelling rules, memory and learning strategies), London South Bank University (LLU+) spelling and reading programme for adults by Cynthia Klein and Ross Cooper. ICT programmes such as the Units of Sound Programme and the ALP (Dyslexia Action) were also used. One college said that it had modified the ALP to enable its use in vocational areas.



**Figure 12** Graph of teaching methods used with learners with dyslexia

(n = 14)

Seven colleges talked about an individual approach: responding to the individual needs of the learner, a personalised response, what the student wants to work on, working with preferred learning styles, using learning aids geared to the individual student. Other teaching methods included: those based on the needs of the student around their main

course or vocational choices, and support with the programme of study; study skills and strategies, including organisation and planning, assignments, revision and exam techniques, proofreading; strategies to promote independence, strategies for coping; a variety of activities; a range of strategies depending on individual need; use of whiteboards, markers, highlighters, multiple coloured pens, and coloured paper. One college said that they had an open model of support with a flexible approach such as help at the beginning of the course and around heavy workloads.

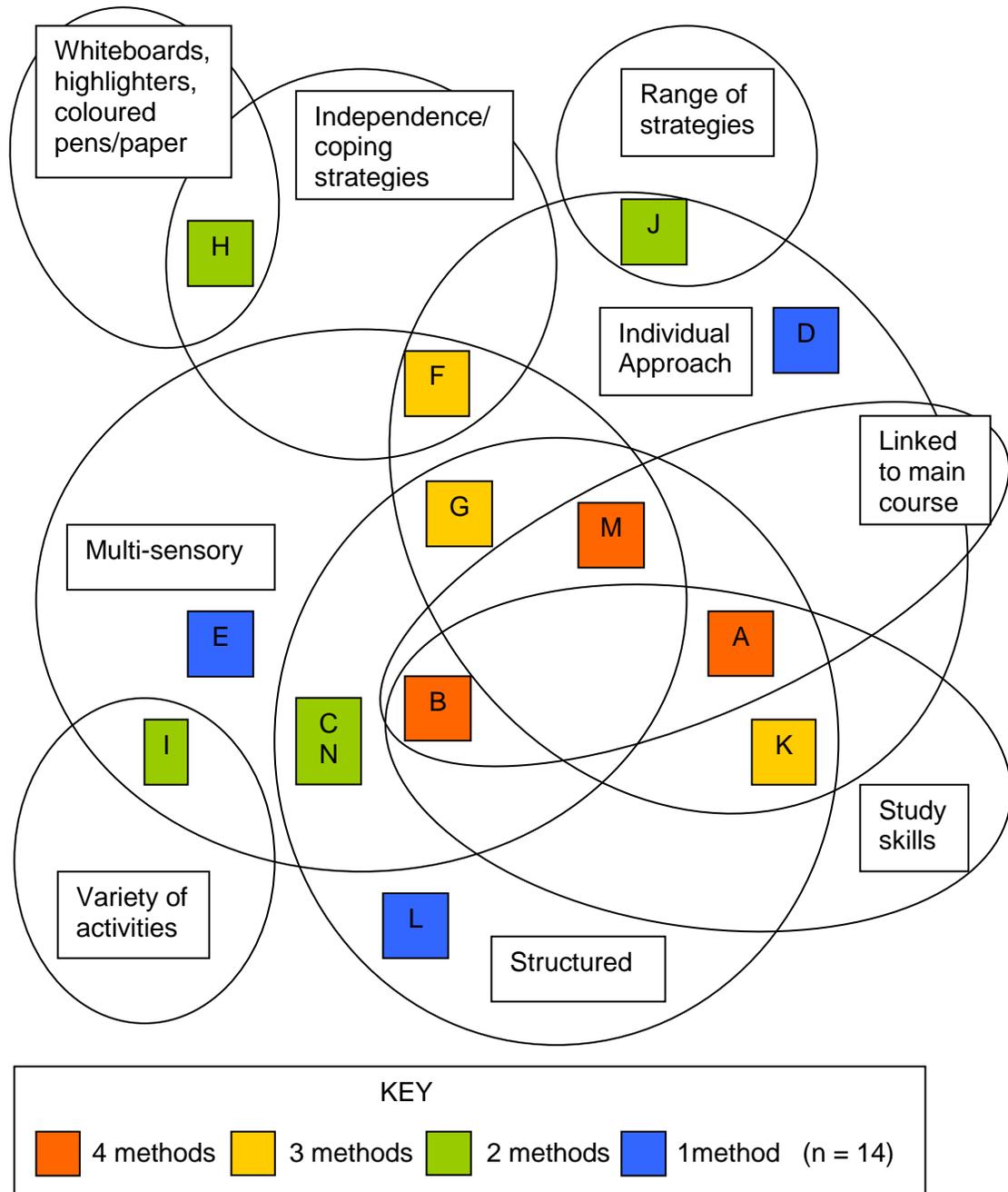
The dyslexia tutors confirmed the use of these methods, suggesting those that were matched to individual learning style and needs, multi-sensory methods, structured teaching, study skills strategies, development of confidence and independent learning. One tutor said that it was important to find out how the learner learns best and to teach to a student's learning style, teaching methods have to be student led and adapted to meet individual needs. This involves multi-sensory teaching methods, ICT and literacy software, use of cards, and a whole range of concrete, multi-sensory aids to help with the learning. Tutors elaborated on study skills strategies: organisation and planning of assignments, mindmapping, time management, help with analysing questions, understanding terms of vocabulary and recognising deadlines. One tutor said that it was important to improve learner confidence in expressing themselves on paper and doing a piece of formal writing, this could involve developing strategies such as writing frames and trigger lines. The tutor made the point that similar strategies work for ESOL and learners with dyslexia. Two tutors said that the ultimate aim was to empower the student and give them control over the learning so they become an independent learner. A personalised approach was needed so that the young person could take greater ownership. Level 3 students needed to be able to articulate the type of support that they required and take control of that.

The majority of colleges used more than one method to teach learners with dyslexia (11) (**Figure 13**). Three colleges used four of the methods, three colleges used three methods, five colleges used two methods, and three colleges used one of the methods.

#### **4.11.2. Summary**

Eleven colleges used more than one method to teach learners with dyslexia. The main methods used were multi-sensory methods, a structured or cumulative approach and an individual and personal approach. Other methods included: those based on the needs of the student around their main course or vocational choices, study skills and strategies,

strategies to promote independence and ability to cope, a variety of activities. Dyslexia tutors confirmed the use of these methods and stressed the need to develop confidence.



**Figure 13** Diagram of teaching methods used with learners with dyslexia

## **4.12. Accommodation**

### ***Question 21: Does the dyslexia team have a resource centre?***

#### **4.12.1. Resource centre**

Five colleges said that they had a resource centre for the dyslexia team. In one college this was also the teaching room and in one college the resource centre was in the learning zone. One college said that the dyslexia resource centre was part of a general learning resource centre on the main site and they also had other learning resource centres on the different sites. Nine colleges did not have a resource centre, one of these said that the resources were kept in the staff room and two said they were kept in the teaching room. One college mentioned that some resources were stored in the dyslexia testing room and some in the general workshop. Another college said that they had one resource centre for all the additional support team.

#### **4.12.2. Dyslexia team - accommodation**

### ***Question 22: How many teaching/assessment rooms does the dyslexia team have available?***

Seven colleges said that the dyslexia team had their own teaching rooms, one of these was a shared room used by three specialists (**Figure 14**). An assessment room was available for the team in two colleges, in one college an interview room was available, in two colleges the teaching room was also an assessment and testing room. Two colleges said that they had the use of a small office and one had a specialist team staffroom, which they used for one-to-one sessions with learners.

#### **4.12.3. Shared spaces**

The majority of colleges had the use of shared spaces with other teams (10) (**Figure 14**). These consisted of: the library, learning centre, learning zone, assessment/study centre, silent study room, workshop rooms, and assistive technology room. Four of the colleges had the use of rooms shared with another team, such as the additional support team, learning support team, skills for life and key and basic skills team. One college said that the dyslexia team had rooms available on the main college site; these were for learning support in general. There were also rooms for general use all over college that they could use, as the dyslexia specialists were attached to different vocational areas. Four colleges had the use of small rooms if needed; these usually had to be booked.

Silent study room		Library	1 Assessment room	1 small office	A
			1.5 rooms		B
Book small rooms					C
6 rooms for general use in Learning Support/ Resource Centre - Main site	Learning Resource Centres - other sites	Individual rooms available all over college on all sites			D
2 General SFL workshop rooms			1 testing/1:1 room		E
Assistive Technology room	Learning Centre		1 Assessment room		F
			2.5 rooms		G
Small rooms	4 rooms - Additional Support Team	Library	1 specialised room		H
			1 room	Use of specialist team staffroom for 1:1	I
Small rooms	Assessment/ Study Centre		Individual teaching rooms for workshops		J
Learning Resource Centre			1 teaching room		K
2 small rooms	Learning Zone		1 interview room		L
			1 teaching/ assessment room shared by three specialist tutors	1 office/ workroom	M
Use Key and Basic Skills rooms					N

**KEY**

Shared space with other teams

SFL - Support for Learning

**Figure 14** Accommodation available for use by the Dyslexia teams in GFE Colleges

(n = 14) The figure shows colleges A-N and their use of shared spaces with other teams as well as those who have their own rooms

Three of the tutors commented that the accommodation was inadequate. The main difficulty was the lack of privacy and noise in shared spaces. One of the tutors said that they often delivered support in the library, which lacked privacy and could be noisy. A brand new building was being planned; however, the LSC would not fund a room for learning support, as this was not within their funding guidelines. A previous base room was too small to cover the number of people that needed to use it.

#### **4.12.4. Summary**

Five colleges had a resource centre for the dyslexia team and nine colleges had no resource centre. The dyslexia team had their own teaching rooms in seven colleges; other smaller rooms were also available. Shared spaces were used in ten colleges. Four of the colleges used rooms shared with another team and four could book small rooms if needed. Tutors commented on difficulties with accommodation in shared spaces; which lacked privacy and tended to be noisy.

### **4.13. Resources**

#### **4.13.1. Availability of resources**

Seven colleges mentioned the resources used, these consisted mainly of specialist software programmes such as: Read and Write Gold/Texthelp, voice activated software - Dragon Dictate/Naturally Speaking, Units of Sound and the home version Literacy that Fits, ALP, Inspiration (mindmapping), Starspell, Wordshark, and the Screen Teacher. On-line resources were also used, for example, Sure Skills, KeySkills4u.com (on line practise tests) and Skillswise, although these were not specifically dyslexia related. Other resources included: structured programmes like Marian Walker worksheets, Alpha to Omega, Hickey Language Course; Bookworms; Individual Learning Aids; own flash cards; games; reader pens and dedicated laptops with software. In three colleges specialist tutors had their own resources. One college did not specify the resources in detail.

Tutors expanded on the list of resources used, these included: software, on-line resources, technological aids, learning aids and structured programmes. One tutor commented that learning aids enabled students to take control of the issue, for example, using fridge magnets and LEGO blocks to help with learning verbs and tenses. The tutor pointed out that resources created by tutors helped their own development as it attuned them more to the student's requirements. One tutor mentioned the need for management support to develop a strategy for ICT resources. Two tutors favoured personalised pen drives with

screen reading, Spellcheck, mindmapping software, Texthelp - Read and Write Gold; however, a high cost was involved. One tutor said that resources were available through the learning resource centre lending system, including coloured sheets.

#### **4.13.2. Summary**

A range of resources was used by colleges consisting of: specialist software programmes, on-line resources, structured programmes and worksheets, reading books, individual learning aids, own flash cards, games, reader pens, laptops, personalised pen drives and specialist tutors' own resources. Resources were also available through a lending system.

### **4.14. Assessment**

#### **4.14.1. Assessments conducted**

Both specialist tutors and Educational Psychologists conducted assessments. Specialist tutors carried out Exam Access Arrangements (8) and full diagnostic assessments (7). Eleven colleges used an Educational Psychologist for Exam Access Arrangements, full diagnostic assessments (7) and Disabled Student's Allowance (DSA) assessments.

#### **4.14.2. Assessments used**

##### ***Question 10: Which assessments are used?***

The GFE Colleges used a wide range of assessments to assess learners with dyslexia (**Tables 9, 10, 11, 12**), for a variety of purposes: to screen and identify learners with dyslexia; to test for eligibility for Access Arrangements in examinations; to provide a diagnostic assessment, to support application for HE; to test for Irlen Syndrome/Scotopic Sensitivity. Four of the colleges were not able to specify the assessments that were used, in detail, as the Educational Psychologist or specialist tutors chose these. One of these colleges said that a very wide range of psychometric tests is used to establish the nature of the learner's difficulties. Others made general comments about the use of the assessments: to generate an overall picture of the student's needs and support requirements; to identify the learning needs of individual learners and put in place support arrangements, to support claims for Exam Concessions.

The tests were grouped according to the different purposes, as a general estimation. A number of tests and assessments were identified as those used to screen or identify learners with dyslexia (**Table 9, Figure 15**).

**Table 9** Tests used to screen/identify learners with dyslexia  
(GFE colleges where figures were provided n = 13 out of 14)

Name of test/assessment	Objective for using the test/assessment
Initial Assessment (BKSB 2012)	A, C (BKSB), D (BKSB), E, F (BKSB), N, K - Initial Assessment based upon previous learning experiences, school information, and data from Connexions. Diagnostic tests in Maths and English are a part of the College Induction Process. Further discussions with students at interview help to identify difficulties that may be due to Dyslexia [7] <sup>12</sup>
GL Assessment/Dyslexia Screener (GL Assessment Group 2012)	B [1]
Lucid Adult Dyslexia Screening (LADS) (Singleton, Horne and Thomas 2004)	L - Initial Assessment - LADS - to assess the probability of dyslexia [1]
The Dyslexia Institute (Dyslexia Action) Questionnaire (2012) British Dyslexia Association (BDA) Checklist (Vinegrad 1994)	K - Dyslexia Action Initial Screening Test M - To screen learners for dyslexic traits N - Vinegrad Checklist - all full time learners, pre-entry. Used in combination with a piece of free writing to identify potential needs [3]
Own Dyslexia Questionnaire	A - To allow detailed discussion of the student's difficulties [1]
Initial Interview	A, C, D, F - Background accumulation of difficulties, G, H - Cynthia Klein – Interview, I, J, K, L, M - Cynthia Klein (Interview - for background) [11]
Dyslexia Adult Screening Test (DAST) (Fawcett and Nicholson 1998)	E - General assessment of strengths and weaknesses G - Screen for likely risk of Dyslexia J - Screening Test M - Phonemic Segmentation Test: ability to separate words in to their constituent sounds; Nonsense Passage: ability to recognise, interpret and manipulate units of sound necessary to read prose with fluency; Verbal fluency test: ability to recollect words beginning with a specific letter within a specific time; Semantic fluency Test: ability to recollect words belonging to a category of objects within a given time. Used for initial screening and diagnostic assessments. N - To give a more diagnostic result to help LSAs devise a learning plan [5]
Bangor Dyslexia Test (Miles 1997)	A - Identification of dyslexic traits not directly linked to literacy skills H - Cynthia Klein Interview and Bangor Dyslexia Test used together. Gives good background. Focuses on areas of need

<sup>12</sup> Numbers in square brackets indicate total number of colleges

Bangor Dyslexia Test (continued)	M - May use parts of this during initial interview N - To identify if a full assessment is needed [4]
Digit Memory Test (Ridsdale and Turner 2004) - Dyslexia Institute (Dyslexia Action)	E - Digit Span – short term memory I - Audio memory L - short term memory M - To assess verbal memory difficulties, ability to remember digits forwards and backwards. Used for initial screening [4]
The Snowling Graded Nonword Reading Test (Snowling 1993)	M - To test phonological awareness - ability to recognise, interpret and manipulate units of sound necessary to read with fluency [1]
Free Writing Task/Test	A, H, M, N [4]
Basic Skills Agency Dyslexia Diagnostic Tests e.g. Phoneme deletion/ blending, individual word reading, non-word reading Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) 2009 - The Excellence Gateway	A - Identification of phonological processing difficulties and decoding difficulties [1]

**Table 10** Tests, which may be used for Access Arrangements in examinations

<b>Name of test/ assessment</b>	<b>Objective for using the test/assessment</b>
Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT 4/3) (Wilkinson and Robertson 2006)	D - Standard Tests E - WRAT 3 - Written encoding and decoding skills G - Assessment of achievement I - Reading, Spelling, Comprehension L - To measure attainment and ability M - To assess single word reading and spelling - used for exam access arrangements. To test ability in Mathematics [6]
Wechsler Achievement Test (WIAT) TUK (Wechsler 2006)	F - Single word reading, comprehension, speed of reading, spelling. Gives standard scores for exam concessions. To assess levels of literacy and how they might affect the learners' progress within the course [1]
Wide Range Intelligence Test (WRIT) (Glutting, Adams and Sheslow 2000)	D - Standard Tests - Depending on results Educational Psychologist may be used E - Cognitive abilities (not used in every case) F - IQ test. This gives some idea of how able the learner is and gives some idea of whether or not they can progress G - Ability assessment I - General and specific IQ. All 4 tests L - To measure attainment and ability M - To assess ability in verbal and non-verbal skills - expressive language, verbal analogy, visual problem solving and timed construction. Used for exam access arrangement testing as well as diagnostic assessments [7]

Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE)(Torgesen, Wagner and Rashotte 1999)	I - Speed of Reading words and non-words [1]
Adult Reading Test (ART) (Brooks, Everatt and Fidler 2004)	E - Reading accuracy, reading comprehension, speed of reading and writing (not used in every case) M - To assess prose reading accuracy, comprehension and rate of reading. Used for exam access arrangement testing [2]
Free Writing Test Allcock Assessment of Handwriting Speed (Allcock 2001)	H - Free writing test M - To ascertain whether or not the student is able to write a continuous piece of sequential prose. It gives an indication of vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar, coherence of writing, handwriting style and writing speed. Used for initial screening and for exam access arrangement testing as well as full diagnostic assessments [2]
Symbol Digit Modalities Test (SDMT) (Smith 2002)	F - Oral and Written Test. This also provides evidence for exam concessions. The objective of using this is to see how their processing speed is affected. I - Digital Symbol Modalities: Assess ability to learn and speed M - To test for cerebral dysfunction - involves the ability to convert geometric designs into written and/or oral number responses [3]

**Table 11** Additional tests used to assess for dyslexia: diagnostic assessments

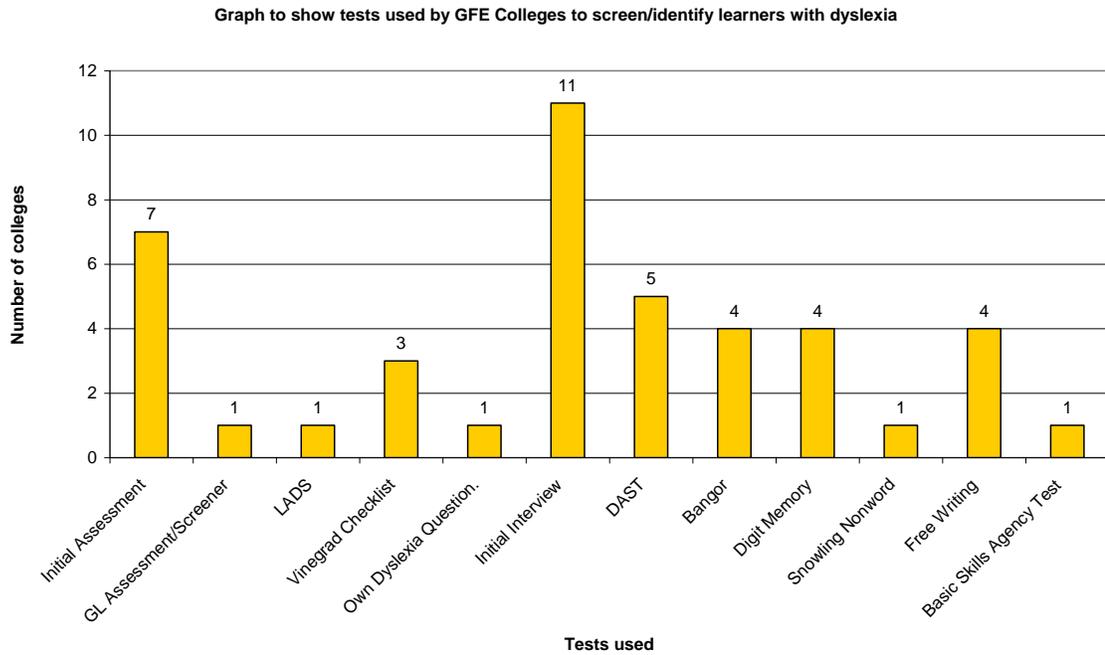
<b>Name of test/assessment</b>	<b>Objective for using the test/assessment</b>
Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP) (Wagner, Torgesen and Rashotte 1999)	F - The phonological skills are tested as well as memory. This provides standard scores and also information about specific details related to their literacy skills I - Part Word Reading, Elision and Word Blending [2]
Wordchains Test (Guron 1999)	M - To assess speed of reading and processing, ability to recognise and divide chains of letters and words [1]
Dictation Test - The Sheffield College Spelling Dictations (Hulley and Monaghan (1994)	H - Dictation test – to look at sounds M - Ability to hold, in short term memory a string of words and translate them into the written word. Gives an indication of writing speed, spelling. Used for diagnostic assessments [2]
Morrisby Manual Dexterity Test (Morrisby, Morrisby and Fox 2003)	M - To assess fine-motor skills - manual speed and skill. Used for diagnostic testing [1]
Gray Silent Reading Test (GSRT) (Wiederholt and Blalock 2000)	M - To assess silent reading comprehension. Used in diagnostic assessments [1]

Raven's Progressive Matrices (Raven, Court and Raven 2008)	E - Set 1 – Non-verbal reasoning [1]
Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) (Dunn and Dunn 2007)	E - Vocabulary (not used in every case) [1]
Kim's Game	I - Visual memory [1]

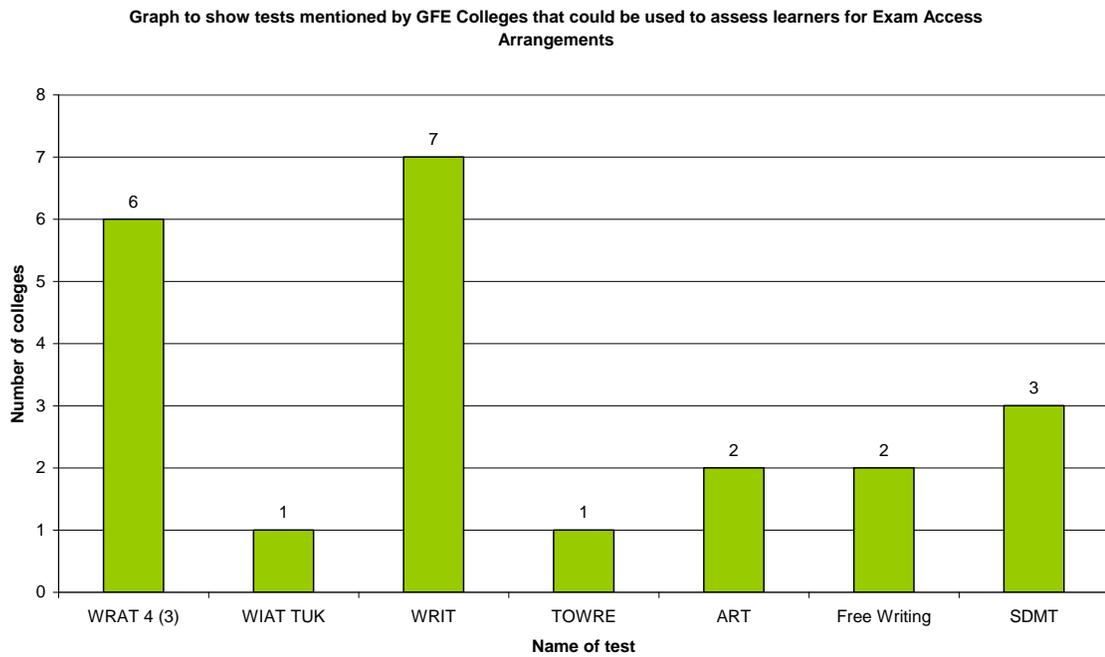
**Table 12** Other tests used

Irlen Syndrome/ Scotopic Sensitivity	A - Irlen Syndrome Questionnaire (developed by Own College). To identify whether testing for Irlen Syndrome is required F - Test for Irlen Syndrome for learners with visual perception problems and overlays are offered along with changing computer background M - Intuitive Overlays and Wilkins Rate of Reading Test - to test if an overlay of a particular colour helps the learner [3]
Intuitive Overlays Assessment (Wilkins 2001)	
Wilkins Rate of Reading Test (Wilkins, Jeanes, Pumfrey and Laskier 1996)	

The most common assessment used to screen and identify learners with dyslexia was the Initial Interview (11) (**Figure 15**); it was used to provide a background to the difficulties; two colleges used the Cynthia Klein Initial Interview as a structure (Klein 1997). The DAST (5) was used for initial screening, diagnostic assessments, and as a general assessment of strengths and weaknesses. Seven colleges used an initial assessment; three of these used the BKSBS assessment. Other tests included: a free writing test (4); the Bangor Dyslexia Test (4) to identify for dyslexic traits; the Digit Memory test (4) to test short-term memory and audio memory, as well as for initial screening. The Dyslexia Action Checklist (Vinegrad 1994) (3) was also used as an initial screening test. In one college it was used with all full time learners, pre-entry, in combination with a piece of free writing, to identify potential needs. Other tests used to screen and identify learners with dyslexia are included in **Table 9**, and include diagnostic tests to assess phonological awareness and identify phonological processing difficulties.

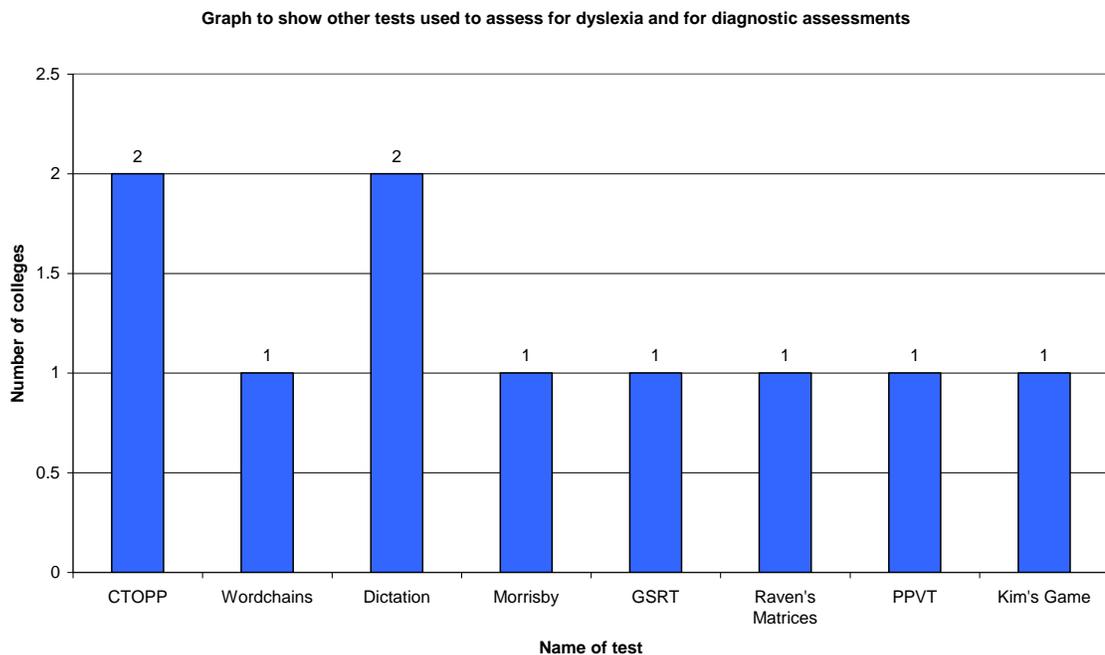


**Figure 15** Tests used by GFE colleges to screen and identify learners with dyslexia (n = 13)



**Figure 16** Tests used by GFE colleges for diagnostic assessment (Exam Access Arrangements) (n = 13)

Other tests mentioned by the GFE colleges were used for more diagnostic assessments including those needed for Access Arrangements in examinations (**Table 10, Figure 16**). The most commonly used tests were the WRIT (7) and WRAT 4/3 (6) (**Figure 16**). The WRIT was used to assess cognitive abilities and attainment, verbal and non-verbal skills. The WRAT 4/3 gives a measure of achievement, attainment and ability; it was used to assess single word reading and spelling, comprehension and ability in Mathematics. Other tests included: the SDMT (3) which gives an indication of processing speed; the ART (2), used to assess prose reading accuracy, comprehension, rate of reading and speed of writing; a free writing test (2), such as the Allcock test, which was used for initial screening, exam access arrangement testing as well as full diagnostic assessments; the WIAT TUK, which tests single word reading, comprehension, speed of reading and spelling; the TOWRE test, used to assess speed of reading words and non-words.



**Figure 17** Other tests used by GFE colleges for diagnostic assessments  
(n = 13)

Tests used by GFE colleges to assess for dyslexia and for diagnostic assessments (**Table 11, Figure 17**) included: the CTOPP (2) to test phonological skills as well as memory; a dictation test (2); the Wordchains Test; the Morrisby Manual Dexterity Test; the GSRT to assess silent reading comprehension; Raven's Matrices to assess non-verbal reasoning; PPVT to test vocabulary; Kim's Game to test visual memory.

Three colleges tested for Irlen Syndrome/Scotopic Sensitivity (**Table 12**). The Intuitive Overlays and Wilkins Rate of Reading Test were used to test for visual perception problems, to determine whether an overlay of a particular colour helps the learner.

Tutors offered further information on the assessments. In a college where the specialist tutors conducted all assessments an Initial Interview was used to initially assess learners, this included a piece of free writing, a short reading test and a phonics test to assess areas of strengths and weaknesses. They furthered assessments in the future if needed. In another college, there had been difficulty in the past with students not turning up for assessments from an outside service. This led to a service level agreement with Dyslexia Action and the specialist tutor to do the assessments, but also to have some contact with tutors and to run workshops as well. The tutor spent the first part of the academic year talking to lecturing staff, going into groups and talking to students about dyslexia. The specialist tutor provided a skills profile for students, course tutors and the support coordinator, with positive feedback. Learners said that this helped them, because they knew what their strengths were and they worked to their strengths. Course tutors also found it helpful because they knew how to work with that student leading to a better relationship, they were more aware of their difficulties. They are now turning round the culture, empowering the student with a more student centred approach and students are coming to tutors and saying 'I think I'm having these difficulties'. Tutors now have another point of contact for dyslexia, and so they are much more aware about it. Another tutor made the point that more tests are now available to non-specialist teachers, for example reading tests, and they are now looking at doing their own testing; this would enable a quicker response. One tutor mentioned needing more time to complete assessments.

#### **4.14.3. Use of Educational Psychologist**

Eleven of the GFE colleges used an Educational Psychologist for conducting assessments, seven mentioned using the Educational Psychologist for full diagnostic assessments and reports, two colleges sent learners to Dyslexia Action for these and one college brought in Educational Psychologists from a local university to do the assessments for exam access arrangements and the DSAs for university. They gave a comprehensive feedback with recommendations. One tutor said that it would be wonderful if every college could have one, in residence, or a team, but could not see it necessarily being an achievable goal.

#### **4.14.4. Summary**

A wide range of tests was used for initial screening and identification of learners with dyslexia as well as achievement tests, ability tests and diagnostic tests to identify specific difficulties, strengths and weaknesses. Both specialist tutors and Educational Psychologists conducted assessments for Exam Access Arrangements, full diagnostic assessments and DSA assessments. In one college students and course tutors provided positive feedback to having a skills profile of the student's strengths and weaknesses.

#### **4.15. Reviews**

##### ***Question 9: How do you assess progress of individual learners?***

Assessment and measurement of progress of learners with dyslexia was related to both the specialist teaching and the main programme (**Figure 18**). The figure shows colleges A-N and how progress is reviewed. Some issues, such as communication with course tutors, cross over between specialist teaching and the main programme.

##### **4.15.1. Reviews mentioned by colleges**

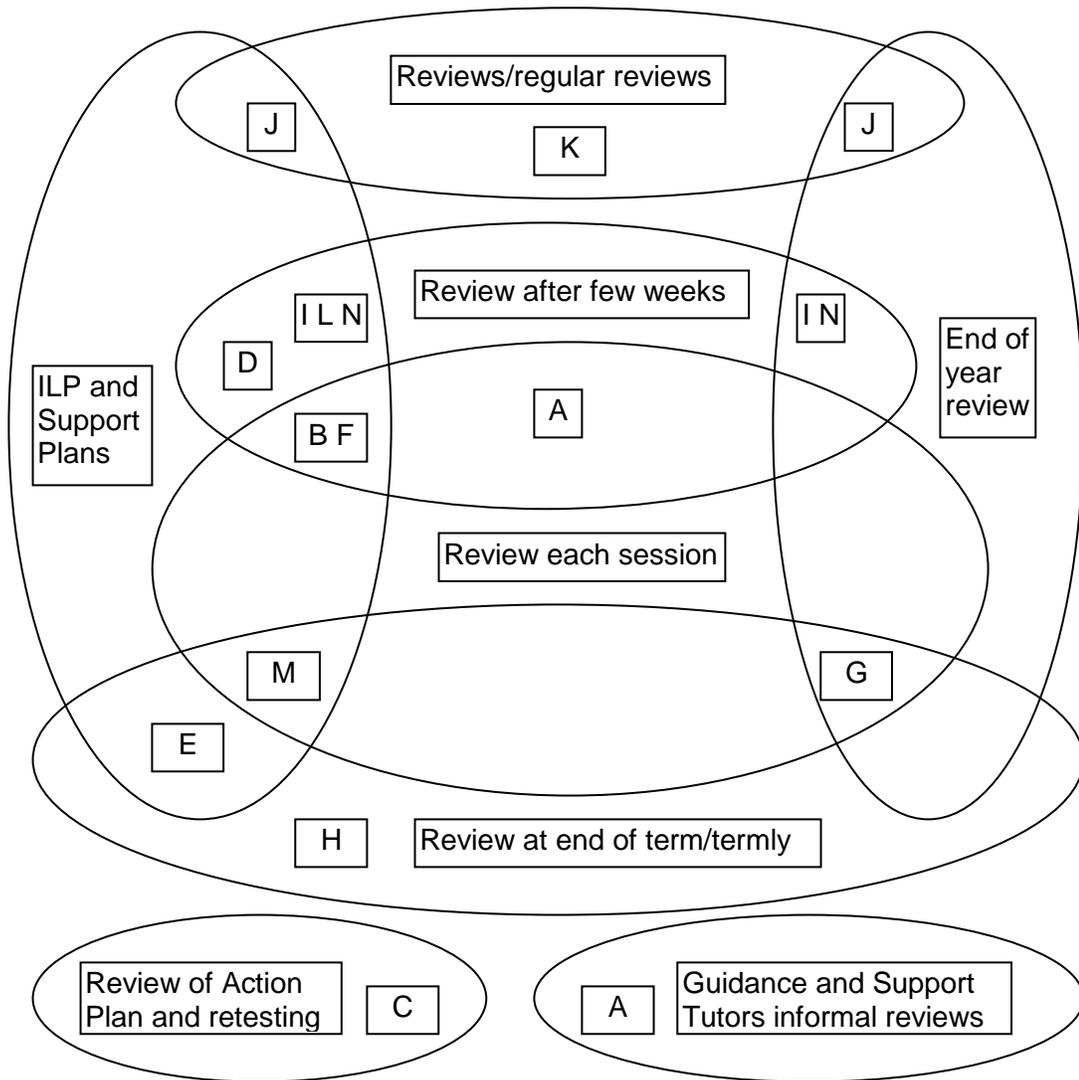
Reviews took place in all fourteen GFE colleges. Nine colleges mentioned the use of an ILP; tutors and learners discussed this at the start of the programme of support and set targets. An Action Plan was set with learners (2), this was reviewed and retesting took place. Work was also reviewed each session (5) through: recording progress, setting individual short-term targets, assessment and evaluation of learning, use of review books, with reviews at the end of the session. Four colleges talked about reviews by specialist tutors being shared with, and fed back to, course tutors and vocational areas.

	SPECIALIST TEACHING				MAIN PROGRAMME			
A	Progress recorded in weekly 1:1 support sessions		Review after 7 weeks of support	Guidance and support tutors informal reviews		Retention and achievement on main programme		Success in Literacy and Numeracy and Key Skills
B	Individual short term targets each session		ILP: 4-8 week target	Review after 4 sessions		Progress against course		Success on main programme
C	Reviews of a learners action plan and retesting							
D	ILPs, Support Plans		1:1 support reviews 2-3 wks	Group support reviews monthly		Vocational/Tutor reviews		
E	Through ILPs and individual reviews		Tutor records	Student records	Termly reviews			
F	ILP	Progress assessed through reviews	Review books all support sessions	Formal reviews every half term. Information shared with course tutor		Specialists in constant touch with tutors		
G	Reviews at end of each session		Review at end of each term	Review at end of year		Confidence levels	Distance travelled	Achievement
H	Reviews termly					Progress assessed by retention		Achievement
I	ILP	Constant reviews every 6 weeks		Final review at end of year				
J	Through ILP for ALS support		Regular reviews	Progression review at end of year		ILP - Programme of study		
K	Reviews with all students			Course tutors informed of outcomes of reviews		Achievement data held by course tutors and Programme leaders		
L	Through ILPs and reviews		Short period of support - review (every 6-8 wks) 2 per term		Reviews fed back into vocational areas			
M	ILP targets and Action Plan	Assess and evaluate learning at end of each session		Reviews at end of each term 3 per year	Course tutors informed of outcomes	Achievement of learning goal	Progress to higher level courses	
N	ILP	6 weekly reviews by LSAs		Exit interview				

Key:  Specialist teaching  Main programme (n = 14)

**Figure 18** How progress of learners with dyslexia is assessed and measured

#### 4.15.2. Frequency of reviews



**Figure 19** Reviews by specialist dyslexia tutors

(n = 14)

The frequency of reviews varied between colleges (**Figure 19**), with the majority reviewing progress after a few weeks or sessions (7). Reviews took place: in each session; on a regular basis; every few weeks; after two to three sessions (D); after four sessions (B); every six weeks (I, N), every six to eight weeks (L), seven weeks (A), every half term (F); at the end of each term (E, G, H, M). Reviews, or an exit interview, were also held at the end of the year. Group support reviews took place every month. One college mentioned informal reviews by GSTs running alongside specialist tutor reviews.

### **4.15.3. Other ways of assessing progress**

Ten colleges mentioned links with the main programme of study. Progress was mainly assessed through achievement or success on the main programme (6). Other ways included: progress to higher-level courses, retention and achievement, confidence levels, distance traveled, the programme of study ILP, and reviews through vocational subjects and tutorials. Tutors expanded on ways of recording and reviewing progress of learners. One tutor used a log book to prepare lesson plans and evaluate the lesson. Targets were set with the student before the start of support and were reviewed at the end of each term; to check whether they have reached their targets, new ones were then set. This enabled learners to see how well they were doing, how well they had progressed and areas they needed to work on. Course tutors were informed of the outcomes of reviews. In one college tutors used feedback sheets or work done, personal documentation sheets. They recorded work covered by learners, for example, assignments, any difficulties, and recommendations. This developed over the term so tutors got an idea of how the student had done.

### **4.15.4. Summary**

Assessment and measurement of progress of learners with dyslexia was related to both the specialist teaching and the main programme. At the specialist teacher level this was done through an ILP or an Action Plan. The reviews varied between colleges and took place at different intervals, generally after a few weeks or sessions. Reviews by specialist tutors were shared with course tutors and vocational areas. Progress was mainly assessed through achievement or success on the main programme. Tutors provided more details of ways of recording and reviewing progress of learners.

## **4.16. Learner well-being**

***Can you talk about how you provide for the well-being of learners?***

### **4.16.1. Provision for learner well-being**

The emotional and social well-being of learners was seen as paramount, with support having a positive effect on achievement. Students needed empowering to articulate their support needs, especially for transition to higher level courses. Tutors took learner well-being into consideration in different ways, at the start of support and through learning support. One of the tutors made the point that at the start of support some of the newer students sometimes felt a little intimidated, so the tutors needed to reassure students that

they were there to help. It was considered very important for the student to get completely relaxed with the tutor as a person, so they chattered at the beginning of the support session to relax learners. Another tutor said that specialist tutors listened to the students, planning learning support together; the student was totally involved in that as well as in the review process. Tutors needed to explore, with the student, any areas of learning or skills that they would like to focus on, and then set targets. Tutors talked about the importance of emotional and social targets as well as skill-based targets, pointing out that sometimes specialist tutors are not just teachers; they have to be almost counsellors or therapists, and everything they get told is in confidence. They are often dealing with vulnerable young people with low self-esteem, and there can be behaviour problems, social problems, social isolation, and a whole baggage of difficulties. One tutor pointed out that if students had any kind of emotional needs or behavioural difficulties they were directed to other appropriate services in the college.

In one of the colleges tutors said that students have been the best advocates for the support due to their achievements. Some students had turned passes into merits and distinctions as a result of support, and had noticed improvements in their spelling, they were more confident and their course tutors had noticed. However, concern was expressed about transition, the need for good transition planning: getting more information from schools and planning for universities. Students needed empowering by learning how they can articulate their needs; they may be worried that if they mention a support issue, it might affect their application. One college was working on a transitions passport; this would set out the support that students have found useful and support they would like to be continued in university.

#### **4.16.2. Summary**

Learner well-being was taken into consideration in different ways: at the start of support; through learning support; through the emotional and social well-being of learners; through achievement; empowerment in articulating support needs; transition to higher level courses.

## 4.17. Evaluation

### *Question 11: How do you evaluate the provision for learners with dyslexia?*

The results of the questionnaire replies and telephone interviews indicate that the GFE colleges evaluate provision for learners with dyslexia in three main ways: by collecting the views of learners, learner perceptions; feedback from the vocational area tutors and success on the main programme of study; and through college management systems (Table 13, Figure 20).

**Table 13** Methods of evaluation used by the GFE colleges

(n = 13 out of 14)

College	Learner perceptions				Main Programme of study					College Systems
	Indiv. support sessions reviews targets	Learner Ques. Evaluation Surveys	Student perceptions	Focus Group	Letters of thanks Voc.Area Tutor feedback	Tutorials	Tutor Ques.	Success on main prog. Lit/Num	Progression to higher level	
A	A	A		A				A		A
B	B	B						B		
C										C
D		D		D		D				D
E	E	E			E					
F	F	F					F		F	
G	G	G						G		G
H										H
J	J	J								J
K	K					K		K		K
L			L		L					L
M	M	M		M				M		
N	N	N					N			N

### 4.17.1. Learner perceptions

Eleven colleges mentioned different methods by which they collected the views of learners: through learner feedback in support sessions and through individual reviews (9); through a learner questionnaire, student evaluation forms and surveys (9); and through focus group interviews (3). One college did not specify the method.

	LEARNER PERCEPTIONS				MAIN PROGRAMME		COLLEGE SYSTEMS		
A	Review	Learning support questionnaire - end of year		Focus group	Success in Literacy & Numeracy	Retention and achievement on main programme	QAS - ADLS - SAR for the Skills Area		
B	Individual short term targets each session		Learner questionnaire		Success on main programme				
C							Benchmarking against non-dyslexic learners	SAR	
D	Student surveys/ evaluations		Focus groups		Tutorials		Success rate compared to not supported		
E	Student record sheets	Termly reviews	Student evaluation forms	Dyslexia Team	Tutor feedback				
F	Learner feedback in support sessions		Learner questionnaire	Surveys	Tutor questionnaire		Progression to higher level		
G	Individual support evaluated		Student evaluation questionnaire				Attendance monitored	Success rate compared to non-dyslexic	ALS review
H							Self evaluation		
J	Individual learner feedback, progress reviews		Student questionnaire				SAR - QIP ALS success rate		
K	Individual reviews				Tutorial system		Progress, retention and achievement	College Reports	
L	Perceptions of students collected				Letters of thanks from Vocational areas & tutors		Quantitative data - retention and achievement of learners supported	SARs through year	
M	Learner reviews	Learner questionnaire	Focus Group interview		Successful completion of course				
N	Exit review	Learner questionnaire		Tutor questionnaire		SAR			

Key:   Learner perceptions   Main programme   College systems (n = 13)

**Figure 20** Evaluation of provision for learners with dyslexia in GFE colleges

(**Figure 20** shows colleges A-N (except college I - no data) and how provision for learners with dyslexia is evaluated by: learner perceptions; the main programme of study; and college management systems. The location of the main issues in the shaded areas is approximate, due to availability of space and issues overlapping between different areas).

Tutors mentioned that learner perceptions were mainly evaluated through a student questionnaire at the end of the year, with a focus group and review also used. The questionnaire provided feedback from students about the effectiveness of the support and included comments on any changes or improvements the student would like to see with their support. One tutor stated that it was a learning support questionnaire for everybody who they work with, not specifically for students who have got disabilities or difficulties associated with dyslexia. One tutor said that they also evaluated the use of equipment.

#### **4.17.2. Main programme of study/vocational areas**

Evaluation of the support was also determined through the main programme of study and vocational areas (10), through tutor feedback and letters of thanks (2), tutorials (2) a tutor questionnaire (2), success on the main programme (5), retention and achievement (3). Analysis of data enabled a measure of the impact of support against achievement. One tutor talked about the monitoring of attendance; they needed to be able to justify non-attendees because of the funding. GSTs are informed if learners miss three sessions; they follow this up with the students, with the aim of improving attendance. One college mentioned evaluation through progression to higher-level courses.

#### **4.17.3. Management systems**

The third way of evaluating provision was through college management systems, such as the college SARs, QIP, Additional Learning Support (ADLS) reviews (9). Four colleges mentioned benchmarking or comparing success rate against non-dyslexic learners, or ALS supported to the mainstream. One tutor said that they have a course review for each of the vocational areas, which feeds into the college SAR; this covers learning support. The whole area, strengths and weaknesses, are looked at and an action plan is put together. The skills support co-ordinator prepares an annual report on ADLS, which includes dyslexia; it looks at trends and take-up of support, the type of difficulties that they are working with, as well as success rates. Case studies of learning are now included and both quantitative and qualitative points of view are examined. The Management Information System (MIS) manager also looks at what people declare, and their

achievement rates compared to people who do not declare a disability; categorized by each type of difficulty.

#### **4.17.4. Summary**

Provision for learners with dyslexia is evaluated in three main ways: by collecting the views of learners, learner perceptions; feedback from vocational area tutors and success on the main programme of study; through college management systems. Methods by which the views of learners were collected included: learner feedback in support sessions, individual reviews, a learner questionnaire, student evaluation forms, surveys, and focus groups.

#### **4.18. Barriers to effective practice**

**Question 23: What do you consider to be the barriers to effective practice?**

##### **4.18.1. Areas of concern**

Barriers to effective practice identified by GFE colleges were divided into seven main areas of concern: specialist staff, other staff, staff training, time, costs/funding, accommodation and learner issues (**Table 14**).

**Staff:** Barriers to effective practice concerning staff included: the lack of specialist staff or difficulty in recruiting and retaining suitably qualified staff (4), this was hampered by the pay structure; other staff in college (5), the main difficulty was lack of understanding of dyslexia; staff training (2), the cost and availability of specialist qualifications, insufficient availability of training for dyslexia specialists working in an FE context.

**Time:** Five colleges mentioned time as a barrier, time for staff to carry out their roles effectively and time to give to the learners, to ensure progress. In one college tutors had heavy teaching commitments in other areas. There was a difficulty in putting support in place quickly, due to the time delay from application to assessment to delivery.

**Costs/funding:** In four colleges shortage of funds was a concern; for such things as resources, diagnostic tests, and specialist qualifications. One college said that the funding methodology prevented the development of inclusive support strategies by insisting ALS was claimed for individuals.

**Accommodation:** Five colleges cited accommodation as a barrier; the main difficulties were lack of: space, a base room and assistive technology room. The accommodation

was not adequate for the nature of the job, which required confidential, undisturbed rooms for one-to-one interviews, testing and specialist teaching sessions.

**Table 14** Barriers to effective practice mentioned by GFE Colleges

(n = 14)

Area of concern	Barriers mentioned by GFE Colleges
Specialist staff	B) Having an effective pay structure to enable recruitment and retention of suitably qualified staff C) College is unwilling to pay an additional rate for Diploma qualifications therefore very hard to attract suitably fully qualified tutors E) Difficult to find trained staff G) Lack of staff
Other staff	D) Knowledge of staff at all levels of the organization H) Vocational tutors allowing student out for one-to-one support I) Lack of understanding by management K) Lecturers/tutors do not always understand their role in giving support by adopting effective teaching strategies M) Lack of understanding and support by management
Staff training	A) Cost and availability of specialist qualifications L) Insufficient training available for dyslexia specialists working in an FE context
Time	B) Time to give to the learner to be able to make enough progress D) Time delay from application to assessment to delivery I) Lack of staff time I) Evening classes cannot be covered M) Lack of time for communication with tutors, preparation, administration, writing reports N) Dyslexia specialists have heavy teaching commitments in other areas e.g. ESOL, Key Skills
Costs/funding	A) Cost of specialist qualifications A) Cost of diagnostic tests A) Funding not always there G) Funding K) Funding methodology preventing the development of inclusive support strategies by insisting ALS claimed for individuals M) Shortage of funding for resources
Accommodation	A) Lack of base room for support F) Disturbance from other learners e.g. in library F) No separate room for assistive technology G) Environmental factors I) Lack of space I) 3 sites to cover - with more staff and space a lot more could be done M) Accommodation not adequate for nature of job: shared room, lack of confidential space for one-to-one interviews, testing and specialist teaching sessions
Learner issues	D) Fear from learners D) Numbers of learners E) Huge number to test - many should have been tested at school J) Late diagnosis/assessment of learners with dyslexia J) No relevant information - referred by previous schools K) Previous support experiences make many students reluctant to ask for/accept support

**Learner issues:** Four colleges mentioned learner issues as a barrier, because of the huge number of learners, especially those who needed testing, and fear from learners. Previous support experiences made many students reluctant to ask for and accept support.

#### **4.18.2. Summary**

Barriers to effective practice related to a number of themes and included: the lack of specialist staff, other staff issues, staff training, time, costs/funding, accommodation, and learner issues.

### **4.19. Suggested improvements**

***Question 24: Please list factors which you consider would help you be/become a more effective practitioner***

#### **4.19.1. Areas for improvement**

Factors which the GFE Colleges considered would help them become more effective practitioners included: transition, provision, staff capacity, staff training, time, accommodation, resources, assessment and management (**Table 15**). Tutors suggested additional improvements such as: development of local skills, identification, transition, screening, support provision, staff capacity, staff training, time, accommodation, resources, assessment, learner issues, and management.

**Development of local skills:** One of the tutors mentioned the need to improve local skills in numeracy and literacy.

**Identification:** Improvements to identification suggested by tutors concerned: college systems, to pick up students who enrol at different times of the year, for courses that start part way through; and advertising of the specialist dyslexia tutors, in the staff handbook, with an e-mail address; this would enable easier access to specialist tutors by other staff.

**Transition:** Suggestions for improvements to transition (4) included getting more information from schools, and planning for universities and employment. One college was working on a transitions passport, to set out the support that students had found useful and the support they would like to be continued in University.

**Table 15** Suggestions for improvement made by GFE colleges and tutors

(n = 12)

<b>Area for improvement</b>	<b>Improvements suggested by GFE Colleges</b>
Development of local skills	A) Improvement of local skills in numeracy and literacy
Identification	M) Improvement in college systems to pick up students through the year K) Advertising of specialist tutors
Transition	E) If HE students would apply earlier for their DSA J) A more developed focus in schools to provide transition information post 16 K) Transition planning - information from schools and planning for university and employment - Transitions passport M) Schools to inform colleges of previous assessment and support
Screening	M) Incorporating a cognitive abilities test in the screening process
Support provision	A) Encouragement for students to take up support - course tutor G) Would like a flexible drop-in provision K) Making support relaxed, friendly and informal K) Funding to provide for the cost of developing new approaches to supporting the learner with dyslexia K) An 'institutional' versus 'personalised' approach to support L) More effective strategies with an FE bias
Staff capacity	E) If the college had more staff who were qualified in Dyslexia G) Greater staffing levels I) More staff would help K) At least one permanent practitioner K) More hours for the dyslexia tutor - full time N) Dyslexia specialist to be relieved of other responsibilities
Staff training	A) Specialist qualification A) Opportunity to specialize and work solely with students with dyslexia A) Dyslexia awareness training for course tutors and college staff B) More peer training/courses F) Continue to attend external training and networks H) Would recommend tutors to join the West Yorkshire Dyslexia tutors Forum, as it is invaluable. High quality training is provided - can share knowledge with other specialists J) A sharing of good practice L) More training
Time	E) Fewer teaching hours - need remitted time for co-ordinating support H) Time - time to train staff and time to check all resources M) More administration time M) More time with learners
Accommodation	A) Dedicated base room with space for storing resources A) Quiet A) Permanent access to ICT E) More rooms available for one-to-one support G) Dedicated resource centre for dyslexia support I) To keep the second specified room for purpose K) Integrated but distinctly separate M) Improved accommodation - more space, individual rooms for interviews, testing, teaching M) Improved space for storage of resources M) Change in location to raise profile of dyslexia support - centrally based N) Specific resource centre N) Small quiet room

Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>B) Resources for older learners, 16-19 year olds, to help complete vocational programme</li> <li>F) Need to update some of the hardware</li> <li>G) Better resources</li> <li>K) Specialised software</li> <li>K) Personalised pen drives</li> <li>L) More resources with an FE bias</li> <li>M) More funding for specialist resources</li> </ul>
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A) Improved funding for testing</li> <li>E) If more students were tested at school prior to attending college</li> <li>F) Would like Exam boards to write their exam papers in a more dyslexia friendly way and find ways to assess the learners more creatively</li> <li>J) Earlier diagnosis - a more specific assessment process during school years</li> <li>K) More time needed for assessments</li> <li>K) Assessment and support at school</li> </ul>
Learner Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>K) Empowerment of students to articulate their needs</li> <li>M) Learner awareness of dyslexia</li> </ul>
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>M) Improved understanding of needs by management</li> <li>M) Management awareness of dyslexia</li> <li>M) Views of dyslexia tutor to be taken into consideration</li> <li>M) Feedback on how students had done on their courses</li> <li>N) Appointment of a disability officer</li> </ul>

**Screening:** One tutor suggested incorporating a cognitive abilities test in the screening.

**Support provision:** Four colleges suggested improvements to provision, including the development of new approaches and strategies. An 'institutional' versus 'personalised' approach to support was proposed. The institution needed to have a good level of awareness, with tutors being aware, differentiating and incorporating strategies in their teaching. This involved tutoring staff about in-class support, working with the learning support staff and training to support in classrooms. Personalisation was seen as an essential, lifelong tool for learners, listening to the individuals needs and trying to wrap round the support to them. A very flexible approach was needed with a package of different things available.

**Staff capacity:** Five colleges mentioned improving staff capacity, with at least one permanent practitioner. Specialist dyslexia tutors needed to be fully utilized, employed full time hours, and relieved of other responsibilities. More staff were required, who were qualified in dyslexia.

**Staff training:** Six colleges suggested the need for more training for the dyslexia tutors: training for a specialist qualification; attending external training and networks, such as the West Yorkshire Dyslexia Tutors Forum, which provided high quality training, enabling

members to share knowledge with other specialists; sharing of good practice and peer training. Dyslexia awareness training, for course tutors and other staff was also needed.

**Time:** More time was needed for: administration, training staff, checking resources coordinating support, with fewer teaching hours. One tutor said that they would like more time with learners.

**Accommodation:** Seven colleges raised accommodation as an issue and suggested a need for: a dedicated resource centre or base room for dyslexia support (3); improved space for the storage of resources (2); rooms for one-to-one support (4); more space and individual rooms for interviews, testing and teaching; a small quiet room. Additional suggestions for improvement by tutors involved being centrally based and integrated, with a base room, a quiet space and access to ICT. One tutor commented that changing the location of dyslexia support would raise the profile. It was suggested that the ideal dyslexia department should be centrally based in the college with all the other support services, like a spoke in that wheel, perhaps leading off from the main library area, near the learning workshop, in the forefront of things, somewhere that is integrated but distinctly separated. Two tutors suggested the need for a base room, for storing resources and helping to build a rapport with students, by providing an area they know. It needed to be quiet with permanent access to ICT. Another tutor said that students would like their own room, or an area, a booth, that was screened off.

**Resources:** Six colleges said there was a need for improved resources. Issues mentioned included: more resources with an FE bias for older learners (16-19 year olds); more funding for specialist resources; an update of hardware; specialist software available across all college sites. One college was exploring with the idea of personalised pen drive applications, so that a student could have all the particular pieces of software that they needed with them, however, a high cost was involved.

**Assessment:** Five colleges suggested improvements to assessments; the main issue was the need for earlier diagnosis of dyslexia, with a more specific assessment process during the school years, prior to attending college (3). Other points raised included: exam boards to write exam papers in a more dyslexia friendly way; more creative ways of assessing learners; more time for assessment; improved funding for testing.

**Learner issues:** One tutor suggested improving learner awareness of dyslexia by providing information on dyslexia and how it will affect them. Another tutor said that students needed empowering, by learning how they can articulate their needs.

**Management:** The main management issue raised was the development of awareness and understanding of dyslexia, and the work of the dyslexia team, by management; this was seen as crucial. One tutor stated that it was imperative for managers to have actually done the job, as they may not be aware of what is involved in a full assessment, the time it takes, the skill and precision involved and the knowledge it takes to do it effectively. It was important for dyslexia tutors to have a say and their views taken into consideration. The point was also made that managers often have to implement decisions and ways of doing things that tutors are not happy with and sometimes they have to go with the flow. Tutors would also like to know how students had done in their courses.

#### **4.19.2. Summary**

A number of suggestions for improvement to support, for learners with dyslexia, were outlined by colleges and tutors. The main issues identified by colleges included: accommodation (7), staff training (6), resources (6), staff capacity (5), assessment (5), transition (4), and support provision (4). Issues to do with learners (2) and managers (2) were also mentioned, as well as the development of local skills and screening.

#### **4.20. Summary: questionnaire, telephone and tutor interviews**

The questionnaires and telephone interviews enabled a great deal of data to be collected in answer to the first research question, concerning the present position in GFE colleges with respect to systems for identifying and providing for learners with dyslexia. The tutor interviews enabled more in-depth data to be collected with regard to the second and third research questions, the different perceptions of specialist tutors concerning effective practice in the identification and provision for learners with dyslexia and suggestions for improvements. The main themes included: background information, referral, initial identification, screening, support, support services provided, staff, collaboration, staff training, teaching methods, accommodation, resources, assessment, reviews, learner well-being, evaluation, barriers to effective practice and suggested improvements.

## Chapter 5

### Research findings (2)

#### Learner interviews

##### 5.1. Background information

Twelve learners were interviewed from three GFE Colleges. Six of the learners were female and six were male. There was one focus group of five learners and two groups of two learners. Three individual learners were also interviewed, one of whom had a friend with him. One learner mentioned that they had dyspraxia. Three of the learners mentioned having other specific learning difficulties as well as dyslexia, such as dyspraxia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Meares Irlen Syndrome<sup>13</sup>. Two learners had been born in other countries and English was problematic for one. Ten of the learners were young people and two were mature learners.

The data from the learner interviews were organised into the themes that had been included in the questionnaire, as well as the focus group interview questions and prompts. The main themes included: initial identification, support provision, staff, teaching methods, resources, accommodation, progress and assessment, learner-well being, evaluation, previous experience at high school, opinion about the term 'dyslexia'.

##### 5.2. Initial identification

###### ***Can you talk about your first feelings when you started college?***

*Prompt: How did you feel about disclosing your dyslexia during application/registration?*

*How could the disclosure process be improved?*

The themes that emerged from the learner interviews on initial identification included: learner awareness of difficulties, feelings about starting college and transition, suggested improvements.

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<sup>13</sup> This supports research evidence on co-morbidity of various types of specific learning difficulties (Backhouse 2005, Muter 2011) (Section 2.3.2.5)

### **5.2.1. Awareness of difficulties**

Seven learners mentioned that they were aware of their difficulties before starting college. Two of the learners had been statemented at school and one had attended private tuition at the Dyslexia Institute. One learner said that his tutor at college first made him think about asking for support.

### **5.2.2. Feelings about starting college/transition**

Learners talked about feelings of apprehension as well as positive feelings about starting college. They also expressed negative feelings about experiences at school. Two of the learners mentioned apprehensive feelings about starting college mainly due to the amount of writing that would be involved, essays and paperwork. Five of the learners expressed very positive feelings about the help and support they received when they first started:

*'They were really good for helping and that... I came here and got support straight away.'* (M1)<sup>14</sup>

All five of the learners interviewed in the focus group said that they felt happy with the transition process of coming to college and getting supported straight away. They thought the college was good and they could not think of anything that could be improved. One learner was very positive about having met the skills support coordinator at school before coming to college. Three learners said they did not mind disclosing their dyslexia at college (Section 5.12.1).

Learners also talked about negative experiences of school. Five learners mentioned the lack of adequate help and support at school (Section 5.11). One learner talked about a bad experience in her childhood where she had been put into a school for the disabled.

### **5.2.3. Suggested improvements**

Learners suggested improvements to do with early identification of dyslexia and the need to address a difficulty. Six learners suggested that you need to identify learners as young as possible, preferably at primary school:

*'I think, for everybody's sake, it being identified as young as possible, it would make a massive difference.'* (F4)

*'It could be identified sooner ... be acknowledged sooner...'* (F4)

*'It needs doing at Primary school'* (F2)

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<sup>14</sup> Each learner has been allocated a number. M - male F - female

One learner said that if they had been identified younger they would not have struggled and would have found a way of coping:

*'if we had been identified younger, and had got the support at a younger age, then maybe we wouldn't have struggled and we would have found a way of coping easier than leaving it till later in life.'* (F4)

One learner said that they would not have missed out on reading and writing etc.:

*'It needs doing at Primary school because you're missing out on your reading and writing and things like that.'* (F2)

One learner suggested that a difficulty should be addressed. It was learning in a different way to suit each individual:

*'If you know there's a difficulty then that should be addressed. It's learning in a different way, and where that suits you, each individual.'* (F4)

#### **5.2.4. Summary**

Seven out of twelve learners were aware of their difficulties before starting college. This highlighted a need for colleges to gather previous information from schools and to identify new learners at the start of their courses. Learners mentioned the lack of help and support at school as well as negative experiences in the past. Learners commented on being apprehensive about starting college but were happy about the transition process and receiving support straight away. Meeting one of the tutors at school before starting college was a positive experience. Learners suggested the need for early identification of dyslexia, preferably at primary school, and the need to address difficulties.

### **5.3. Support provision**

#### ***What are your views about the support provided for learners with dyslexia?***

*Prompts: Do you have access to one-to-one support? Is the support you are receiving meeting your needs? Is the provision of support flexible? How could it be improved? What other kind of support would you like to see in place?*

#### **5.3.1. Opinions of support**

Learners gave their opinion of the support and talked about one-to-one support. Five learners said that the support was meeting their needs. All twelve learners said that they

had one-to-one support. One learner had one-to-one with different tutors. Learners made positive comments about the support. Five learners found the support quite flexible as the tutors worked around their timetables. One said that they could ask for extra help as well. All twelve learners mentioned that the one-to-one support helped them saying things like:

*'We go through loads of things, it's great.'* (M1)

*'I think that it's good. I think the session that I do with the specialist tutor; it has made an impact, a positive impact.'* (M4)

Two learners said that they learn more in the sessions with the dyslexia tutor:

*'I find that I learn more going out, than I do actually in there.'* (F1)

*'That's like me; I can do it when I come here.'* (M2)

Two learners said that one of the strong points about having support is *'that there's someone there if you need it.'* (M3, F6). One learner said it was *'the teacher giving you the time.'* (F5)

Learners talked about different ways in which the one-to-one support helped them, these included: coursework (3)<sup>15</sup>; writing (2); proofreading (2); software (3) for example, the ALP which helped with reading and spelling; Memory (3) remembering things and keeping a diary. The support also helped with spellings (2); English and ICT (1); key terms (1); reading (1); organisation (1); confidence (1); brainstorming (1); and Maths (1).

One learner said:

*'It meets the needs of my course. I could have come in and had work on English and reading and spelling, but that isn't going to get me the qualification, what I need for my course. I can manage and write it down rough, I need a proofreader to be able to go through it and do it that way. Verbally, it's easy enough, but written down it's more of a task.'* (F4)

One learner mentioned that he would have found it hard, a lot harder, without having the support, especially with his writing.

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<sup>15</sup> Numbers in brackets represent number of learners

### **5.3.2. Suggested improvements to support**

Suggested improvements to support included more support in class, support from a friend, additional English sessions, and a translator. Three learners mentioned the need for more support in class. Two learners said that it was important that the support assistant helped:

*'We did have one last year but she wasn't very good. She never really helped.'* (M3)

One learner was very appreciative of the support he received from a friend:

*'I think probably he supports me more than the staff to be honest, he's a good lad, they should pay.'* (M4)

One learner mentioned that small English sessions would help, where work is broken down a bit more. Things such as: *'structuring paragraphs, structuring work or even spellings... there/their, was and saw.'* (F4). One learner, for whom English was not his first language, said that he would also benefit from a translator.

### **5.3.3. Summary**

All twelve learners had one-to-one support and all said that it helped them, it had a positive impact and they were able to learn much more. The support helped with the development of skills, such as reading, spelling and writing as well as with coursework, key terms, English, Maths and ICT. It also helped with study skills: proofreading, brainstorming, organisation, memory and confidence. Five learners found the support quite flexible. Suggested improvements to support included more support in class, support from a friend, additional English sessions and a translator.

## **5.4. Staff**

### ***Who supports learners with dyslexia?***

*Prompts: Have you access to specialist tutors? Do you make use of dyslexia support staff in lessons? Are your personal/subject tutors aware of your needs? If not, would you like them to be? How would this help you?*

### **5.4.1. Staff issues**

Learners talked about issues to do with staff, these included: specialist tutors, in-class support, course tutors, and awareness of dyslexia. Six learners mentioned that they had access to specialist dyslexia tutors. Two learners had support in class. One learner said

that he had support from the teacher as well as a LSA. Three learners said that they managed all right with just the teacher who helped them when they needed it. Two of these worked in small groups of eleven and eight learners. One learner had small group support in Maths.

Six learners found tutors supportive when they needed it although two learners said that not all tutors were: *'Yeah, well most of them.'* (M3)

*'...but as for the rest, most of them don't do it, to be honest.'* (M4)

*'All they do is probably just print the powerpoint off, if they have one.*

*That's it mainly.'* (M4)

One learner said that he would like tutors to help you more, as there were two or three other people in the group that were dyslexic, as well as himself, and they did not ask staff for help. Two learners mentioned difficulties due to staff absences on their main courses.

Ten learners said that their subject tutors were aware of their dyslexia and one said he did not think that most of them knew, he thought it would be better if they did. One learner said that her tutor was always telling her off for being distracted and did not understand that it was part of her dyslexia. Learners pointed out that one of the main issues that affected provision was the lack of awareness and understanding of dyslexia among other learners in the group (one learner) and among tutors (one learner).

#### **5.4.2. Summary**

Learners said that they had access to specialist tutors, in-class support, support from teachers and small group support. Six learners found tutors supportive, although two learners said that not all tutors were and one learner said that he would like tutors to help you more. Ten learners pointed out that tutors were aware of their dyslexia although there were also tutors who were not aware. Lack of awareness and understanding by other learners was another issue mentioned.

#### **5.5. Teaching methods**

***How does specialist support or teaching help you? Can you talk about any specific teaching methods used?***

*Prompts: Are teaching methods used helpful? Do you use any specific programmes?*

*What do you think of these? How could teaching methods be improved?*

Learners talked about difficulties with teaching methods as well as tutor delivery in lessons, these suggested areas for improvement.

### **5.5.1. Improvements to teaching methods**

Eight learners expressed difficulties with teaching methods that highlighted areas for improvements, these included: breaking work down into small steps, clear instructions written down, bullet points, tutor notes beforehand or a printout of powerpoints, lessons recorded, visual methods, use of learning aids and opportunities for own individual learner methods.

**Breaking work down into small steps:** *'I always make a point of saying to the teacher 'what was that?' or 'can you break it down?' (F4)*

**Clear instructions written down:** *'The teacher gives you guidelines of what to do, then you go away and sit down and you just forget everything he said.'* (F6) *'I always have to ask again, what to do, because it doesn't go in, it doesn't register.'* (M3)

**Bullet points:** *'The main thing that my friend does that helps is he makes bullet points, it does help with bullet points, and he explains it a bit more.'* (M4)

**Tutor notes beforehand - print out of powerpoints:** Four learners mentioned a difficulty with dictation (2 learners) and note taking (2 learners). Three learners mentioned that tutors gave out handouts, which they found helpful:

*'They do give handouts, but a lot of them like to dictate and then write some of the stuff on the board.'* (F2)

*'He keeps telling us to write notes but... cos I'm dyslexic, I can't note take, I've never been able to note take. I can't multitask like that, I can't note take.'* (M3)

*'I find note taking difficult. I miss bits out. You get into your own world and that.'* (M4)

*'The thing what would help me is printouts, proper good printouts, of what to do.'* (M3)

**Lessons recorded - use of a Dictaphone:** *'I would use the Dictaphone, that would be one thing I would use. That would come in handy, yeah, to be honest.'* (M4)

**Visual methods:** *'... it could do to have something, maybe pie charts and things, actually explaining stuff, like spider diagrams and things, just with key points on and stuff.'* (F2)

**Learning Aids:** *'I use cards. I write, like stuff, on the cards... It helps me remember a lot, especially in Maths, cos there's obviously that many different rules.'* (M1)

**Opportunities for own individual learner methods:** *'I just want to do it my way.'* (F5)

### **5.5.2. Improvements to tutor delivery**

Seven learners talked about difficulties they had experienced as a result of the way that the tutor delivered the lesson. These were to do with the duration and speed of delivery, poor spelling by tutors, learner contact and interaction, explanations.

Problems with duration and speed of delivery were mainly due to tutors speaking very fast and for a long time:

*'The teacher in one of the classes has got like a really, really strong accent, and you can't understand a word he says, and he speaks really fast.'* (F6)

*'He'll talk for about an hour.'* (M3)

*'And after ten minutes you switch off. And then at the end of it, you've only got the first ten minutes.'* (M3)

*'With my course, it's a lot of listening to the tutors, I think they need to slow down a bit, I'm slow at book reading and stuff and dictating.'* (F2)

Difficulties with learner contact and interaction involved the tutor not devoting enough time to learners in class and talking down to learners:

*'We had this course work and we had to do it over a year and the tutor just comes into the lesson for five minutes and then just goes away again and when she goes we just all muck about cos there's nobody there to say, right get on with your work. I know it's our responsibility, but...'* (F1)

*'...this one was talking to me like I was a kid... I don't need that... I just want to go a bit further, where I can read a proper letter, that's all I want to do.'* (F5)

Learners pointed out difficulties due to the spelling skills and explanations of tutors:

*'Even tutors, some of them say, 'I can't spell that word'. You're supposed to learn from the tutor.'* (M1) *'I think they could explain better...'* (F5) *'...my friend... he explains it a bit more.'* (M4)

### **5.5.3. Summary**

Learners expressed difficulties with teaching methods that highlighted areas for improvements, these included: breaking work down into small steps, clear instructions written down, bullet points, tutor notes beforehand or a printout of powerpoints, lessons recorded, visual methods, use of learning aids and opportunities for own individual learner methods. Difficulties with tutor delivery included the duration and speed of delivery, learner contact and interaction, poor spelling and explanations by tutors.

## **5.6. Resources**

***What do you think about the resources available to help you learn?***

### **5.6.1. Resources available**

Learners talked about the software they used, assistive technology and other things that helped.

**Software used:** Specialist software used helped with reading, writing and spelling, mindmapping and Maths. Six learners used the computer programme 'Read and Write Gold'. One learner said:

*'You use it for screen reading and you use it when you're checking your work, it reads it back to you so that you can tell if it sounds OK, when you listen to it, so that you can change it if it needs to be... that helps me.'* (F6)

Four learners said that they used the ALP; it helped with spelling (2) and reading (2). Two learners mentioned mindmapping and brainstorming software, such as 'Inspiration', one said that it helped with revision. One learner said that he used programmes to help with Maths.

**Assistive technology:** Assistive technology mentioned included laptops and Dictaphones. Three learners mentioned having a laptop, which they use, and two learners said that they would like one, as it would help if they had one: *'I think we need our own laptops, we have to go and get them and borrow them.'* (M2)

One learner said that he found it pretty good that they supply you with a laptop and all the right software on it. Two learners said that the laptops had helped them:

*'...it's like our own thing to use, we don't have to worry about anybody watching, we can just do our work, and just relax whilst we do it.'* (M3)

One learner commented that a Dictaphone helped:

*'I've used the Dictaphone... it's helpful because if you record it, you can go back to it and play it back, and pronouncing words...'* (F4)

**Others:** One learner mentioned changing the colour on the screen: *'On the computer, I change the colour of the screens, cos my eyes can't take the screen. It's the glare.'* (F2)

One learner said that his friend was probably his best resource:

*'I think probably the friend is the strongest one out of all that.'* (M4)

### **5.6.2. Summary**

Specialist software used by learners included: 'Read and Write Gold', the ALP, which helped with reading, spelling and writing; Inspiration, which helped with mindmapping, brainstorming and revision; and Maths programmes. Learners made use of assistive technology such as laptops and Dictaphones and were very appreciative of this, saying it helped them a lot. Changing the colour on the screen also helped as well as having a friend to support them.

## **5.7. Accommodation**

***What is your opinion about the accommodation for dyslexia support?***

*Prompt: How could this be improved?*

Issues raised by learners to do with accommodation concerned the present accommodation and suggestions for improvement.

### **5.7.1. Present accommodation**

Learners made positive and negative comments about their present accommodation. Four learners said they liked the present accommodation because it was private and quiet. One learner said: *'It's little but I like it, it's out of the way, you haven't got people noseying about, you can just go there, and it's private.'* (M3)

Two learners made negative comments saying that the accommodation was 'a bit little'. Two learners said that the present accommodation in the library was not really suitable as it was not quiet and learners could not concentrate because of distractions:

*'We have to sit in the library and there's nothing there, it's not quiet and you're not getting one-to-one cos you watch... and certain people can't concentrate... people walking around... you can't... you need somewhere in the college where you can go.'* (F2)

*'There's a quiet area in the library but it's not really quiet... I have trouble with concentration... I'll get distracted.'* (M2)

A small interview room was sometimes used in one college but three learners complained about the lack of light and noise: 'Our rooms got no windows in, it drives you insane... It's like a chicken coop.' (F1) 'You go inside and it's dark...' (M2)

### **5.7.2. Suggestions for improvement**

Four learners expressed a desire for some space of their own, like a proper support area with computers, books and equipment, free from distractions:

*'A proper support area would be good where you've got books and equipment and stuff.'* (F2)

*'Where you know you're not going to be disturbed.'* (M2)

*'Some sort of rooms with computers or something.'* (F2)

*'I think we could do with our own room with less distractions, especially with having the common room next door.'* (M2)

Two learners had some suggestions to make for a New Build; they wanted an area or floor with quiet rooms or a group room.

### **5.7.3. Summary**

Learners expressed mixed opinions about their present accommodation; this was mainly due to the level of noise and privacy. Some of the learners liked the present accommodation because it was private and quiet; others said that their accommodation was too small, dark, or noisy. They found it difficult to concentrate in a shared space. Four learners expressed a desire for some space of their own, like a proper support area with computers, books and equipment, quiet and free from distractions.

## **5.8. Progress and assessment**

### ***Can you talk about how you can tell if you've improved your skills?***

*Prompts: Do you feel that you are improving? How do you know that you have improved? How do you feel about assessments?*

Learners talked about how they became aware of their progress, as well as their views on assessment and the difficulties that they experienced.

### **5.8.1. Progress**

Learners were made aware of their progress through an improvement in grades and skills. Three learners said that they knew they had made progress by the improvement in their coursework and grades. Five learners spoke about the way that their skills had improved. These included improvements in spelling, writing, reading, concentration, and Maths:

*'My spellings a lot better than it was and my writing has really improved. It used to be very sprawled but now it's like, legible, and my concentration has got a lot better.'* (F1)

*'I feel that I'm being a better reader and my spelling's improving. Because at first I used to make spelling mistakes, like nearly every single word, now I'm not, so I think that's an improvement to be honest.'* (M4)

One learner said that the ALP helped to improve reading:

*'I've found that with the ALP thing the reading has got better cos when I used to look at words, just separate letters, but through ALP they just start to join together, and make a word instead of just separate letters.'* (F6)

One learner said that there was always something new to learn. Another learner was concerned about recognition of qualifications in employment, making the point that key skills is only recognised in university and colleges and not in employment, where they just want a C at GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education). Another learner stressed the fact that Level 3 at Key Skills is equivalent to a C at GCSE.

### **5.8.2. Views on assessment**

Learners talked about when they had been assessed, they made both positive and negative comments about assessment.

**When assessed?** Six learners had been assessed before starting college and six after starting. Out of the six learners that had been assessed previously three said that they had been assessed whilst at school; two said that they had had a private assessment and one had been assessed during a previous course. Out of the six learners who were assessed whilst at college, three of these mentioned that they had been assessed as soon as they started college and three were assessed during their course.

**Positive comments:** Six learners made positive comments about the assessment; it made them feel better about themselves, more confident and more aware of their difficulties:

*'It was good. I had it done at high school and when I came here I had a piece of paper to say what I'd got and stuff. I just weren't classed as an 'idiot', you were, like, classed as something else.'* (F1)

Learners had previously been made to feel; *'stupid', 'thick', 'an idiot'*. After the assessment they felt: *'brighter', 'like everybody else', 'classed as something else', 'more confident', 'more open'*.

Three learners said that the assessment helped them to become aware of difficulties and receive the support that they needed.

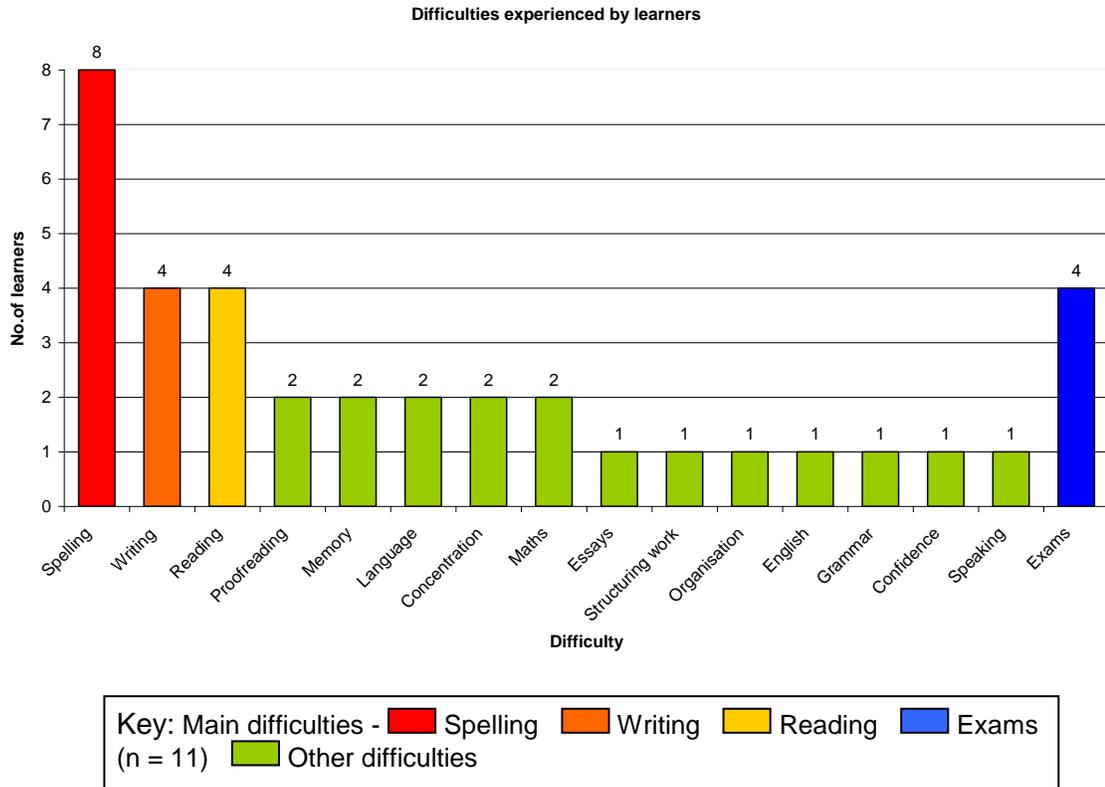
**Negative comments:** Two learners made negative comments about the assessment these were to do with an awareness of limitations and repeating an assessment. One learner said that the dyslexia assessments took him to the limits and made him feel 'thick' because he was slow and could not do some of the things, as they were too hard. One said that he was a bit annoyed about having to do an assessment again as he had done one previously when he was statemented.

### **5.8.3. Difficulties experienced**

Learners mentioned a number of difficulties that they experienced (**Figure 21**). The main difficulty was spelling, as well as writing, reading and exams. A wide range of other difficulties was also experienced, to do with study skills, literacy and language skills, Maths, memory, concentration and confidence.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> This supports the major problem areas identified by Brayton (1997) as well as the wider range of difficulties found in adults (Section 2.3.1.2). (Singleton 1991; Klein 1992; McLoughlin, Fitzgibbon



**Figure 21** Difficulties experienced by learners

Four learners talked about their difficulties with exams. The length of exams was a problem, especially for two learners with poor concentration. Three learners mentioned needing extra time in exams. One learner said that he would have benefited from extra time in the exams but did not get it. He ended up just scraping through. One learner said that he had a scribe to help with the written work, which helped.

Three learners said that they had difficulty understanding the exam questions. One learner appreciated the invigilators helping to alleviate the stress of exams by talking to him and making him feel welcome. Two learners said that exams influenced their choice of courses, avoiding courses with exams.

#### **5.8.4. Summary**

Learners were made aware of their progress through an improvement in course grades and skills, such as spelling, writing, reading, concentration, and Maths. Concern was expressed about recognition of key skills qualifications in employment. Six learners had

been assessed before starting college and six after starting. The assessment made learners feel better about themselves, more confident and more aware of their difficulties. One learner said the assessment made him aware of his limitations and another did not like the idea of repeating an assessment that he had done previously. The main difficulties experienced by learners were spelling, writing and reading. Other difficulties included: proofreading, memory, language, poor concentration, Maths, writing essays, structuring work, organisation, English, grammar, lack of confidence and speaking skills. Learners also had difficulty with exams, understanding the questions and the length of exams. Two learners avoided taking courses with exams.

## **5.9. Learner well-being**

### ***In what way have your personal needs been met?***

*Prompts: Are you aware of your individual learning programme? Are you aware of the way you think? What are your strong points? What are you good at?*

#### **5.9.1. Learner awareness**

Learners made positive comments on well-being and talked about their increased awareness and things that helped them. Three learners said that their personal needs were being met through the support. One of these said that they were just feeling more comfortable than when they first came.

Learners were aware of their difficulties and targets as well as self-awareness and awareness of their strengths. They were aware of the skills they needed to develop, these included spelling skills and reading skills. Other things mentioned were writing, grammar, English. One learner said that he had all the knowledge, it was just about writing it down. Four learners said that they were aware of their individual targets such as not getting distracted, reading, writing, language, and speaking. Issues mentioned by learners to do with self-awareness:

- Two learners said that they worked better when they sat on their own.
- One learner made the point that everyone's different '*massively different from everyone.*' (M2)
- Five learners mentioned an awareness of their learning style. These included three visual learners and two practical learners.
- Three learners mentioned that they had to work a lot harder than others and yet others easily got distinctions without putting in the same effort.

- One learner mentioned the lack of confidence and self-esteem experienced by people with dyslexia.
- One learner said that he hid his difficulty, as he was embarrassed about not being very good at reading and things like that. When he grew older he just asked for more help, as the work got harder.

Nine learners were aware of their strengths (**Figure 22**). Six of these mentioned that they were good at computer related work. Four learners said that they were good at socialising or interacting with people or children. One learner said that she turned a weakness in English into a strength.

Learner	Strengths			
M1	Maths	Building things	Sports	Social life - Organising Events Secretary Young Farmers
F1	Organising	Playing flute	Socialising	
F3	Talking - interacting with people	Public Services		
M2	Computers	Business minded		
F2	Technology Computers, films	Childcare - children	Brownies	English
F6	Using Software on computer			
M3	Using Software on computer			
M4	IT - Spreadsheets Computers			
M6	Computers - IT	Computer Games		

(n = 9)

**Figure 22** Strengths of learners with dyslexia

Learners mentioned things that helped them, these included relaxation and self-determination. One learner said that she had somebody to help her relax at high school. Two learners mentioned using music to relax through an iPod or headphones.

Two learners said that they did not mind being dyslexic but did not like it when others put them down. Two learners said that it made them more determined:

*'It has me, it's made me think, it's not going to stop me. Having acknowledged that I was dyslexic and should I say, having a statement at*

*college and having the assessment, made me think to myself, 'you're going to do it'. (F4)*

### **5.9.2. Summary**

Learners said that their personal needs were being met through the support. They were aware of their difficulties, targets, and skills they needed to develop. They also had self-awareness, for example, awareness of differences in learning styles and how they worked best. Learners were also aware of their strengths and things they were good at.

### **5.10. Evaluation**

#### ***What chances have you had to make your views known?***

*Prompts: Have you had a chance to make your views known about your support needs/requirements? Have you any suggestions on how this could be done?*

#### **5.10.1. Making views known**

Issues mentioned by learners to do with evaluation included: a chance to make their views known, suggestions for improvement and evaluation of support. Learners had a chance to make their views known about their own problems and about improvement to support. Two learners said that they had a chance to make their views known, especially to the Key Skills team, which incorporates the dyslexia team:

*'Key Skills... they're really, really helpful, they're like your mum, they're really caring... they're like your friends. They're really, really good.'* (F3)  
*'I can tell them my problems, that's the good thing about it.'* (M2)

Two learners said that they had been asking for support in class all year without success and had only just recently got someone coming in to support them in two lessons where they do not really need it. A previous support assistant had not been very good.

One proposed solution for improvement was to be able to communicate quicker with the manager who is in charge. One learner said that it would be best to talk to someone with an understanding of the course.

Learners mentioned evaluation of support through a questionnaire and focus group. Four learners said that they had had a chance to evaluate the support by completing a questionnaire at the end of the year:

*'It was like a tick thing to say whether I thought that what I'd been given was OK and things like that. Just like a questions and answers thing. Yes and No, and things like that.'* (F2)

One learner mentioned a question that said 'Who do you think learning support is for?' and he said that he put 'special people'. He said: *'I'm special'* in a happy and proud way.

One learner talked about participating in a focus group: *'I did one of these (focus group), the OFSTED one. I fed back to them what I thought was good and so on.'* (F2) *'You need to evaluate what's good and what's bad.'* (F2)

### **5.10.2. Summary**

Learners had a chance to make their views known about their own problems and about improvement to support. They spoke to tutors and evaluated support through a questionnaire and focus group. Suggestions for improvement included being able to communicate quicker with the manager and talking to someone with an understanding of the course.

## **5.11. Previous experience at high school**

Learners talked about positive and negative experiences of high school and suggested improvements.

### **5.11.1. Positive and negative experiences**

Two learners felt positive that teachers had supported them: *'My English teacher helped me get through my GCSE.'* (F1) *'Some of the teachers are good.'* (M1).

Seven learners talked about difficulties in high school, negative experiences included: lack of help, being taken out of lessons, learning, teachers, and the size of the school. One learner said that he did not get help until the GCSE's in Years 10 and 11. One learner mentioned not liking being taken out of lessons: *'High schools the problem, they pull you out of lessons and stuff and it makes you feel very... it's when you get taken out of lessons.'* (F2). Two learners said that they learnt more at college than they did at high school. Three learners said that they learnt more from the television and the computer than they did at school, apart from things like key terms.

Three learners talked about the difficulty for people with dyslexia when they are in the same group as people who know what they are doing or do not want to learn:

*'The people who are intelligent can just get it.'* (M1)

*'There's people who don't care about learning, so that the people who are dyslexic, who want to learn, but can't, struggle, don't learn either, so they don't get any help.'* (M1)

Three learners mentioned the teachers at their high school. Two learners said that teachers had not supported them: *'Some of the teachers are good but half of them are just ridiculous.'* (M1). One learner mentioned a difficulty due to a lot of temporary staff.

*'... we were quite ignored by the staff to be honest, the school was struggling at the time, there wasn't a lot of permanent staff, so it was just temporary.'* (M4)

Two learners expressed feelings of being left to fend for themselves, without support from the teachers:

*'He concentrated on the more... those who could do it, where I was there, like... 3 hours later, I still couldn't understand what it was on about. If it doesn't go in first time it just doesn't go in.'* (F1)

*'When I was at high school, the ones that weren't going to get a C were just put in a corner, and that's the thing what annoyed me, at the end of the day.'* (F2)

One learner mentioned the size of high schools and pointed out that they were just too big: *'There are too many people, that's the thing. There are too many people in high schools.'* (F1)

### **5.11.2. Suggestions for improvement**

Suggestions for improvement by learners included having support similar to college, trained specialist teachers in schools, more teacher time for those who want to learn and learning out of school. Two learners said that the schools should have a similar support set up to college: *'I think they should have what we have here at high schools.'* (M1).

Three learners mentioned the need for trained specialist teachers in schools: *'They should have somebody trained properly to teach people who are dyslexic.'* (M1)

Two learners suggested that they target the people who want to do the work but have difficulty with it and help them: *'They waste more time with people who don't care, they should spend more time with people who want to learn, who are struggling, which is ridiculous.'* (M1)

One learner suggested sending learners out one day a week: *'They should form the seeds in the high school where they send them out one day a week.'* (F2)

### **5.11.3. Summary**

Two learners felt that teachers had supported them at high school whilst seven learners had negative experiences, due to the lack of help, being taken out of lessons, lack of learning, no support from teachers, and the large size of the school. Suggestions for improvement included: having support similar to college, trained specialist teachers in schools, more teacher time for those who want to learn and learning out of school.

## **5.12. Opinions about the term 'dyslexia'**

***How do you feel about using the term 'dyslexia' to describe your difficulties?***

*Prompt: Would a different term be preferred?*

### **5.12.1. Dyslexia**

Learners expressed their opinions about the term 'dyslexia'; these had to do with the word itself, revealing dyslexia, strengths of being dyslexic and the need for public awareness.

**The word 'dyslexia':** The thoughts about the word dyslexia included negative feelings, whether to use a different word or not giving it a name. Two learners thought the word 'dyslexia' was too long and hard to spell: *'It's stupid that it's such a long word and people can't spell it.'* (F2). One learner said that people do not understand what it means: *'They don't understand what it is, if you say the one word, then they'll like... what?'* (F6)

Three learners mentioned negative feelings associated with the word 'dyslexia'. One learner said it made him feel *'retarded'* and one learner said: *'... some people treat you like you're thick.'* (M6). One learner had often heard people say: *'Oh he's dyslexic'* in a sarcastic way. A learner who worked with children did not think it right that they should be

put in a dyslexia box: *'They're the same as you, it's nothing different, they've just got a little problem, you all have particular needs.'* (F2)

When asked whether they would prefer a different word five learners said they would leave it as it is: *'I think everyone knows what it is.'* (F2) *'It's special.'* (M2) *'It's different.'* (F1) *'You'd probably get the same response.'* (M6)

Two learners thought that it did not need a name: *'It doesn't have to have a name, it just makes me... me'* (F6) *'Yeah, I just don't like people discriminating because you've got...'* (M3)

**Revealing dyslexia:** Learners expressed positive and negative feelings about revealing their dyslexia. Two male learners expressed concern about revealing their dyslexia when applying for a job for fear of having their application turned down: *'I will not tell them that I'm dyslexic... I couldn't if I've got to get a job...'* (M1). One of these stated that he did not like people discriminating because he had dyslexia, the fact that he had dyslexia did not mean that he would not be good at his job.

One learner expressed positive feelings, saying that they did not mind telling people at work as it meant they got support from an understanding manager:

*'I do. With mine, I've got to fill in loads of forms and stuff... The manager goes through it and signs the form and checks it, she'll go through and check my spellings for me.'* (F1)

Three learners said they did not mind letting people know in education such as in college and university. One learner stated that this enabled support to be put in place:

*'I'm going to University in September, and I had to tell them and they're going through the process at the moment, trying to sort out the support for me.'* (F6)

**Strengths:** Four learners felt positive about the strengths of being dyslexic because some people had particular skills in certain areas, like a lot of well-known dyslexics who had succeeded in their particular fields. One learner made the point that: *'At least you know what to work at and what you need to exploit.'* (M1)

One learner said that some people who are good at everything just do not know what to do. Two learners thought it was good being dyslexic as they just learn in a different way:

*'We're lucky.'* (M1). *'I like it, I think it's good.'* (M2)

**Public awareness:** One learner suggested that it should be spoken about more and acknowledged in public. She said that it was vital that it gets brought into the younger generation:

*'Because the children that are dyslexic are not identified, and later on in life it becomes a problem to accept it. It needs to be brought in naturally.'*

Her own son had grown up knowing he was dyslexic

*'... he's not bothered; because he's grown with it a little bit more now. He's accepting and knowing that there's nothing wrong being dyslexic, he's still a normal person, he's still able to walk, talk, drink, go out, have a laugh and do all the rest of the things.'* (F4)

### **5.12.2. Summary**

Learners had different opinions about the term 'dyslexia', some expressed negative feelings about the word; however they also said they would leave it as it is. Two learners thought that it did not need a name. Two learners were concerned about revealing their dyslexia, especially when applying for a job, although three said they did not mind letting people know in education. Four learners felt positive about the strengths of being dyslexic and one learner pointed out the need for public awareness.

### **5.13. Summary - learner interviews**

The learner interviews enabled more in-depth data to be collected in answer to the second and third research questions, the different perceptions of learners concerning effective practice and suggestions for improvements. The main themes that emerged from the learner interviews included: initial identification - awareness of difficulties, feelings about starting college, transition; support; staff; teaching methods; resources; accommodation; assessment; learner-well being; evaluation; previous experience at high school; opinion about the term 'dyslexia'. Learners suggested improvements within the different themes. The main themes will be considered further in section 6.2.

## Chapter 6

### Summary of research data

#### 6.1. Summary of the data collected on present provision

The data obtained from the questionnaires, telephone interviews, tutor interviews and learner interviews, with reference to the first three research questions, were summarised. The main themes identified included: background information and dyslexia teams, referral, initial identification, screening, support, support services provided, staff, collaboration, staff training, teaching methods, accommodation, resources, assessment, reviews, learner well-being, evaluation, barriers to effective practice, suggested improvements, previous experience of high school and opinions about the term dyslexia.

The dyslexia teams in the fourteen colleges were located in the Skills teams, ALS teams and Services. Nine colleges had a policy that included dyslexia support (QTI)<sup>17</sup>. Learners were referred through a number of routes; the two main methods were self-declaration and tutors (QTI)(TI)<sup>18</sup>. Other methods of referral included: schools, parents, LSAs, mentors, student advisors, and other agencies (QTI).

Identification took place through a variety of methods: application form (QTI); individual tutor interview (QTI); interview or questionnaire during registration (QTI)(TI); initial assessment, paper and computer screening tests (QTI)(TI); tutor going into lessons (TI). Thirteen colleges used more than one method to identify learners. Suggestions for improvement included: early identification at primary school (LI)<sup>19</sup>; assessment and support at school (QTI)(TI)(LI); improved transition; development of skills in the local area; on-going identification through the year; raising awareness among staff; advertising of specialist tutors; increased funding for testing (QTI)(TI).

The main methods of screening were an initial interview and a paper-screening test (QTI)(TI). Other methods consisted of: a free writing test, computer screening test, short screening tests, an internal dyslexia assessment, and a Skills Profile of strengths and weaknesses. Six colleges used more than one method to screen learners and seven

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<sup>17</sup> Questionnaire and telephone interview (QTI)

<sup>18</sup> Tutor interview (TI)

<sup>19</sup> Learner interview (LI)

colleges used one method. Suggested improvements included: using a cognitive abilities test and more time for assessment (TI).

Both full time and part-time learners with an identified need were selected for support. The main issues that affected support were staff shortages and location of courses (QTI). Other issues raised were: the lack of: take-up of support; understanding about dyslexia in the area, particularly in school; time for support; reluctance from the course tutor. Suggested improvements included: providing a relaxed, friendly and informal environment; a full time specialist tutor; encouragement by course tutors for students to take-up support (TI); more effective strategies with an FE bias and funding to provide for the cost of developing new approaches to supporting learners with dyslexia (QTI).

A wide range of support services was provided for learners with dyslexia (QTI)(TI). The favoured method of support was one-to-one sessions (TI)(LI). Other support included: drop in sessions, one-to-three, dyslexia-friendly teaching in class (TI), and support in the lesson (TI)(LI). Suggested improvements included: flexible drop-in provision; an 'institutional' versus 'personalised' support; support in preparing learners for university and employment (TI); more support in class; support from a friend; English sessions; use of a translator; and more help from the tutor (LI).

Twelve colleges provided qualified specialist tutors either full or part time (QTI)(TI)(LI). Other staff included LSAs and mentors (QTI)(TI)(LI); an LSA in every class was suggested as the ideal (TI). Dyslexia tutors collaborated with course staff (TI) and nine colleges collaborated with outside agencies (QTI). The dyslexia team provided dyslexia awareness training (QTI)(TI), however, lack of support for CPD training for specialist tutors was an issue; there was a high cost involved (TI). Suggested improvements included: employment of more qualified staff; relieving the dyslexia specialist of other responsibilities (QTI)(TI)(LI); more time available for teaching, administration, training (QTI); improved CPD training opportunities for specialist tutors (QTI); dyslexia awareness training for course tutors and college staff (TI).

A variety of teaching methods was used: multi-sensory methods (QTI)(TI); a structured or cumulative approach (QTI)(TI); an individual, personal approach (QTI); methods based on the needs of the student around their main course or vocational choices (QTI); study skills and strategies (QTI)(TI); strategies to promote independence and ability to cope (QTI)(TI); a flexible approach (QTI); methods matched to individual learning styles and needs (TI);

learning aids; software; methods to improve confidence in writing (TI). The ultimate aim was to empower the student (TI). Similar strategies worked with other learners (TI). Learners expressed difficulties with teaching methods and tutor delivery, such as duration, fast speed of delivery, poor spelling by tutors, lack of learner contact and interaction, tutor talking down to the learner, and poor explanations (LI). Learners pointed out a lack of awareness and understanding among other learners in the group and among tutors (LI).

Only half of the dyslexia teams had their own teaching rooms, others used shared spaces or booked small rooms, colleges also lacked a suitable resource centre (QTI). Difficulties with accommodation included: lack of privacy (TI)(LI); noise and distractions in shared spaces (TI)(LI); small size of rooms (LI); poor light (LI). Suggestions for improvement included: individual rooms for one-to-one support, interviews and testing; a dedicated resource centre (QTI); a centrally based dyslexia department; a quiet base room, with resources and access to IT; individual rooms or areas for teaching (TI)(LI), with computers, books, equipment (LI); own space (LI); quiet rooms (QTI)(TI)(LI) or a group room (LI).

A wide range of resources was used by colleges: specialist software programmes, on-line resources, structured programmes, worksheets, individual learning aids, games, technological aids, specialist tutors' own resources, reading books (QTI)(TI); resources on loan (TI). Management support for resources was needed (TI). Learners used assistive technology and a range of software (LI). One learner said that his friend was his best resource (LI). Suggested improvements to resources included: resources for older learners with an FE bias; updated hardware, more funding for specialist resources (QTI); specialist software; personalised pen drives (TI).

Both specialist tutors and Educational Psychologists conducted assessments for Exam Access Arrangements, full diagnostic assessments and DSA assessments. A wide variety of tests were available and used to screen and diagnose learners (QTI)(TI). Suggested improvements included more time for assessments and conducting own testing (TI). Only half the learners had been assessed previously and others were assessed whilst at college, they were aware of their difficulties. Learners mentioned problems with exams (LI). Improvements to assessments included: earlier diagnosis and testing at school (QTI)(TI)(LI); more time and funding for testing (TI); dyslexia-friendly exams (QTI).

There was evidence of good practice regarding review arrangements, with reviews conducted on a regular basis. ILPs were used to record progress towards identified

targets (QTI)(TI). Learners assessed their progress by improvement in coursework, grades and skills (LI). Evaluation systems were in place for obtaining learner perceptions of support and evaluation through success on the main course and management systems (QTI)(TI). Learners made their views known by speaking directly to tutors and through a questionnaire or focus group (LI).

Barriers to effective practice consisted of: the lack of specialist staff, other staff issues, staff training, time, costs/funding, accommodation and learners (QTI). Improvements suggested included: staff capacity, staff training, time, accommodation, resources, provision, learner issues, assessment, management (QTI); learner awareness, increased time with students, raising the profile of dyslexia support, consideration of views of dyslexia tutors (TI); management awareness (QTI)(TI); having managers that had actually done the job (TI); improved communication with staff and teaching methods (LI).

Learner well-being was taken into consideration, at the start of and throughout support this involved: emotional and social well-being, achievement on main courses, an improvement in skills and confidence (TI). Learners were directed to other services in college if necessary. Good transition planning was suggested, getting more information from schools and planning for universities (TI). Personal needs of learners were being met through support, they were aware of their learning style, strengths and weaknesses, skills to develop and individual targets (LI). Learners mentioned a lack of confidence and self-esteem and having to work a lot harder than others (LI). Student awareness of dyslexia was regarded as important, as well as empowerment to articulate their needs (TI).

Learners talked about negative experiences at high school and identified a need for trained specialist teachers in schools (LI). Both negative and positive comments were made about the word 'dyslexia'. Five learners would leave the word as it is and two thought that it did not need a name. Two learners expressed concern about revealing their dyslexia when applying for a job for fear of having their application turned down. They did not mind letting people know in education, college and university, as it enabled support to be put in place. Four learners felt positive about the strengths of being dyslexic. One learner suggested that it should be spoken about more and acknowledged in public (LI).

## **6.2. Literature research evidence**

The present research findings were related to literature research evidence, the main themes include: inclusion, institutional and personalised provision, learner centred provision, collaboration with outside agencies and quality provision, policy and procedures, referral, identification and screening, support, staff, dyslexia-friendly methods and environment, accommodation, resources, assessment, reviews, learner well-being, barriers for adult learners, evaluation, learner voice.

### **Inclusion**

An inclusive learning environment for students with LDDs in FE has been the focus of legislation and reports (Sections 2.2.1.3, 2.2.1.4). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations Enable 2008 Article 24.1) stresses the need to “ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning”. It encourages universal design (Sections 2.2.1.3, 2.7.1.6) of products, environments, programmes and services, which can be used by all people. The LLLU (2002) recommends a policy of inclusiveness in FE to include: equal access to specialist assessment, support, resources and services; a sympathetic and enabling environment; and teaching to address individual learning styles, taking into account strengths and weaknesses (Section 2.5.1).

### **Institutional and personalised approach**

An Institutional versus personalised approach to support, as suggested by one of the coordinators during the tutor interviews, is backed up by the literature research. The whole organisation needs to be involved in bringing about change in practices, procedures, plans and policies, driven forward by senior managers, thus supporting the DED, as specified in the DDA, and a social model of disability (Sections 2.2.1.2, 2.2.1.3, 2.3.2.3). The emphasis is on the quality of learning with consistent and effective learner assessment processes, active intervention, effective learning, teaching, support, and outcomes (Sections 2.2.1.3, 2.2.1.4, 2.2.1.5, 2.2.1.6).

A high quality personalised experience for all learners is envisaged, with a range of practices to personalise learning, developing teaching and learning that is tailored to individual needs (Sections 2.2.1.4, 2.2.1.6). Support that is available at all levels and taught by specialists who focus on enabling learners to develop strategies for themselves is seen as good practice for learners with dyslexia (Section 2.2.1.4).

### **Learner centred provision**

A person-centred approach is needed, with learners seen as equal and active partners in the teaching and learning process, actively involved and fully engaged in their learning (Sections 2.2.1.5, 2.2.1.7, 2.6.3). The importance of listening to learners is stressed. An individual learning environment for all students is envisaged, consisting of: an ILP; a curriculum that promotes progress in learning; effective teaching; entry and exit procedures, such as, initial assessment, counselling and guidance; opportunities for students to discuss and manage their own learning; support for learning; learner support, for example, crèche; procedures for assessing, recording and accrediting achievement; learning materials and resources; technical aids and equipment; learning technology; trained staff; physical surroundings in teaching rooms, canteen, library (Section 2.2.1.4).

### **Collaboration with outside agencies and quality provision**

Collaboration with other providers or partners and multi-agency working is seen as good practise (Sections 2.2.1.3, 2.2.1.5), to ensure a pattern of provision that maximises participation in a holistic way. Higher standards for LLDDs can be achieved by: collaborative working between agencies; improving assessment; and improving transition planning into FE, training, employment, and HE (Sections 2.2.1.3, 2.2.1.5, 2.5.1, 2.6.2).

### **Policy and procedures**

Anti-discrimination policy and processes are required (Sections 2.2.1.2, 2.2.1.3) with recommendations for an explicit policy on admissions, enrolment, assessment and marking for learners with dyslexia, and a Code of Practice (Sections 2.4.3, 2.7.1.2). Management structures and systems are proposed that incorporate: dyslexia support in a strategic plan; cross-college policies; job descriptions that include responsibilities towards all students with disability; a dyslexia support co-ordinator; strong links between dyslexia support, additional learning support and basic skills departments; a delegated budget or access to identified funding (Section 2.5.1). Involvement of disabled people is needed, in planning and producing a disability equality scheme and developing an action plan (Section 2.2.1.2).

### **Referral, identification and screening**

A system of early identification and referral with a variety of routes and opportunities is recommended: self-referral; tutor referral; and referral throughout the course. Policies should include referral procedures, as well as fast initial identification and screening, using a variety of methods (Sections 2.4.3, 2.5.1, 2.7.1.2), with initial assessment of the learning

and support needs of learners during induction (Sections 2.2.1.3, 2.2.1.4, 2.6.2), and access to fully funded, confidential, specialist diagnostic assessment (Sections 2.4.3, 2.5.1). An initial interview is considered paramount (Sections 2.5.1, 2.7.1.2, 2.7.1.7). Awareness of the effects of prior experience on learners' attitudes and approaches to learning support is important (Section 2.7.1.2). Transition arrangements need to include liaison and links with outside agencies and schools, prior to admission (Section 2.5.1).

### **Support**

Effective support and learning support in FE is paramount (Sections 2.2.1.3, 2.7.1.2), with all adult learners with dyslexia having access to specialist support (Section 2.4.3). Learners need to be made aware of the provision available (Section 2.7.1.2) and most learners assessed as requiring support should receive it, with the take-up and impact analysed (Section 2.6.1.2). The nature and level of support required needs to be determined through discussion between learning support staff, the learner and the learner's personal tutor (Sections 2.4.2, 2.6.1.2), with integration between the support and teaching of the main programme envisaged. A specialised individual programme of support is recommended, based on careful assessment. Support provision should include: individual one-to-one tuition, small group support; in-class support; support from peers; technological support; assessments for examination arrangements (Sections 2.7.1.2, 2.7.1.6, 2.7.1.7). Flexible provision should reflect individual skills and learning profiles (Section 2.4.3), with support tailored to learners' need, to their unique pattern of strengths and weaknesses, with realistic and achievable objectives, identified by the learner.

### **Staff**

A sufficient number of specialist teachers, with appropriate professional qualifications, training and experience, should be appointed to support LLDDs (Sections 2.2.1.4, 2.6.3). Salaries need to reflect specialist qualifications and level of work. Administrative staff should also be available. A dyslexia advisory group for specialists has been suggested (Sections 2.4.3, 2.5.1, 2.7.1.3).

Tutor training in awareness of dyslexia was the single biggest factor needed to improve literacy classes (Section 2.4.2). Staff development and awareness of dyslexia for all staff, including managers, is seen as vital, as well as for all stakeholders: teachers, careers guidance staff, employers, human resources personnel, workplace trainers, union officials, jobcentre staff (Sections 2.4.2, 2.5.1, 2.7.1.3). Encouragement for staff to undertake specialist training and CPD for specialist staff is also suggested (Sections 2.2.1.3, 2.5.1).

Collaboration and communication needs to be developed with parents, learning support and curriculum staff, course tutor, and employers, as well as effective links established with other organisations that promote the well-being of learners (Sections 2.6.2, 2.7.1.3).).

### **Dyslexia-friendly methods and environment**

Researchers recommend a wide variety of appropriate teaching methods, to include: multisensory methods; a structured programme; effective learning strategies; life skills; and coping strategies. Teaching programmes and specific targets need to be relevant to the learner, with methods and resources discussed with them and age-appropriate (Section 2.7.1.5). Teachers and education providers are responsible for the universal design of curricula, materials and environments, making them suitable for all students to access and use (Sections 2.2.1.3, 2.7.1.6). Dyslexia-specific and flexible teaching in colleges is recommended, with the use of specialist methods with all learners (Sections 2.4.3, 2.7.1.6). All staff should be working towards a learning environment that is suitable for a wide variety of learners with their differences understood and communicated.

### **Accommodation**

Suitable accommodation should be in place for learning support, to provide a healthy and safe environment. An adequate amount and range of accommodation needs to be available (Section 2.6.3), with quiet and private areas for diagnosis and study (Sections 2.4.3, 2.5.1). There is a need for dedicated accommodation for assessments and support of students with dyslexia, or shared bookable accommodation; with privacy, natural light, quiet, good ventilation; located in the main part of the college (Sections 2.5.1, 2.7.1.6).

### **Resources**

An adequate amount and range of suitable specialist equipment and learning resources needs to be available, and used by tutors to promote effective learning. Resources should include: specialist equipment; modern computers with appropriate specialist software; relevant up-to-date books, multisensory resources and learning aids, with feedback from learners sought (Sections 2.4.3, 2.6.3), a policy for evaluating and investing in new software and hardware for learners with dyslexia is recommended (Section 2.5.1). Methods and resources should be appropriate to age and learning style (Section 2.7.1.6).

Technological support has been emphasised in reports (Sections 2.2.1.4, 2.4.3, 2.5.1, 2.6.3) and its importance stressed for learners with dyslexia (Sections 2.7.1.2, 2.7.1.6). A range of appropriate technological resources should be available for loan by learners, as

well as; technological support; training in use of resources; range of non-technical resources, coloured overlays; opportunities for staff to update knowledge of resources (Section 2.5.1).

### **Assessment**

Assessment is crucial in the teaching of adults with dyslexia (Sections 2.2.1.4, 2.2.1.5). Effective learner assessment processes should be consistent, rigorous, fit for purpose and match learners' support requirement, with a multi-agency approach (Section 2.2.1.5). It could involve self-assessment, an initial interview, checklists, identification of strengths and weaknesses, assessments for exam arrangements and full diagnostic assessment (Section 2.7.1.2) by a qualified practitioner (Section 2.5.1). A detailed guideline for assessment is provided in Section 2.7.1.7, with a wide range of tests suggested. Teamwork with other professionals is envisaged (Section 2.7.1.7).

Alternative methods of assessment have been proposed (Section 2.7.1.4): a variety of routes to achievement; college-wide marking policies; explicit written feedback, special arrangement in tests and examinations; negotiation of extra time for assignments (Section 2.5.1). Formative, on-going, assessment, during learning, has been identified as important (Section 2.7.1.4) with regular review and monitoring suggested (Section 2.7.1.7).

### **Reviews**

ILPs need to be realistic, suitably demanding and understood by the learners. Records should clearly indicate the progress learners are making towards the objectives. Suitable ILPs need to be devised which include clear targets for achievement. Progress of learners, relative to their prior attainment and potential, should be evaluated (Sections 2.6.2, 2.6.3).

### **Learner well-being**

The well-being of learners should be considered (Sections 2.6.1, 2.7.1.8). The 'climate' of the institution can facilitate or hamper learning. Research suggests the need for a comfortable emotional environment, a place to feel welcome, with a friendly, relaxed atmosphere, warmth and rapport between student and tutor, trust and respect. Many learners with dyslexia suffer from low self-esteem due to previous learning experiences (Section 2.4.2). Coping strategies have been identified as important, enabling learners to build up self-esteem and take charge of their own learning (Section 2.7.1.5). Learners need to understand the difficulties associated with dyslexia and be aware of cognitive

processes and metacognition as well as learning styles (Section 2.7.1.4). Awareness by other students also needs to be developed (Section 2.7.1.8).

### **Barriers for adult learners**

Previous learning experiences may present a barrier for adult learners with dyslexia. Many were not identified at school and school education was humiliating and damaging (Section 2.4.2). Barriers to access (Section 2.3.2.4) include: complex enrolment procedures; limited availability of diagnostic assessment; lack of understanding by basic skills tutors and managers; a lack of specialist expertise, suitable classes, funding for specialist teaching (Section 2.4.2). Adult dyslexia groups help to break down barriers, and provide on-going support for adults with dyslexia (Section 2.4.2).

### **Evaluation**

Monitoring and evaluation of college systems by senior management is paramount (Sections 2.2.1.2, 2.2.1.3, 2.5.1). Additional support policies and procedures should provide evidence of the effectiveness of learner support activities and numbers receiving support. Data needs to be available on participation, retention and achievement rates. Course teams should regularly review both quantitative data and qualitative information about their teaching and learners' achievements. The reviews should inform the college's SAR and lead to comprehensive action plans. Colleges need to build up and develop a suitable evidence base, gather and analyse evidence to inform their actions and track progress. The views of disabled service users should be gathered, gaps in service provision identified and improvements made. Information needs to be obtained from different sources: retention figures, satisfaction surveys, focus groups, assessments etc. Response to the views of learners should be evident (Sections 2.2.1.2, 2.6.3).

### **Learner voice**

Hearing the learner voice is vitally important and has been consistently emphasised in the literature. Learners should be seen as equal and active partners in the learning process (Sections 2.2.1.7, 2.4.2, 2.4.3, 2.7.1.8). College strategies, policies, processes and plans need to be in place, which take into account the views of LLDDs, and are informed by them (Section 2.2.1.6). Legislation and reports recommend that FE colleges should be required to: collect learners' views in a consistent and systematic manner as a key way to improving college provision; consult learners on major issues impacting on their learning and the learner environment; publish annually this information in a learner report, together with their plans for addressing the issues (Section 2.2.1.7). The present research aims to

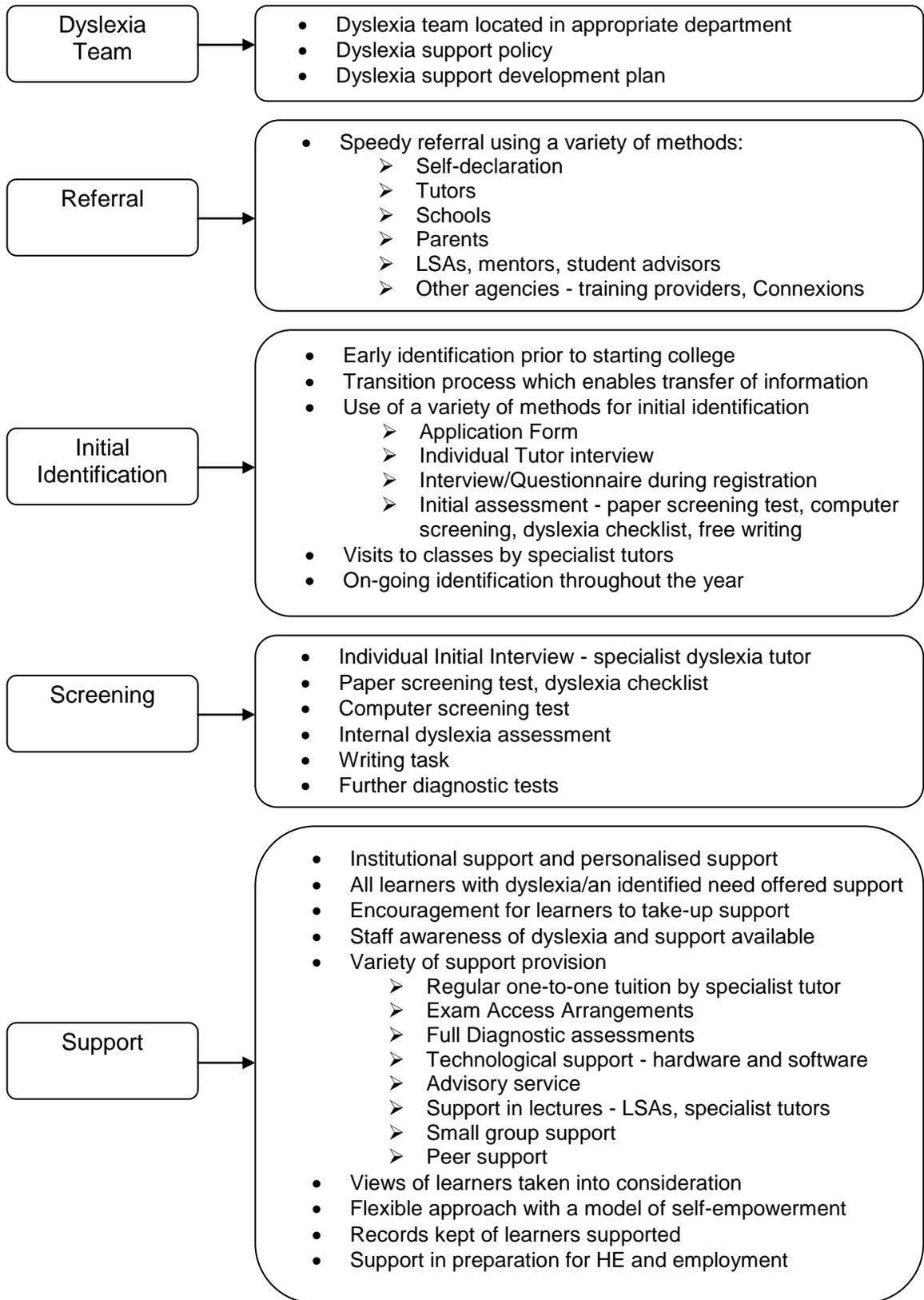
elicit the views of learners on provision for them, taking their views into consideration, when making recommendations.

### **6.3. Summary of all research findings**

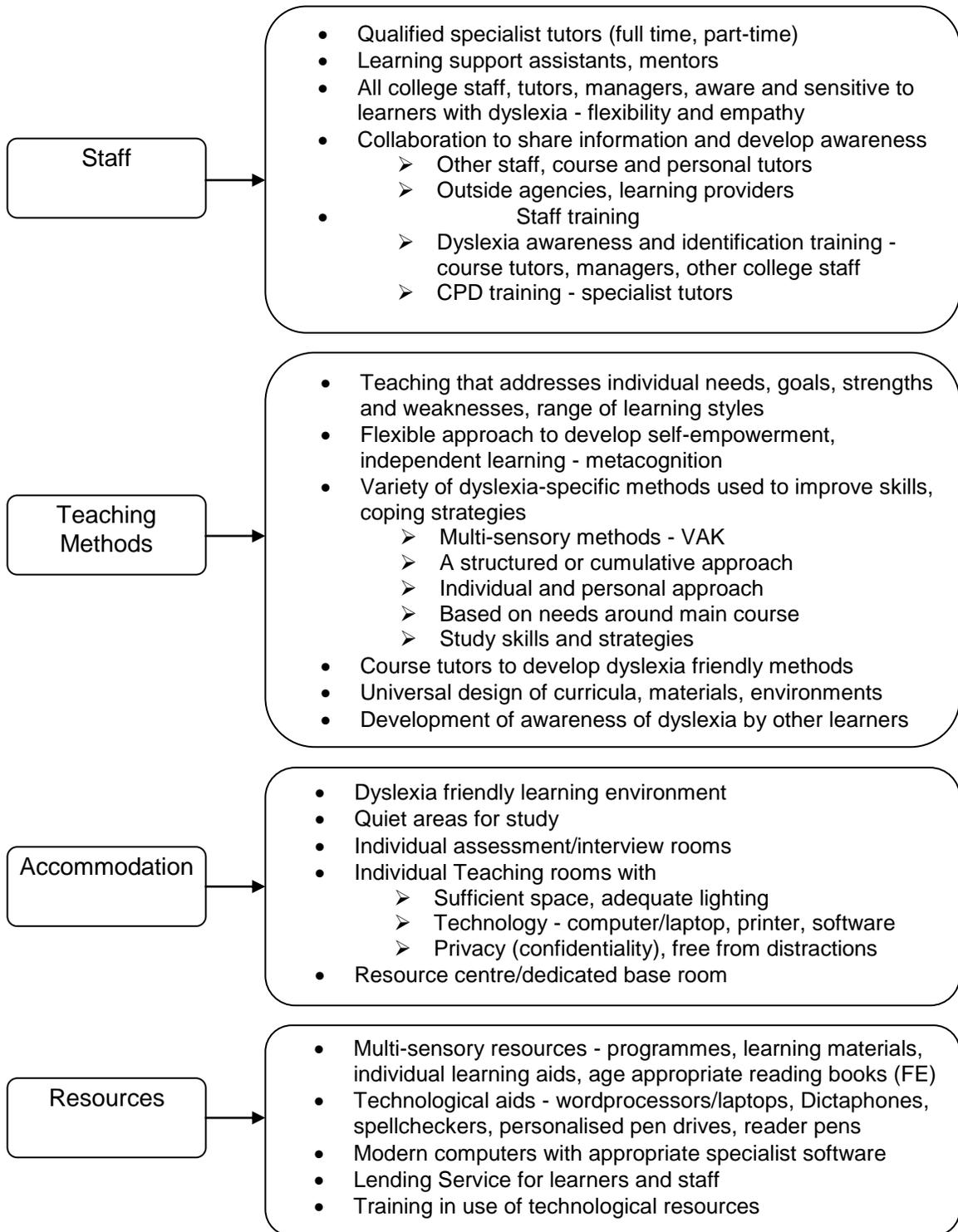
All the key research findings were collated and tabulated together and the data and themes were again examined and analysed, some of the information that had previously been in assigned themes was re-distributed to other themes. Based on all the evidence from the research and the emerging themes and variables a final summary was compiled. This was represented in diagrammatic form (**Figures 23 and 24**). The final themes were: dyslexia team, referral, initial identification, screening, support, staff, teaching methods, accommodation, resources, assessment, reviews, learner well-being and evaluation.

**Figure 23** sets out the key elements of each theme as relevant to providing effective support for learners with dyslexia in GFE Colleges. **Figure 24** depicts effective learning, teaching and support, which motivates and engages both learners and tutors in a two-way process. It shows support on two levels: the 'Institutional' support by the college and 'Personalised' support by the dyslexia team. The learner is in the centre receiving the support and being an integral part of it, in all the themes and their key elements. The arrows indicate lines of communication between the three as well as with outside agencies and organisations involved with the learner and the college. The needs of the individual learner are thus considered in a holistic way. The colours are linked to those of a rainbow signifying a whole spectrum of support and a new beginning for the learner.

All the evidence from the research was analysed and considered, together with the key elements of the identified themes, in order to start to develop a working model for auditing provision for learners with dyslexia in GFE Colleges. This answered the fourth research question.

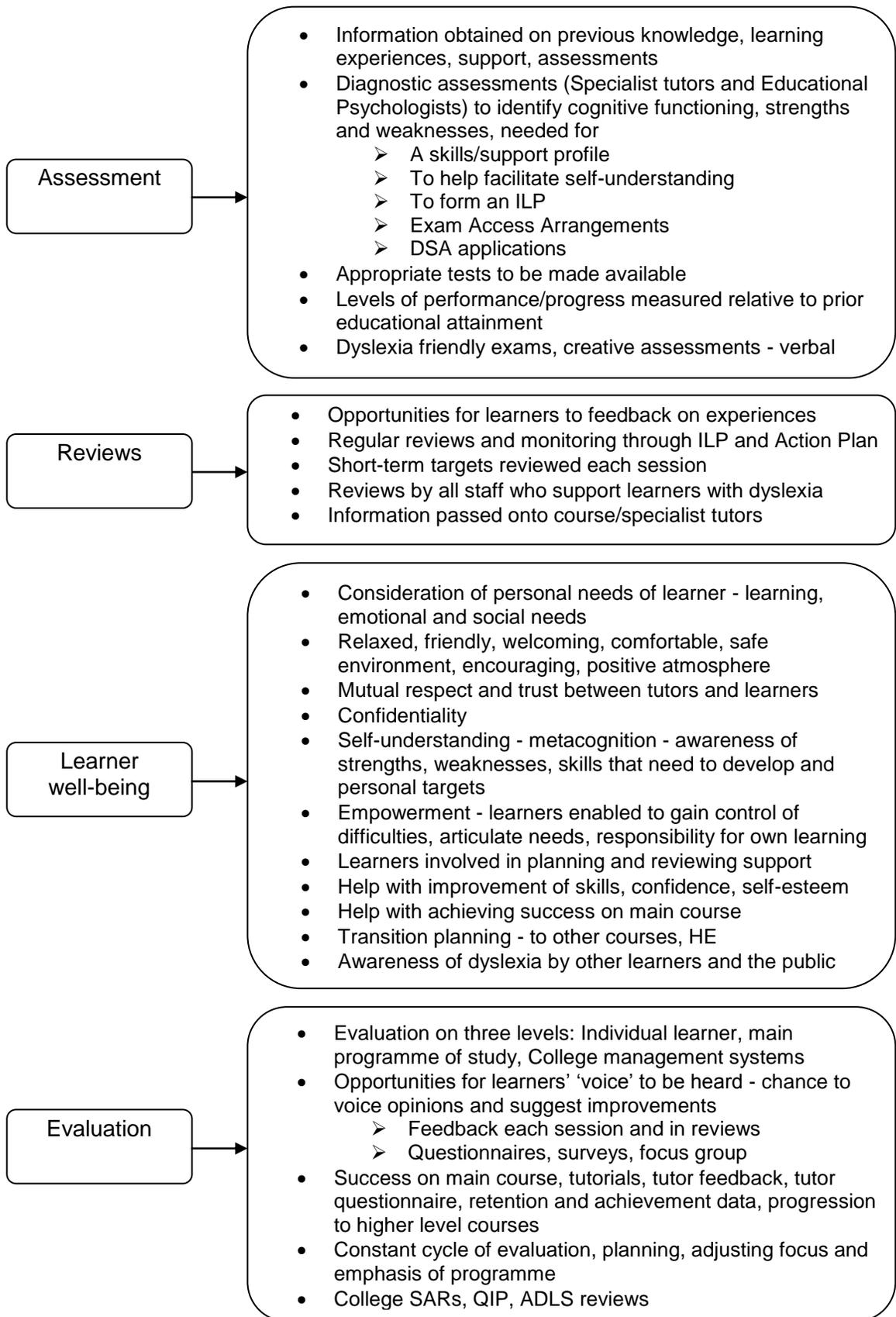


**Figure 23** A summary of support for learners with dyslexia

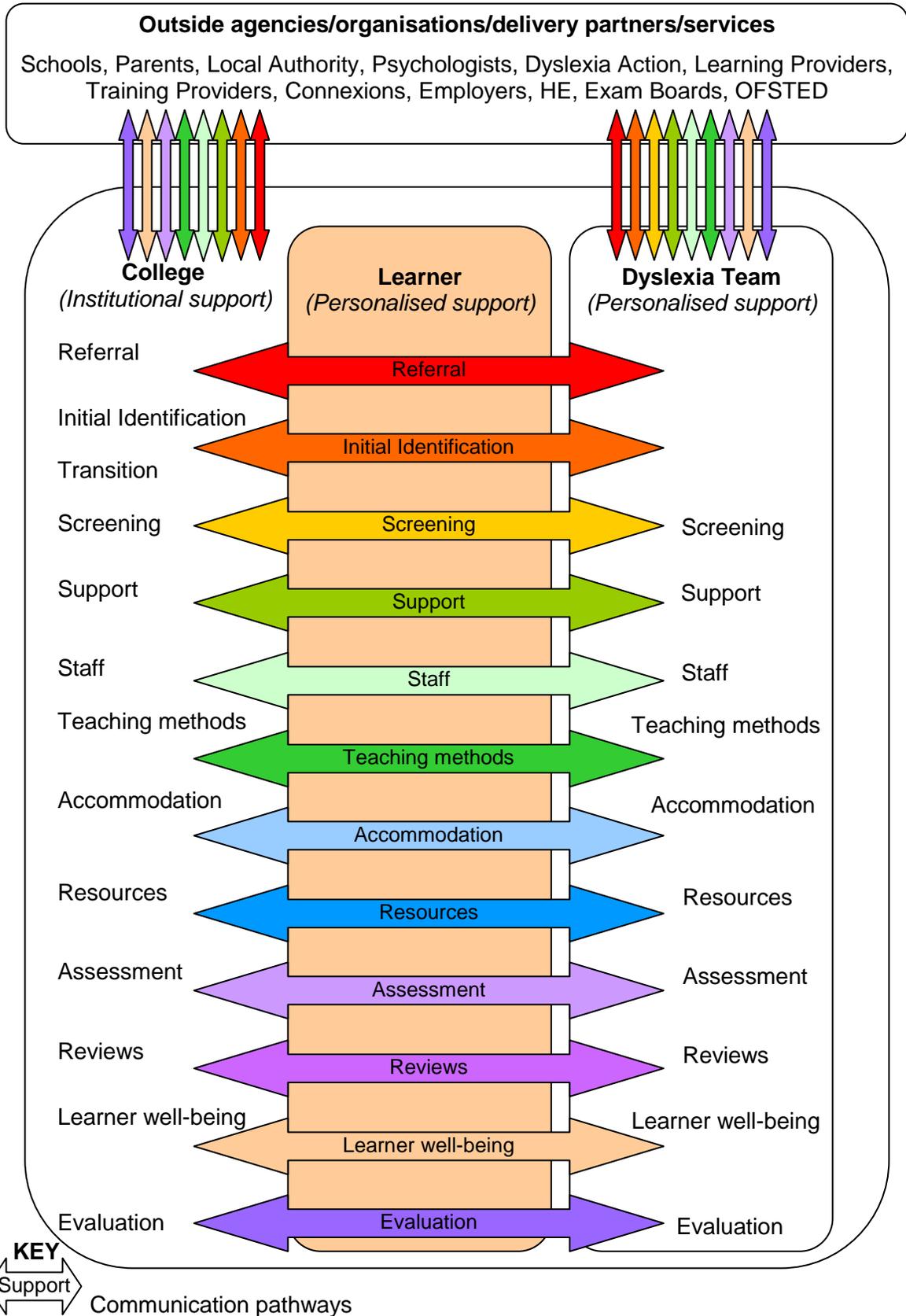


**Figure 23** (Continued) A summary of support for learners with dyslexia

KEY: VAK - Visual, Auditory, Kinaesthetic



**Figure 23** (Continued) A summary of support for learners with dyslexia



**Figure 24** A summary of support for learners with dyslexia and pathways of communication and collaboration

## **Chapter 7**

### **A working model**

#### **7.1. Research Question 4**

Based on the evidence how can FE provision for learners with dyslexia be audited and modelled?

Based on all the evidence from the research and the emergent themes and variables a working model for auditing provision was developed and proposed as a way forward. This answered the fourth research question.

#### **7.2. A model of support**

##### **7.2.1. Introduction**

The summary of all the information gathered from the research and the different pathways of communication and collaboration (Section 6.3) were considered in devising a model of support for learners with dyslexia. A definition of a model by Gibbs (2010) (Section 3.8) proved useful in considering a framework to represent the key elements that emerged from the data, as well as the point made by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2002 p.13) that models can act as tools, which help to clarify and focus on key issues. They can be used with concepts to bring meaning to the world and act as an aid to make sense of reality and give order and coherence to experiences.

##### **7.2.2. Developing a model of support**

In order to bring together the data collected from the research and give it some kind of structure, a framework was sought in order to establish relationships between the different variables. An analytic framework devised by Dyson, Lin and Millward (DfEE 1998) proved a catalyst for developing and applying an analytical framework to the provision for learners with dyslexia in GFE. The original framework was developed as part of a research project into co-operation between LEAs, Health Authorities (HAs) and Social Services Departments (SSDs) in assessing and meeting the needs of children with SEN. The project sought to analyse the extent and effectiveness of inter-agency co-operation, based on guidance in the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of SEN (DFE 1994), which suggests the need for partnership and close working relationships between agencies, with meetings to discuss strategic and operational issues.

Dyson, Lin and Millward (DfEE1998) developed the analytic framework in order to show some purposes served by co-operation, it located most activities along two dimensions: co-operation around individual casework as opposed to strategic planning; and the extent to which co-operation aims to strengthen central control of provision or to enhance the responsiveness of provision to local circumstances. Examples of actual practice obtained from their research were located in the four quadrants. They developed a second representation of the analytical framework to show the role of information within the co-operation process (Dyson, Lin and Millward 1998 p.107). Their framework provides an aid by which agencies can review and evaluate their work in order to improve service delivery. If current strategy is too heavily focused in one quadrant then an agency can explore ways of developing in other areas.

The analytic framework was adapted as an aid to organising the data collected in the present study of provision for learners with dyslexia in GFE colleges. The research differed from that of Dyson, Lin and Millward (DfEE 1998) in that provision of support in colleges was examined. Communication and collaboration at different levels within the organisation were analysed as well as that with outside agencies. The concepts and activities used in devising the framework drew on previously related evidence (Chapter 2) as well as the views of tutors and learners, gathered in the present study (Chapters 4 and 5). Activities were located on two intersecting dimensions:

1. The extent to which provision is centred around individual specialist support as opposed to inclusive support, and
2. The extent to which provision aims to strengthen institutional support or to enhance personalised support

When these two dimensions interact a set of quadrants is produced, creating a framework within which provision of support for learners with dyslexia can be reviewed and evaluated. **(Figure 25).**

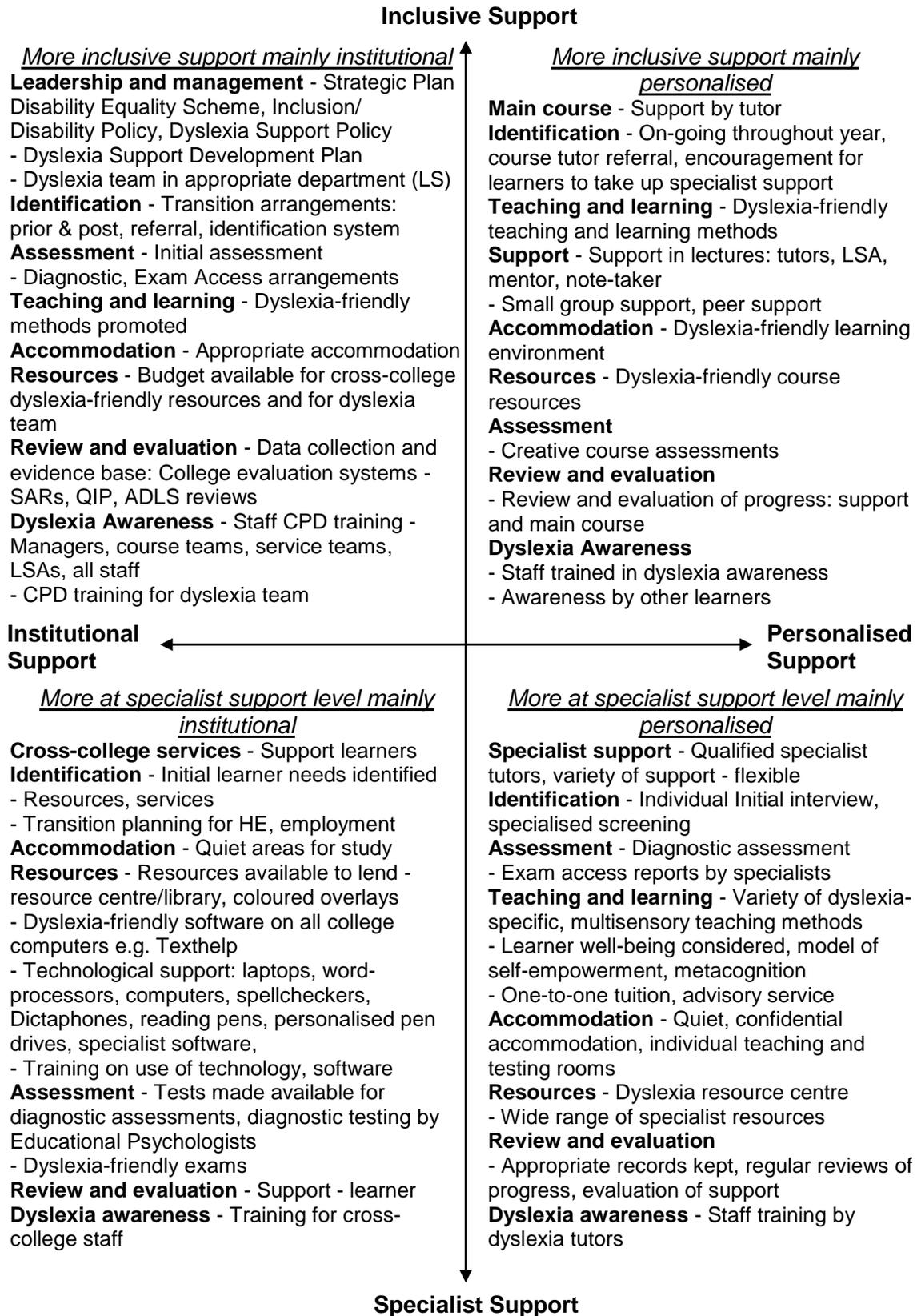


Figure 25 Analytic framework of support provision

Evidence of examples of quality support provision (Chapter 2, and 6), was located in each of the quadrants. One quadrant is not necessarily better than another and provision within each is not static but grows and improves. The top left hand quadrant has a focus on inclusive support tending towards institutional support. The leadership and management of the GFE College should have a strategic plan and policies in place that include dyslexia support, with specific reference to the location of the dyslexia team. A system is needed for the identification of learners with dyslexia, to include transition arrangements from school and into higher education or employment, as well as referral of students to the dyslexia team. Arrangements for assessment are vital, and should include initial assessment of learners as well as diagnostic assessments for exam access arrangements and full diagnostic reports. Teaching and learning throughout the college should include dyslexia-friendly methods that are appropriate for all students. It is of paramount importance that accommodation for the dyslexia team is quiet and confidential with easy access to resources. A budget needs to be available for dyslexia-friendly, cross-college resources as well as those specifically required by the dyslexia team. Review and evaluation systems should be in place with the collection of appropriate data for an evidence base. Dyslexia awareness training for all staff in college should be high on the agenda as well as CPD training for specialist tutors.

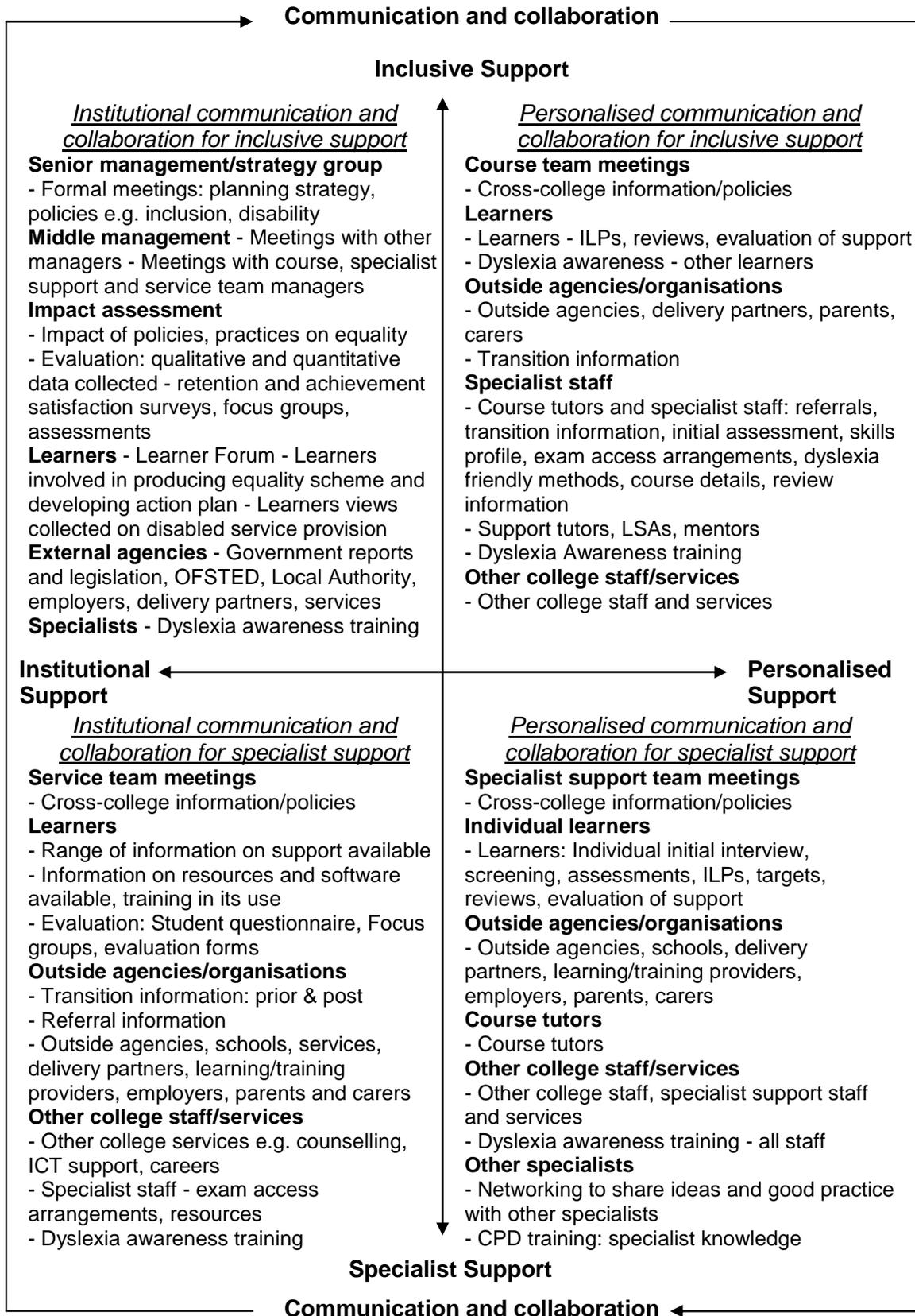
The top right hand quadrant has a focus on inclusive support tending towards personalised support. Support on the main course has been included in this. Tutors on the main course need to be involved in supporting learners with dyslexia, referring them to the specialist tutors and encouraging learners to take up support. An emphasis should be placed on course tutors using dyslexia-friendly teaching and learning methods. A variety of support needs to be available to include LSAs and peer support as well as small group support. A dyslexia-friendly learning environment and course resources, in lessons, will benefit all learners. Creative course assessments are needed in order to enable all students to achieve, to the best of their potential. Regular reviews need to be in place, as well as evaluation of the progress of learners with dyslexia, on their main course and support. All course tutors and members of staff should be trained in dyslexia awareness. It is important the other learners in the group are also aware of dyslexia and its affects.

The bottom right hand quadrant represents an approach where the focus is on specialist support and personalised support. Qualified specialist tutors need to be employed, with a flexible approach, in order to provide a variety of support. An initial individual interview will give a good background and, together with screening, will enable identification of learners

with dyslexia. Further diagnostic assessments will enable more accurate knowledge of strengths and weaknesses to be obtained, informing teaching and facilitating report writing for exam access arrangements. A variety of multisensory teaching and learning methods should be used with consideration given to the well-being of learners, in order to develop metacognition and self-empowerment. Support needs to include one-to-one tuition as well as an advisory service for students. Accommodation must be quiet and confidential with individual teaching and testing rooms available, as well as a wide range of specialist resources and room for their storage. It is important that appropriate records are kept with regular reviews of student progress as well as evaluation of the support. Specialist tutors can be involved in awareness training for other staff in college, it is essential that their own CPD requirements be also supported.

The bottom left hand quadrant represents support at the specialist level that is mainly institutional, such as support provided by cross-college services. It is important that cross-college services identify the initial needs of learners with dyslexia, which may include resources and services required, as well as transition planning for HE and employment. Quiet areas for study need to be provided across college and resources available to lend out to students, with dyslexia-friendly software on all college computers. Technological support in the form of hardware and specialist software is of absolute importance as well as training in its use, this could include laptops and personalised pen drives as well as spellcheckers and Dictaphones. Assessment materials need to be available for diagnostic assessments by specialist tutors as well as Educational Psychologists. Consideration needs to be given to dyslexia-friendly examinations. Learners should be involved in institutional evaluations of their support and have the opportunity to review and evaluate their cross college support provision, for example, technological support. Dyslexia awareness training needs to be available for all cross-college service staff.

The analytic framework provides a mapping, which represents how support is being realised (**Figure 25**). The social model of thinking about disability (Oliver 1990) (Sections 2.2.1.3, 2.3.2.3) proved a very useful tool in considering support provision for learners with dyslexia in GFE. Oliver suggests that to develop inclusionary policies and practices, the whole of the institution or organisation needs to be involved, organisational and administrative machinery needs to develop, to facilitate co-operation and power sharing.



**Figure 26** Analytic framework to show communication and collaboration in providing support for learners with dyslexia

The research highlighted the importance of communication and collaboration in the provision of support. This involves collaboration and partnership with outside agencies, organisations, delivery partners, employers, parents, carers as well as between staff at all levels of the institution: managers, course teams, support teams and service teams. The learner is central to all this, with a need to have a 'voice' in the support provided. The additional framework provided by Dyson, Lin and Millward (DfEE 1998) represents the role of information, and ways in which collaboration can be interpreted, it proved extremely useful in helping to understand the importance of communication and collaboration for providing effective support for learners with dyslexia. It is the oil that keeps the system moving and improving. A second representation of the analytical framework was devised to show how this could be incorporated into provision of support for learners with dyslexia (**Figure 26**). A difficulty found was that some of the communication and collaboration involves regular formal meetings whilst e-mails, telephone calls, letters, and personal visits are ad hoc or informal. Communication with learners is not just about information exchange but also about well-being, self-esteem, confidence building (Section 2.7.1.8).

The four quadrants in the second framework represent ways in which communication and collaboration take place in the delivery of support (**Figure 26**). The communication and collaboration is represented as going around the organisation in a clockwise direction from institutional, inclusive support to personalised, specialist support and back to institutional. The top left hand quadrant represents an approach characterised by formal meetings of senior managers, middle managers as well as course, specialist support and service team managers. Managers make planning decisions and direct resources based on careful analysis of data, gathered through the impact assessment, during the college evaluation and review process, as well as from outside sources, for example, Government Acts and reports, OFSTED guidelines. Learners need to be involved in producing and developing schemes and plans as well as in evaluating disabled service provision. Managers are involved in collaborating with external agencies such as the LA, employers, delivery partners and services. They also need to develop dyslexia awareness through training.

The top right hand quadrant represents an approach characterised by course team meetings and collaboration with learners, outside agencies and organisations, specialist staff, other college staff and services. Information on cross college policies is passed onto course teams who take them on board to deliver inclusive teaching, based on information they acquire from outside agencies, parents, carers, specialist tutors and other services within the college. This information may concern individual learners or information on

dyslexia-friendly methods and environments. Collaboration also takes place with support staff and individual learners in devising ILPs and reviewing progress. Course tutors are trained in dyslexia awareness by specialist staff. Inclusive, personalised support is provided within the general provision for all learners.

The bottom right hand quadrant represents an approach characterised by communication and collaboration in order to provide specialist support to individual learners. This is done through specialist support team meetings, liaison with individual learners, course tutors, specialist support staff, other college services, outside agencies, organisations, delivery partners, employers, parents, carers and other specialists. The aim is to provide personalised, specialist support to learners based on their individual needs. Specialist tutors are informed of cross college policies and initiatives. They train other staff on dyslexia awareness and advise them on dyslexia-friendly methods and environments. They also communicate with other professionals working in the same field in order to share good practice and keep up with updates on specialist knowledge. This involves CPD training.

The bottom left hand quadrant represents an approach characterised by service team meetings and communication and collaboration between the institution and learners. This involves liaison with learners, outside agencies and organisations, delivery partners, employers, parents, carers, other college staff and services, such as examination staff, counselling, ICT support and careers. Service teams are trained in dyslexia awareness. At an institutional level, learners are informed, through a range of different ways, about specialist services and resources available. They are trained in the use of resources. They are also involved in the evaluation of support services provided. Liaison with learners takes place in all four quadrants, at all levels of the organisation. It is important that for effective delivery of personalised support to the right of the central line, managers have meetings with course teams, specialist support tutors, service teams as well as learners, so that they can take into consideration their views and put in place effective strategies and cross-college policies.

### **7.2.3. Analysis of provision**

The analytic framework was applied to the support provision for learners with dyslexia in the fourteen GFE colleges in Yorkshire and Humberside, which took part in the research. The concepts or activities plotted on the framework are indicative and not definitive as colleges do not have to be doing them to be good, but it would be a useful model to use for

analysing provision. The analytic framework captures a snapshot of provision at a particular incidence in time but it also maps changes over time. The activities in the four quadrants are related, and if support was in place in all of them, within an organisation, then this would be an indicator of effective provision.

### **7.2.3.1 Developing analysis**

The data obtained from the questionnaires, telephone interviews and tutor interviews were analysed separately for each college. The final analytic framework may not be a true indication of the situation in each quadrant in the college, as it is based upon evidence collected within the scope of the present research, some things were not included in the data collection, for example, the budget allocated to the specialist provision. Based on knowledge of the literature and professional experience an evaluation was made of the provision in each college for the different activities in the four quadrants.

Four different stages of development were distinguished both in support provision and communication and collaboration: focusing (stage 4), developing (stage 3), establishing (stage 2) and enhancing (stage 1). The four stages of development originated from a school self-evaluation tool for Citizenship education (DfES 2004c). Citizenship consultants at the DfES, for the National College of School Leadership, developed it to chart progress systematically, enabling a more holistic and integrated approach in developing Citizenship education. The four original stages were: focusing, developing, established and advanced. These have since been adapted to: focusing, developing, establishing, enhancing and have been used for different subject areas and whole school improvement. They have also been used by the BDA (2007, 2011) in a dyslexia/inclusion friendly quality mark initiative for FE institutions. This is now being expanded to other languages and contexts through a European project, the Dyslexia VETO (Vocational, Educational and Training Organisations) (Euroreso 2013). The self-evaluation stages of development proved a very useful tool for analysing support provision in GFE colleges.

**Focusing** (stage 4) involves recognising that support for meeting the needs of learners with dyslexia is at the beginning of a process of development. There is an awareness of identified areas that need to be improved and focused upon.

**Developing** (stage 3) suggests that some of the issues and areas identified for development have started to be addressed. Further development is needed to secure and consolidate practice.

**Establishing** (stage 2) means that many activities for supporting learners with dyslexia are in place. These are becoming embedded and the quality of provision is high, due to significant development in the areas previously identified. Good practice needs to be consolidated throughout the organisation.

**Enhancing** (stage 1) shows that there is much evidence of outstanding practice in supporting learners with dyslexia, which is embedded fully. The impact on standards and progress is evident. This practice is worth sharing with others outside the organisation.

The different activities in the four quadrants of the analytic framework can be examined to analyse and map changes over time. They may be at different stages of development. These need to be identified and focused upon so as to plan future development. The framework will need revisiting to enable the changes to be monitored and further actions to be identified. For example, colleges at an early stage of development (*focusing*), in the first quadrant, may have no identified dyslexia support manager or co-ordinator, with a low status with the senior management team and governors. There may be no policy or dyslexia support development plan. Efficient systems may not be in place to refer and identify learners with dyslexia, there may be little support for CPD training, poor accommodation for the dyslexia team, no budget and lack of student involvement in planning provision.

In the *developing* stage, shared vision will have started to emerge in the four quadrants of the analytic framework. Specific areas will have been targeted for development, for example, a dyslexia policy and development plan. In the *establishing* stage, a more coherent and planned system of support will have been developed. This is monitored and evaluated on a regular basis in all the four quadrant areas, with the involvement of managers and staff in these areas as well as the students. Communication and collaboration will be apparent both within the organisation and with outside agencies and services. Transition information will be passed onto colleges and learners will be more prepared for employment and higher education. Thorough assessments will be available for learners much earlier, before the start of their courses. Staff training needs will have been identified and a dyslexia-friendly environment established, with appropriate teaching and learning methods used. Appropriate technological aids will be available for all learners who need them. Practice will be reviewed on a regular basis.

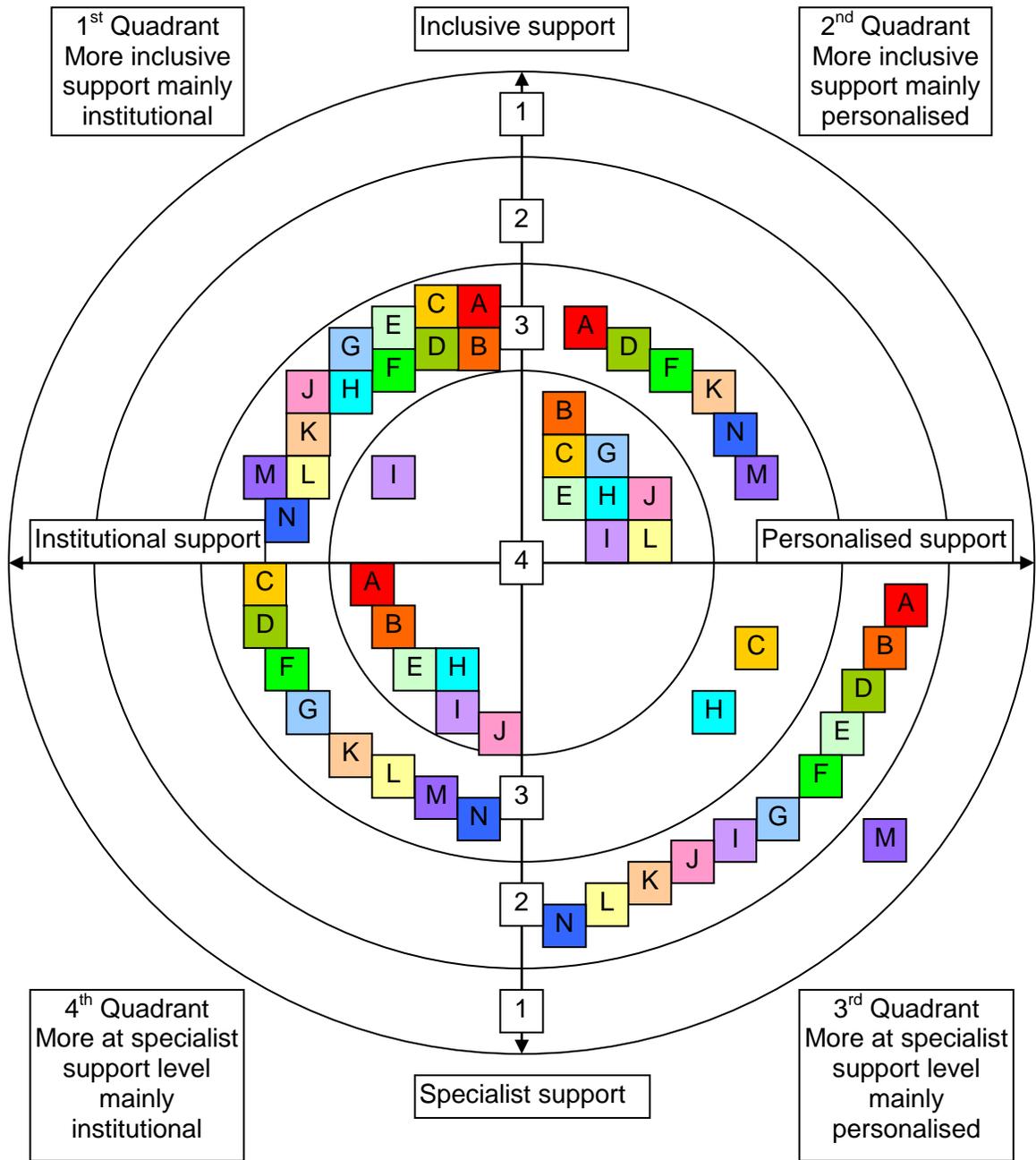
In the *enhancing* stage, colleges will have effective, quality provision in place. There will be a flexible approach to meeting the needs of all learners based on thorough assessment. All staff will have a shared vision and understanding and dyslexia awareness will be of a high standard throughout the organisation with good support networks. New technology will be in place for the use of all learners, and the learner 'voice' will be being heard through the evaluation and review process.

### **7.2.3.2 Analysis of provision in individual colleges**

The analytic framework was applied to the data of the fourteen colleges that took part in the research. The concepts and activities included in the four quadrants were placed onto a grid, which was used to analyse the situation in each college (**Appendix 5**). The grids for the four quadrants were completed for each college for both the frameworks: Support provision and communication and collaboration. This gave a total of eight quadrants for each college.

A rating system was considered, and a possible use of scores was initially investigated, this had the strengths of non-specialists using the framework to analyse the provision, with equal weighting to each activity to make the task of arriving at a final stage easy to calculate. A weakness of such a scoring system was that it was too precise and based on numeric calculations. It was therefore decided to abandon this and use the broad categories of focusing, developing, establishing and enhancing with a professional evaluation decision.

The analysis of data of each college was transferred onto an overall grid (**Appendix 6**) and analytic framework. The four stages of development were represented by circles radiating out from the centre of the framework; with focusing (stage 4) starting in the centre and establishing (stage 1) towards the outside, as practise becomes more extensive and embedded. The nearer the colleges were to the circumference, the more criteria they already met. This enabled an overview of all their positions in each quadrant (**Figures 27 and 28**). For clarity each college has been allocated a colour that was used consistently throughout the present chapter on modelling provision.



**KEY**

Stage of Development: 4 - Focusing 3 - Developing 2 - Establishing 1 - Enhancing

A-N - 14 GFE Colleges who took part in the research, each college has been allocated a different colour for clarity

**Figure 27** Analytic framework applied to support in the 14 GFE Colleges

The colleges tended to score more highly on the bottom right hand (3<sup>rd</sup>) quadrant. This indicated that support at the specialist; mainly personalized level was already in place. One college was at the enhancing stage and eleven colleges were at the stage of establishing. Two colleges were developing. Support in the top left hand (1<sup>st</sup>) quadrant, more inclusive support, mainly at an institutional level, was mainly at the developing stage (thirteen colleges) with one college at the focusing stage. Support at the specialist level that was mainly institutional was located in the bottom left hand (4<sup>th</sup>) quadrant. Ten colleges were at the stage of developing and four were at the focusing stage. Support in the top right hand (2<sup>nd</sup>) quadrant was slightly weaker. This was more inclusive support, mainly personalized, such as that provided on the main course. Six colleges were at the developing stage. Eight colleges were at the focusing stage.

This overview of the support in the GFE colleges indicates that a lot of work was being done in the specialist area to provide personalized support for learners. Specialist tutors were generally using appropriate assessments and methods to screen, assess and teach learners with dyslexia and provide a variety of flexible support. Regular reviews were in place as well as evaluation of the service provided. Specialist tutors were involved in training other college staff in dyslexia awareness. Weaknesses, in the area of specialist support at a personalized level, included the keeping of appropriate records in some colleges and a lack of a resource centre and specialist resources. Nine out of fourteen colleges only partly provided appropriate accommodation, which needed to be quiet and confidential with individual teaching and testing rooms. Information on the well-being and self-empowerment of learners was not obtained from the questionnaires, but was derived from tutor interviews, which went into more depth; therefore, this information was only available for a few colleges.

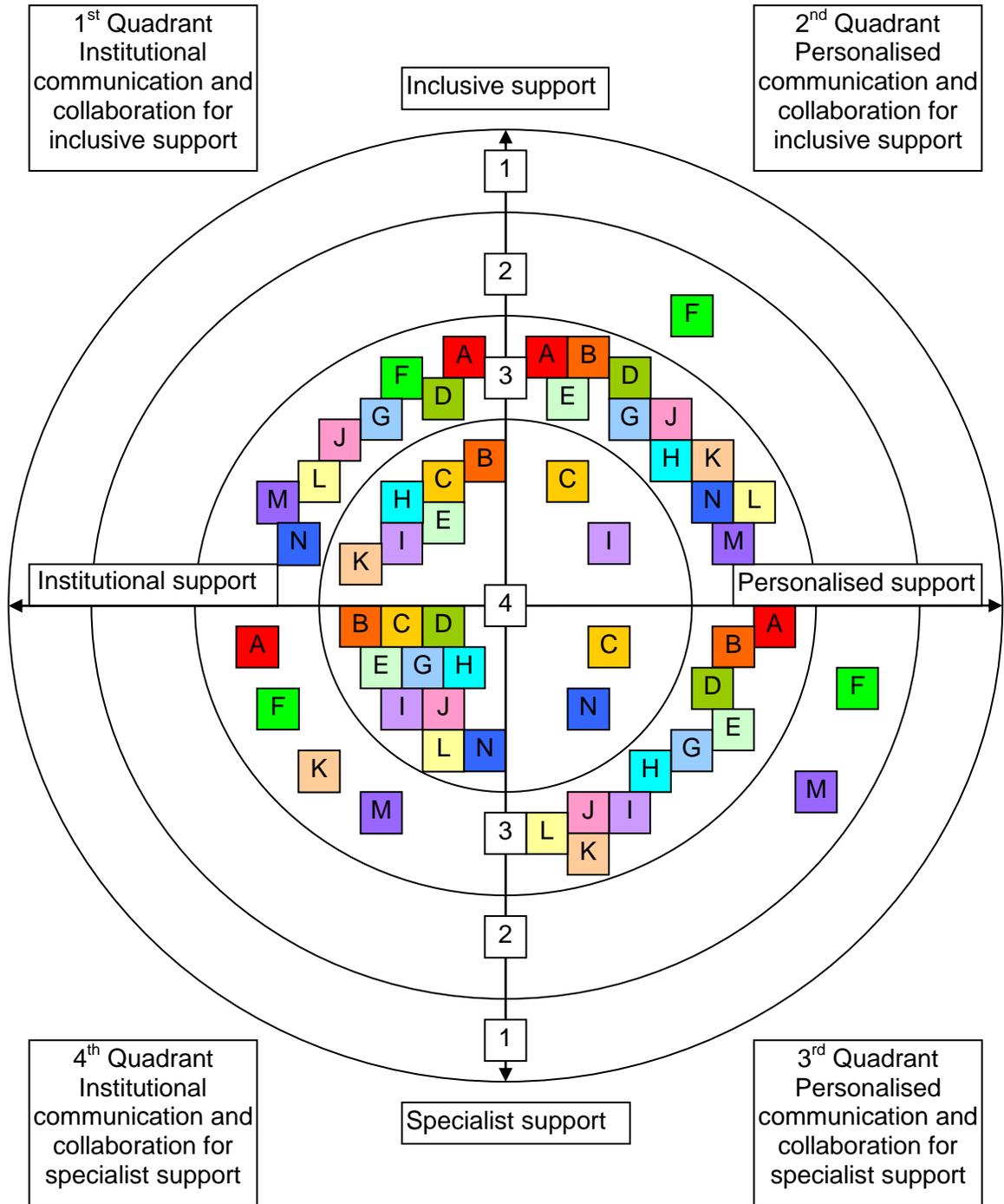
At an institutional level, management was putting systems in place to identify and assess learners and collect data as an evidence base for evaluating support. The information was not collected with regard to strategic plans and equality schemes, so this does not give a complete picture of the situation. There appears to be a weakness in transition arrangements, both prior and post college. Appropriate accommodation was not fully in place for all the dyslexia teams. Although the specialist tutors carried out dyslexia awareness, it was not always clear who attended this and whether managers were also trained. There was a lack of evidence of support by management for appropriate CPD training for the dyslexia team. Data was not collected during the research on the dyslexia team budget.

There appears to be a weakness in more inclusive, personalized support, especially in providing a dyslexia-friendly environment, teaching methods and creative assessments on the main course. There was little evidence of encouragement for learners to take up specialist support and of on-going identification and referral throughout the year. Dyslexia awareness among other learners and support by peers was also not very evident in the information obtained from staff. There was scope for improvement in this area.

Specialist support at an institutional level, through college services, was mainly provided through technological support, provision of diagnostic assessments and testing by Educational Psychologists. Weaknesses at this level included: the lack of provision of dyslexia-friendly software on all college computers; training in the use of technology and software; and the lack of availability of resources for lending through the library. Evidence was not obtained on transition planning to HE and employment, at an institutional level, as well as availability of quiet areas for study and dyslexia-friendly assessments. There was no information obtained from some colleges on the evaluation of support by the learners, at this level.

A second analytical framework associated with communication and collaboration that takes place within GFE colleges and with outside agencies, was applied to the data (**Figure 28**). According to the information obtained in the research communication and collaboration was not yet established in twelve out of fourteen colleges and was mainly at the developing stage with regard to personalised support and at the focusing stage with regard to institutional support.

Communication and collaboration is most secure in the areas of personalized collaboration for specialist support (3<sup>rd</sup> quadrant) and personalized collaboration for inclusive support (2<sup>nd</sup> quadrant). In the area of specialist support two colleges were at the establishing stage and ten colleges were at the developing stage. Two colleges were at the focusing stage. Collaboration with individual learners was fully in place in twelve out of fourteen colleges and partly in place in two colleges. Collaboration also took place with course tutors and outside agencies although this was not fully in place in all colleges. One college provided information on learner support team meetings although this was not targeted in the research. Three colleges mentioned collaboration with other college services. Three of the colleges talked about networking with other specialists to share ideas and good practice and three colleges mentioned CPD training for specialist tutors.



**KEY**

*Stage of Development:* 4 - Focusing 3 - Developing 2 - Establishing 1 - Enhancing

A-N - 14 GFE Colleges who took part in the research, each college has been allocated a different colour for clarity

**Figure 28** Analytical framework applied to communication and collaboration in 14 GFE Colleges

In the area of personalized collaboration for inclusive support (2<sup>nd</sup> quadrant), one college was at the establishing stage, eleven colleges were developing, two colleges were at the focusing stage. Collaboration with LSAs and mentors took place mainly as a result of support in lectures. Collaboration between course tutors and specialist staff was in place in twelve colleges, but this was only partly so in eight colleges. Dyslexia awareness training took place in twelve out of fourteen colleges.

There was evidence of collaboration with learners at the course tutor level in ten colleges. In one college there was evidence of collaboration with other college services and staff. The research did not cover other collaboration at the course tutor level, this included course team meetings and information on cross-college policies. There was little evidence obtained on collaboration with outside agencies by course tutors and the passing on of transition information to them.

In the area of institutional collaboration for inclusive support (1<sup>st</sup> quadrant), eight colleges were at the developing stage and six colleges were at the focusing stage. There was evidence that eleven colleges had evaluation systems in place at an institutional level. Ten colleges collected the views of learners on the disabled service provision. The research did not plan to collect information on other collaboration at an institutional level, such as formal meetings of senior management and other managers, although one college provided a booklet, which clearly outlined their disability statement. This provided evidence of innovative, good practice with the establishment of a Disability Forum in the college, for developing monitoring and reviewing policies as well as other practices regarding disability. A disabled Learners' Forum enabled learners to raise issues and contribute towards policy. No other information was obtained from colleges on the involvement of learners in producing an equality scheme and developing an action plan.

In the area of institutional collaboration for specialist support (4<sup>th</sup> quadrant), four colleges were developing and nine were at the focusing stage. Collaboration between the examination department and specialist tutors was in place in thirteen colleges. Information on resources and software was available in thirteen colleges but this was judged to not be fully in place in nine colleges. Evidence was obtained from two colleges regarding information on support that was available for students. Collaboration with regard to evaluation of support by students at an institutional level was in place in ten colleges but a full range of methods were not always evident, for example questionnaires and focus groups. There was evidence of collaboration concerning referral information in nine

colleges, but little evidence existed on prior and post transition information. The research obtained evidence from three colleges on collaboration with different college services.

My ambitions went beyond portraying the state of provision within a college to identifying and supporting the development of provision in individual colleges.

### **Individual overviews of college provision**

Applying the analytic framework brought into focus the disparate position of colleges, some had areas of strengths and some had areas for development. My original data collection gave greater priority to the specialist area of provision, but I became aware of the significance of the other three quadrants in the course of my data collection. In order to get an overview of provision in each individual college, the ratings of the stages for each college were transferred onto individual analytic frameworks. The combined individual college overviews showing analysis of support as well as communication and collaboration, indicate the present position of colleges with respect to each of the quadrants. Two different examples are provided (**Figures 29, 30, 31, 32**) with further overviews for each college enclosed in **Appendix 7**.

College E (**Figure 29**) has established specialist support (3<sup>rd</sup> quadrant) and is developing at the management level (1<sup>st</sup> quadrant). It is just starting to focus at a course (2<sup>nd</sup> quadrant) and service (4<sup>th</sup> quadrant) level. Communication and collaboration (**Figure 30**) is developing at the personalised level, and is starting to focus at the institutional level. College M (**Figure 31**) is at the enhancing stage with regard to specialist support provision (3<sup>rd</sup> quadrant). Management support (1<sup>st</sup> quadrant) is establishing and course (2<sup>nd</sup> quadrant) and service (4<sup>th</sup> quadrant) support are developing. Communication and collaboration (**Figure 32**) is also fairly well developed at the specialist support level (establishing). It is developing in the other three quadrants. The overview maps provide a summary of the position of each college and can be used to plan future development in weaker areas.

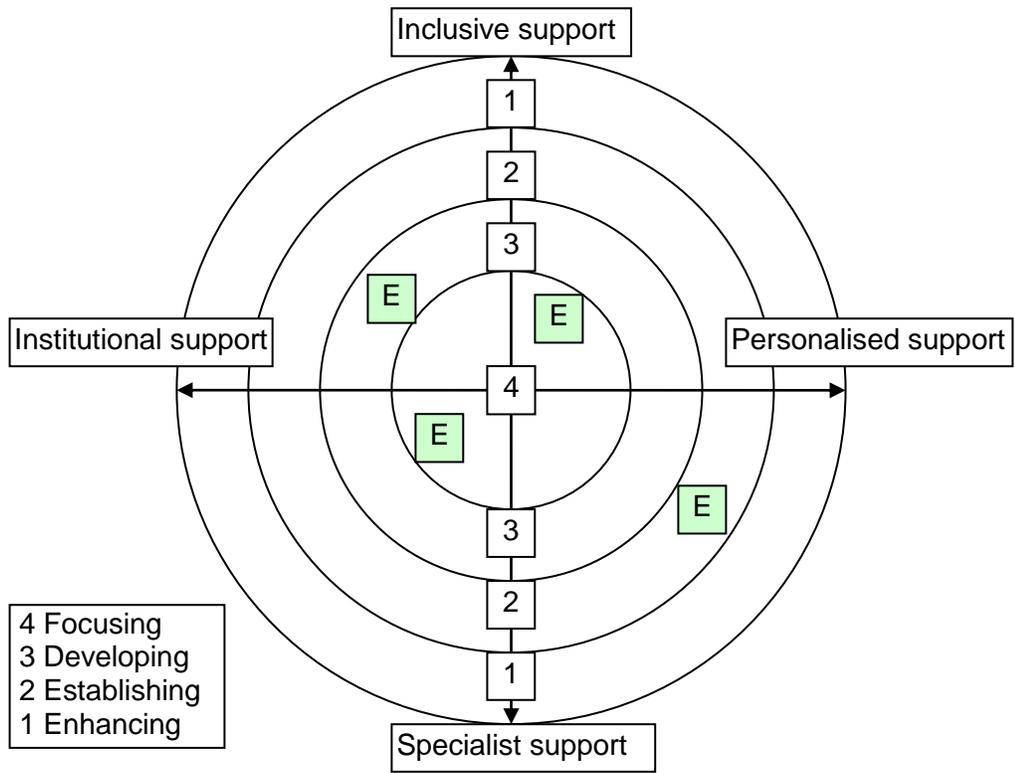


Figure 29 Analysis of Support - Overview College E

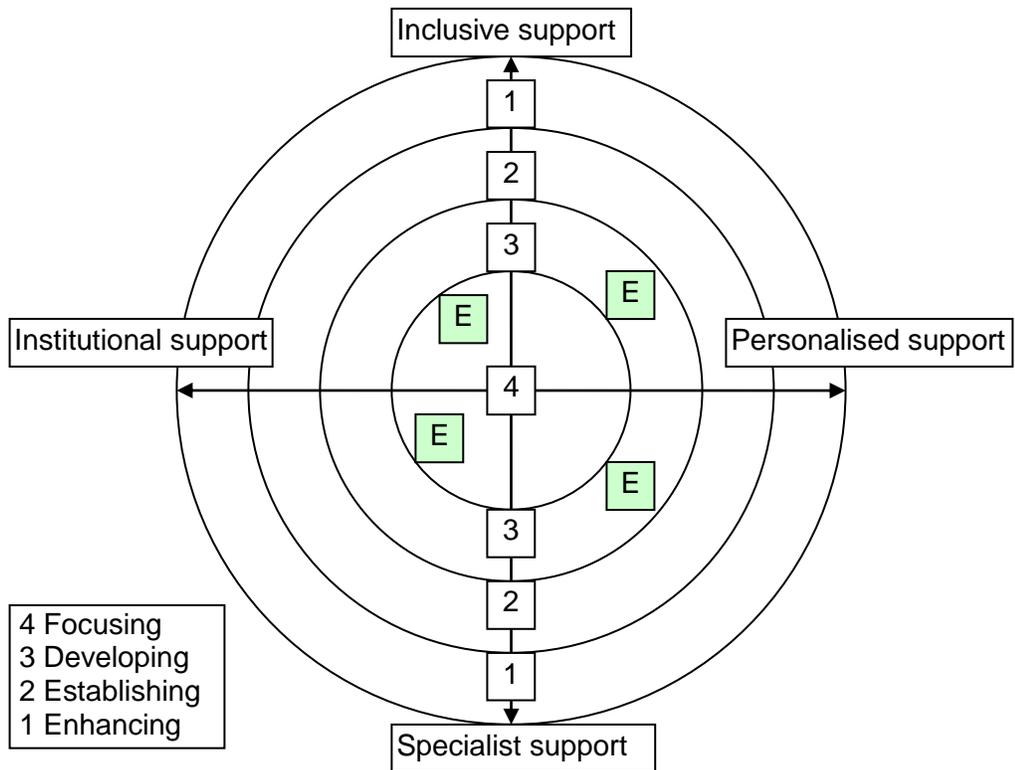


Figure 30 Analysis of communication and collaboration - College E

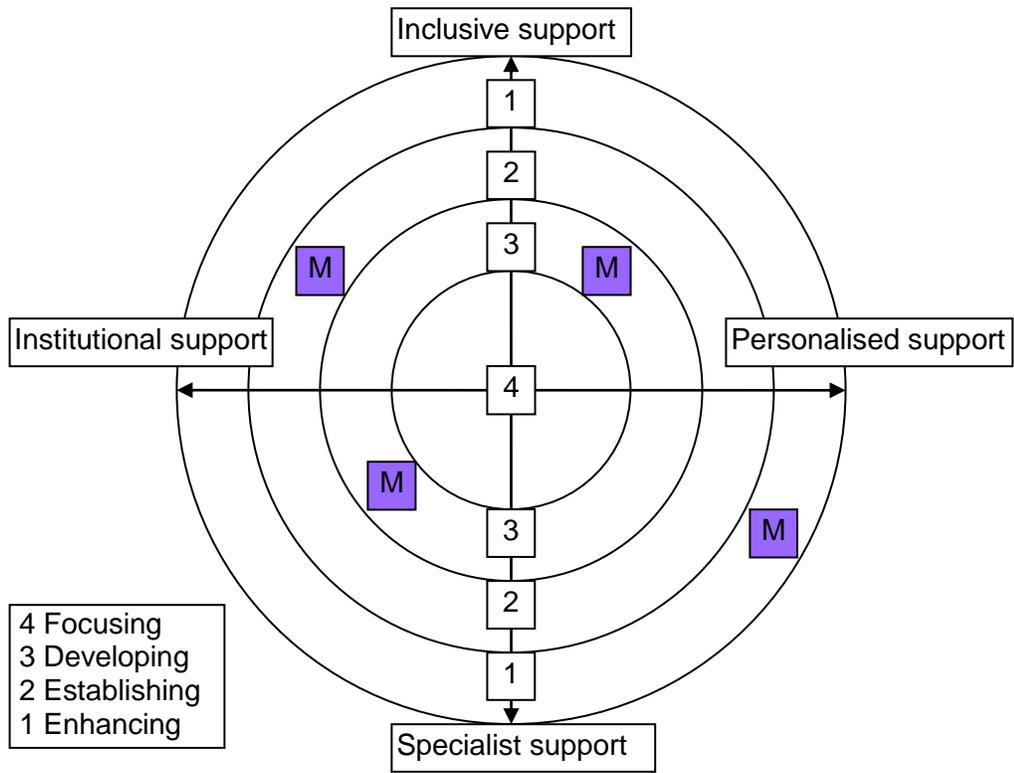


Figure 31 Analysis of Support - Overview College M

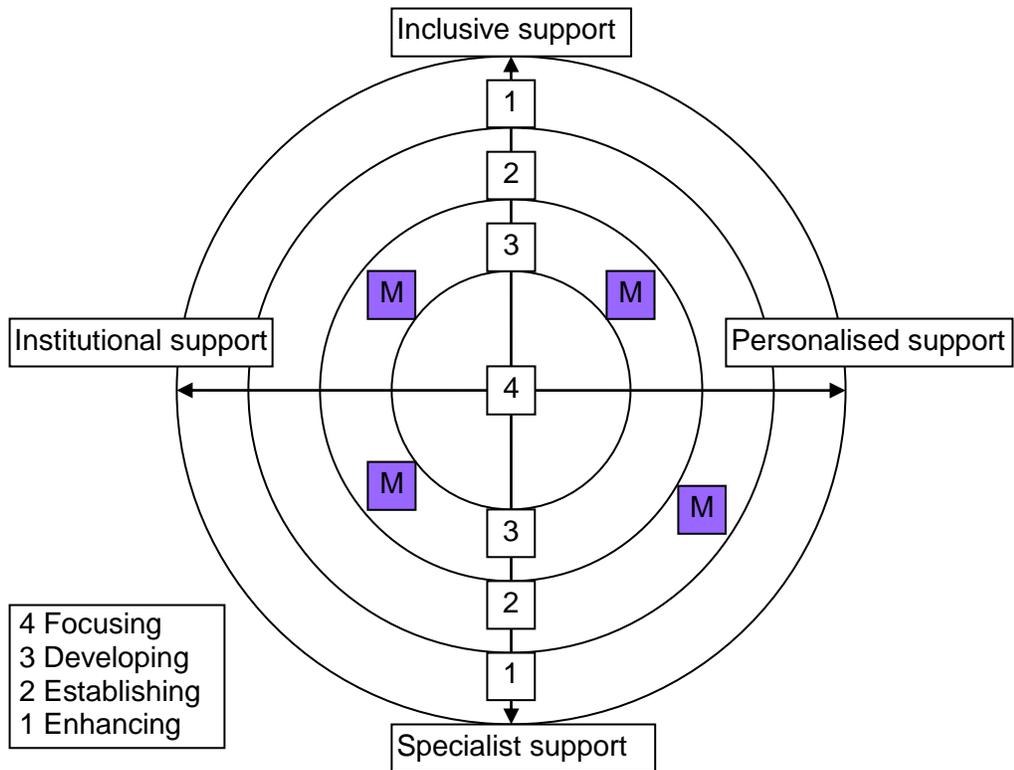


Figure 32 Analysis of communication and collaboration - College M

#### **7.2.4. Summary of analysis**

The overviews of the position of different colleges on the analytical framework, regarding support and communication and collaboration, provided a way of analysing the current provision of support in four different areas. On both frameworks the area of specialist support at a mainly personalised level was shown to be most secure. The area of more inclusive support at mainly institutional level was fairly secure in the analysis of support but came out the weakest in communication and collaboration. The area of more inclusive support, mainly personalised, was the weakest in the support analysis but fared better in the analysis of communication and collaboration. The area of support at a specialist level mainly institutional was in the same position compared to the other areas, with regard to analysis of support and communication and collaboration. Overall, the evidence for communication and collaboration was less secure than that of the support provision.

#### **7.2.5. Use of the analytic framework**

The analytic framework can be used as an audit tool to document and analyse support provision in GFE colleges as part of their review and evaluation process. It can also be used to analyse communication and collaboration with regard to support in different areas, at institutional and personalized levels. The framework will enable colleges to devise a mapping of the present position regarding support provision. Weak areas can then be targeted for improvement so that a more effective system of supporting learners with dyslexia can be developed. The model could be applied to other educational establishments involved in providing support for learners with dyslexia. It aims to provide a starting point for discussion and can be picked up and modified by other researchers.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Discussion**

*'Engagement, challenge and fresh thought'* (Chirban 1996 p.60)

#### **8.1. Introduction**

The research study set out to address the problem of how best to provide for adult learners with dyslexia in a GFE college. It aimed to gather evidence on the present position in colleges and to give tutors and learners a chance to voice their opinions on the issue. In this way it aimed to contribute to professional knowledge so practitioners can work more effectively to meet the needs of learners with dyslexia. The main findings will be discussed in relation to the original research questions:

1. What is the present position in GFE Colleges in Yorkshire and Humberside with respect to systems for identifying and providing for learners with dyslexia?
2. What are the different perceptions by specialist tutors and learners of effective practice in the identification and provision for learners with dyslexia?
3. What opinions do tutors and learners have concerning improvements that could be made for making identification and provision more effective?
4. Based on this evidence how can FE provision for learners with dyslexia be audited and modelled?

#### **8.2. Perceptions of learners and specialist tutors**

The literature research identified the importance of listening to the voice of the learner, one of the main aims of the present research. The learners expressed their opinions and revealed original incites into provision, making suggestions for fundamental improvements. The views of the learners, together with tutor perceptions and proposals (Chapters 4, 5, 6), were used to make recommendations for making support more effective. The main concerns of the learners were: lack of early identification, assessment and support at school; inadequate teaching methods; lack of awareness of dyslexia; and unsuitable accommodation.

### **Lack of early identification, assessment and support at school**

Negative experiences at school had left deep impressions on learners, this was mainly due to lack of understanding and help from teachers. It resulted in low confidence and self-esteem. Their main suggestion for improvement was early identification and support to address difficulties and meet their needs, preferably at primary school. They also stressed the need for trained specialist teachers in school and more support from the teacher in class. Learners did not mind disclosing their dyslexia at college and were very positive about the specialist support they were receiving, which was meeting their personal needs. They suggested the need for more support in class. Flexibility was important for learners, with help at the beginning of the course and help around heavy workloads, one college used an open model of support to provide this.

Specialist tutors identified previous support experiences by learners as a barrier to effective support making students reluctant to ask for and receive further support in college, encouragement by course tutors would help to address the issue. Tutors agreed with learners in the need to provide early identification, assessment and support at school. It was important that information was obtained from schools, with improved transition arrangements, which included planning for universities.

Specialist dyslexia tutors favoured identification through individual, initial interviews with the students, and support through one-to-one tuition. Issues that affected support, to do with staff shortages, location of courses, funding, resources, and time, needed to be addressed. Full-time specialist tutors were needed in every college to provide support, conduct assessments and deliver awareness training, as well as LSA support in class. A proposed institutional versus personalised approach provided a useful framework in modelling support provision. In order to provide a personalised experience that was learner centred and suited to the individual needs of the learner, involvement of the learner was required in all aspects of support: planning, setting targets, reviewing and evaluating the provision. Learners needed empowering to take control of the type of support they required.

### **Lack of awareness of dyslexia**

Learners pointed out that not all tutors were aware of dyslexia; there was also a lack of awareness and understanding from other learners, family, and the general public. This was re-affirmed by tutors who mentioned the lack of understanding of dyslexia in the area and at school. Specialist tutors going into classes to develop awareness and pick up

issues had a positive effect, as well as providing tutors with a skills or support profile, outlining the strengths and weaknesses of learners, with recommendations and strategies.

Awareness of dyslexia by course tutors and managers was vital, as well as other staff in the college. Having managers that had actually done the job and understand it would be the ideal. There was a need for adequate management policies for dyslexia support. Management support was required for encouraging staff training and improving systems to enable easier communication and collaboration with other staff within college and outside agencies, providing for the well-being of learners.

### **Inadequate teaching methods**

Learners expressed their dissatisfaction with teaching methods used by course tutors and made suggestions for improvements to staff delivery as well as methods, these needed to be taken into consideration during staff training. Learners were positive about the use of assistive technology and specialist software. Tutors also found technological resources, such as portable laptops with specialist software, very useful and suggested the use of personalised pen drives. The loan of resources was also suggested. Management support was needed to make sure adequate funding was provided and an ICT strategy developed. Specialist tutors showed very good awareness of the methods of teaching required for learners with dyslexia, as well as resources and learning aids, they also suggested their use with other learners. A need was highlighted for dyslexia-friendly teaching methods in all lessons; this has implications for training.

### **Unsuitable accommodation**

The level of noise and lack of privacy in the present accommodation was of concern to learners, as well as the lack of light and smallness of the rooms. They found it difficult to concentrate in a shared space. Four learners expressed a desire for some space of their own, a proper support area with computers, books and equipment, quiet and free from distractions. The tutors also commented on the inadequacy of the accommodation. A dedicated base room was required with space for storing resources and access to ICT, centrally based and integrated but distinctly separate. The problem of location of courses raises the question whether support should be provided in areas where courses are taking place as well as centrally? This was already being done successfully in two colleges who had adequate facilities and rooms in which to do this.

### **8.3. Improving identification and provision**

In order to address the issues identified by learners and tutors, systems need to be put in place at management level, to support them in their quest for efficient and effective provision. These systems will enable institutional change, to provide an inclusive, dyslexia-friendly environment throughout college, suited to the needs of all learners, alongside a personalised approach. Learner centred provision should be paramount. Learner perceptions and tutor suggestions reveal a need to improve teaching methods and environments on main courses, this can be done through staff awareness training and improved communication. An emphasis on collaboration between staff in college as well as with outside agencies will enhance the well-being of learners.

Government legislation in recent years has moved towards addressing the main issues, with all institutions and organisations now having to heed disability and equality law. This involves putting management systems in place to comply with this. It is the improved experience of the individual with disability, which will ultimately testify to the effectiveness of the systems, their well-being lies at the heart of provision.

#### **Main recommendations**

All the evidence from the research was considered in proposing some main recommendations, these include:

- An 'institutional' and 'personalised' approach to support
- An emphasis on staff dyslexia awareness training
- Learner centred provision
- Dyslexia-friendly methods and environment
- Development of collaboration within and outside the organisation

These recommendations confirm and support those made by the LLLU (2002), they complement and expand on them by including collaboration as an important issue.

The literature review (Chapter 2) supports provision for LLDDs in FE in inclusive environments, providing for individual differences in learning and a high quality, personalised experience for learners. Learner centred provision is envisaged at different levels and involves a whole-college, institutional approach to facilitating individual learning environments that provide learners with a choice of options to meet their individual requirements. The whole organisation needs to be involved in bringing about change in

practices, procedures, plans and policies, driven forward by senior managers and including disabled students in planning. FE colleges and learning providers are being challenged to develop their teaching and learning practices more tailored to individual needs. Flexible provision is recommended, reflecting individual skills and learning profiles.

A whole-college institutional approach and personalisation can be seen as contradictory notions with the idea of providing support in a mainstream setting by course tutors and yet requiring additional support. Such contradictions have led to conflicts in schools. Some researchers argue for 'total inclusion' with no additional provision. The present research contradicts this viewpoint with both tutors and learners strongly in favour of both types of provision and a variety of support services. There is a need for a broader approach with a social model used alongside a medical and educational one.

The Little Report (LSC 2005b) suggests that quality provision should be measured by three simple measures: consistent and effective learner assessment processes; effective learning, teaching and support; effective outcomes. Firstly, consistent and effective learner assessment processes need to be rigorous, fit for purpose and match learners' support requirement, with a multi-agency approach. At the heart of personalisation is a proper assessment of the needs of learners at the start of their programme. Differences in individual learning ability can stem from biological factors. Assessment of individual differences and needs is an important preliminary requirement to responding to and meeting those needs. Teamwork, with a wide range of other professionals, has been highlighted.

The second measure of quality provision: effective learning, teaching and support, involves a two-way process, which motivates and engages learners and tutors. Dyslexia awareness training is required in order to develop this. Staff awareness training has been identified as imperative to the successful inclusion of learners with dyslexia. All staff and services need to be aware of the particular needs of learners with dyslexia and prepared to respond to them. The research highlights the necessity to focus on the student as a client, with their varied life experiences and needs taken into consideration, in a learner centred approach. Consultation with adult learners is paramount. Course tutors are challenged to respond to the diverse needs of learners by creating effective, quality, teaching and learning environments that engage and energise all students, taking into consideration universal design. Adult learners with dyslexia have a broad range of strengths and

weaknesses, which must be recognised, to enable potential to be fulfilled, with a focus on strengths.

The literature research has confirmed the importance of using a wide range of multisensory teaching methods for learners with dyslexia. These are linked to theories of dyslexia; combined approaches based on a range of theoretical influences are more powerful than a single approach. It is argued that there is no need to differentiate students with dyslexia from non-dyslexic students with suggestions that all learners make use of the specialist methods.

Suitable accommodation needs to be made available for learning support, to provide a healthy and safe environment; this should include an adequate amount and range of accommodation, with quiet and private areas for diagnosis and study. An adequate amount and variety of suitable specialist equipment and learning resources should be available, with training in its use.

A third measure of quality provision is effective outcomes for individual learners and clear progression. Progress of learners, relative to their prior attainment and potential, should be evaluated. ILPs need to be in place with records clearly indicating the progress learners are making towards the objectives. Additional support policies and procedures should provide evidence of the effectiveness of learner support activities and numbers receiving support. Data needs to be available on participation, retention and achievement rates. Course teams should regularly review both quantitative data and qualitative information about their teaching and learners' achievements.

Communication and collaboration are envisaged as fundamental to improving the quality of provision, with a multi-agency approach. A vital gap exists in providing learning support that is continuous and seamless across different institutions, with a need for improved transition arrangements.

#### **8.4. Implications**

There are implications for weaving the main themes that have emerged from the research into the very fabric of the institution, to enable a whole-college approach with all staff and services aware of the particular needs of learners with dyslexia and prepared to respond to them. Staff awareness training has been identified as imperative to the successful

inclusion of learners with dyslexia and their well-being, as well as learner centred provision and dyslexia-friendly teaching methods and learning environment. Communication and collaboration are fundamental. The research findings have global implications as well as specific implications for provision of support in GFE colleges.

### **Global implications**

The research has wider implications for the provision of quality dyslexia support provision from the start of schooling and throughout education, working life, and all aspects of existence in the lifespan of the individual living in an inclusive society. The present research findings can be applied globally to other educational organisations such as schools, learning and training providers and HE, with respect to their provision for learners with dyslexia and other LLDDs.

### **Specific implications**

Some of the findings have particular significance with regard to support in GFE colleges, for example provision for the specific needs of adult learners on vocational courses, especially those who lack basic skills. This has implications for the particular resources needed, with more emphasis on active learning, using multisensory learning aids and resources suited to adults with a wide spectrum of needs, working at all levels on a wide variety of vocational courses. The wide range of duties undertaken by specialist tutors in GFE has implications for the time required for these.

A need for collaboration with all parties has been identified: learners, specialist tutors, course tutors, services, managers and all staff in college. GFE involves a wide circle of collaborators, including learning and training providers, employers, local authority and other agencies. A wide range of services is provided to learners; this has implications for the amount of staff awareness that is needed to facilitate dyslexia-friendly and inclusive provision. There are also implications for funding; GFE colleges would need to find monies to make adaptations in order to develop inclusive, institutional provision.

Researchers from all four quadrants of the analytic framework could develop this further: managers, course tutors and service staff. It provides a structure for further investigation. The study could be replicated and expanded in GFE colleges in other regions and by other specialists working with learners who have different disabilities.

## **8.5. Limitations**

The present study was limited due to the time constraints, specialism and location of the researcher, as well as ethical consideration and compliance. It was necessary to limit the sample of GFE colleges to West Yorkshire in order to make it manageable by a single researcher living in the area. Ethical considerations meant that the study was limited to those who consented to participate and were in a position to do so (compliance). Certain cautions are needed in the interpretation of the results, which were based on a sample of fourteen colleges, five tutors and twelve learners. A larger sample would lead to greater reliability. There were limitations to the data collected, for example, the questionnaire asked colleges whether they collaborated with other agencies; it did not specify the methods of collaboration. This is something that could be explored further.

## **8.6. Auditing and modelling provision**

The research moves the field of dyslexia support forward by proposing a whole-college and inclusive approach to support provision alongside a specialist and personalised approach. It also proposes a way of thinking about and utilising the potential of communication and collaboration, internally and externally, in moving forward development of a learning organisation. It links to other research on: inclusion, the social model; the provision of SEN services in schools and school improvement; motivation; diversity, as well as theories of dyslexia. Implications will be considered with respect to modelling provision for learners with dyslexia in GFE: the analytic framework for auditing support provision and a final representation of a dyslexia-friendly learning organisation.

### **The analytic framework**

All the evidence from the research was considered in developing a model for a way forward. The research has implications for the creation of an advancing organisation, which develops and improves on two spheres, two dimensions and four fronts. The two spheres or representations are support provision and communication and collaboration. Each involves consideration on two dimensions: individual specialist support as opposed to inclusive support; and institutional support as opposed to personalised support. An interaction of these produces four quadrants, which can be used as a framework for analysing support in order to focus on areas of development.

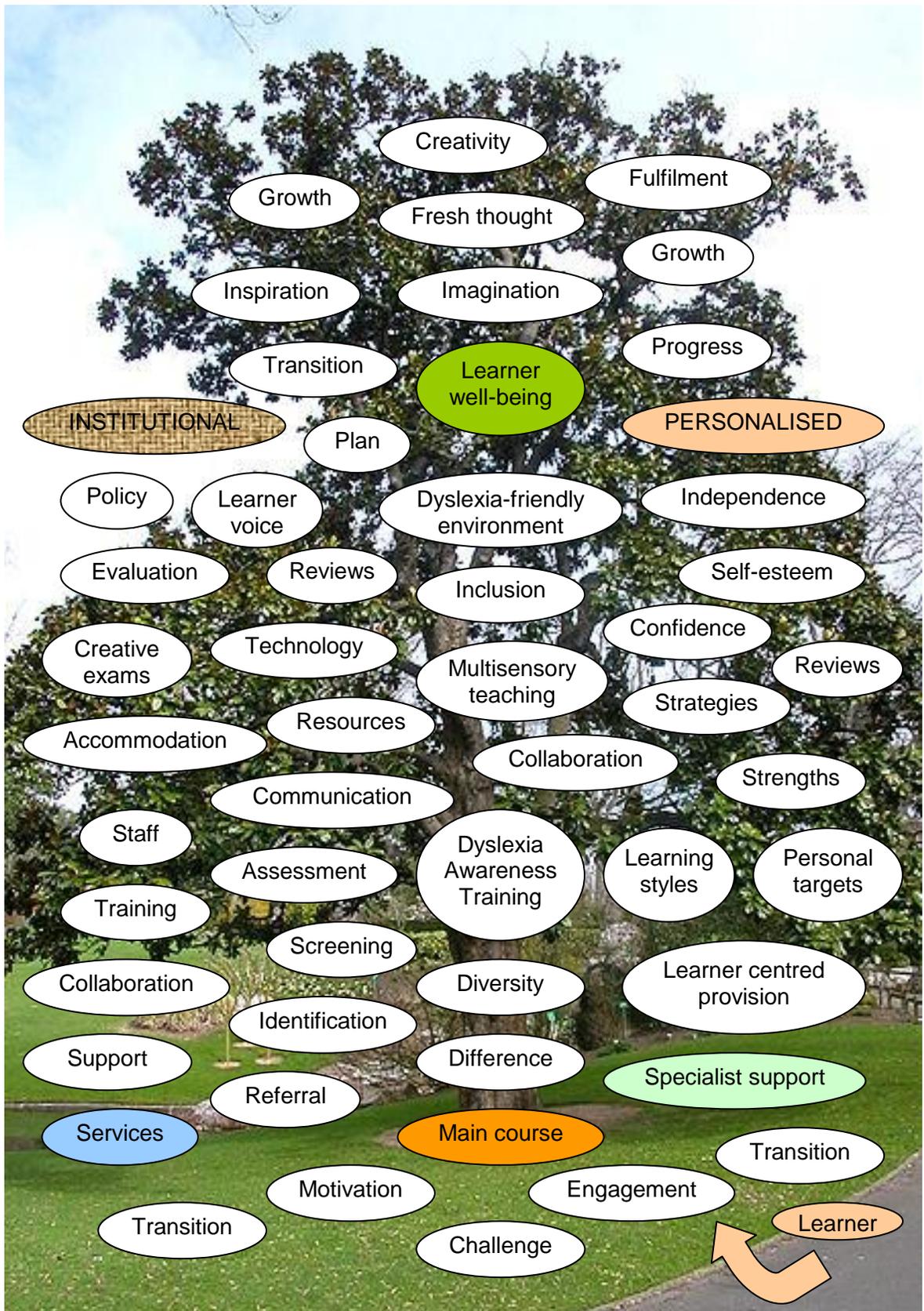
The analytic framework has specific as well as global implications. It can be used as an audit tool to document and analyse support provision in GFE colleges as part of their

review and evaluation process. It can also be used with a second representation of the analytic framework to analyse communication and collaboration with regard to support in the different areas and levels, at institutional and personalized levels. The framework will enable colleges to devise a mapping of the present position regarding support provision. Weak areas can then be targeted for improvement so that a more effective system of supporting learners with dyslexia can be developed.

### **A final vision**

In order to create a vision of a dyslexia-friendly learning organisation a visual representation was devised incorporating all the main themes that emerged from the research (**Figure 33**). The different ideas and views encountered during the process of the research were utilised in devising a final vision of support. The idea of a tree was used as a representation of the learning organisation with the different themes and concepts like leaves on and around it. The learner enters the organisation at ground level, with the main course in the centre represented by the trunk of the tree. Specialist support is represented on the right of the tree and support services on the left. As the learner proceeds up the tree they are supported all the way until reaching a point of independence, success on the main course and self-fulfillment. An amalgamation of all the themes and concepts leads to growth, creativity and fulfilment as everyone flourishes as they are nourished by it.

The representation could be applied specifically to all GFE colleges as well as globally to other learning organisations involved in providing support for learners with dyslexia. It aims to provide a starting point for discussion and can be picked up, modified and adapted by other researchers.



Background image – Pymouss44 (2008) - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magnolia\\_grandiflora](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magnolia_grandiflora)

**Figure 33** A representation of a dyslexia-friendly learning organisation

## **Chapter 9**

### **Conclusion**

#### **9.1. Introduction**

The focus of the present study was to explore provision for learners with dyslexia in GFE colleges, by gathering evidence on the present position and giving tutors and learners a voice to express their feelings and opinions, in order to contribute to professional knowledge. It offered a practical solution, bridging the gap in this field of research.

#### **9.2. Review of literature**

A search through Government legislation and reports, as well as current research on dyslexia, enabled the background to the research to be established and the present investigation to be placed in perspective (Chapter 2). The notion of individual differences and needs has emerged as key and central to provision for learners with dyslexia in GFE colleges. Research into the concept of dyslexia and definitions highlights these differences. Legislation and reform programmes over recent years have encompassed the notion of inclusion with the need to match provision to the individual requirements of learners and their diversity. This provides learning organisations with the challenge of changing and adapting their systems in order to put in place support and services that adequately meet the needs of a variety of learners. Research has shown the need for institutional as well as individual support pertaining to a social model, with an emphasis on diversity and learner centred provision. Collaboration and communication are envisaged as fundamental to improving the quality of provision.

#### **9.3. Research design and collection of data**

The research methods were used as tools for gathering data to answer the research questions, so fitness for purpose was paramount (Chapter 3). A mixed methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative research strategies, was used to gather comprehensive data and ensure broader and better results, revealing different aspects of reality. Appropriate instruments were selected for different purposes in order to develop converging lines of enquiry through triangulation. They enabled data to be obtained in two phases in order to answer the research questions. The answer to the first research question, *the present position in GFE Colleges in Yorkshire and Humberside with respect to systems for identifying and providing for learners with dyslexia*, initially involved use of a

questionnaire in the first phase. This was followed up with telephone interviews and semi-structured tutor interviews in the second phase, which also enabled research questions two and three to be answered, *the different perceptions by specialist tutors on effective practice in the identification and provision for learners with dyslexia, and opinions for improvement*. Semi-structured learner interviews (focus, dyad, individual) facilitated questions two and three to be addressed further.

#### **9.4. Research findings and summary**

The present research findings confirmed legislation and previous research with respect to the main concepts: inclusion, personalisation, individual differences and needs, and a dyslexia friendly and inclusive environment throughout the organisation. The main themes identified through the different research methods included: the dyslexia team, referral, initial identification, screening, support, staff, teaching methods, accommodation, resources, assessment, reviews, learner well-being, evaluation, past experience, the term dyslexia, transition.

The effect of negative experiences in past schooling left an emotional scar on adult students with dyslexia. Learner centred support with an emphasis on the individual needs of learners and their well-being has been identified as most important. This involves awareness training for all staff, dyslexia-friendly teaching methods and a dyslexia-friendly, inclusive environment. Learners need to be aware of metacognition, their own way of thinking and learning. Empowerment of learners through support provision will lead to independence in their future life.

#### **9.5. Development of the model**

The evidence derived from the research findings enabled the fourth research question to be addressed and an emerging *model for auditing provision for learners with dyslexia to be developed*. The main themes identified were support provision and communication and collaboration. Each involves consideration on two dimensions: individual specialist support as opposed to inclusive support and institutional support as opposed to personalised support. An interaction of these produces four quadrants which can be used as a framework for analysing support provision in four main areas: leadership and management; support on the main course; specialist support; and cross-college services. This involves focusing on present provision to identify areas for development and developing, establishing and enhancing practice. Communication and collaboration can

be developed internally between all departments and services and externally with outside agencies: schools, services, delivery partners, learning and training providers, employers, parents and carers. The main concepts and themes can be woven into the fabric of the institution in order to achieve a dyslexia-friendly learning organisation.

## **9.6. Discussion and recommendations**

The present research enabled the views of tutors and learners to be expressed on the identification and provision for learners with dyslexia in GFE colleges, as well as their opinions on improvements. These were used to develop recommendations for making support more effective. The main concerns of the learners were: lack of early identification, assessment and support at school; inadequate teaching methods; lack of awareness of dyslexia; and unsuitable accommodation. Negative experiences at school had left deep impressions on learners who would have appreciated early identification and support at primary school. They expressed the need for more support on their main courses, more specialist tutors and more suitable accommodation for specialist provision. The tutors agreed with the points made by the learners for improvements. Collaboration and communication was needed with course tutors, other staff and outside agencies, as well as dyslexia awareness training. Adult learners with dyslexia have a broad range of strengths and weaknesses, which should be recognised by all stakeholders, to enable potential to be fulfilled.

The study identifies barriers to present practice and recommends an institutional versus personalised approach, which involves incorporating a social model of disability, in order to provide for full inclusion of all students. An inclusive dyslexia-friendly environment throughout college, with learner-centred provision, would benefit all learners as well as those with disabilities. An emphasis on dyslexia awareness training and the development of collaboration and communication within and outside the organisation as well as improved transition arrangements would enhance the quality of provision. These recommendations were supported by the literature review. There is a requirement for specialist support and a personalised approach alongside institutional support. Management commitment is fundamental in order to improve the quality and effectiveness of provision, by developing policies, which will work for and meet the specific needs of students with dyslexia, enabling them to succeed in an appropriate learning environment, which is conducive to their particular requirements and engages and energises all learners.

## **9.7. Final conclusion**

The present research has taken the views of learners and tutors into consideration in proposing a way forward. The analytic framework will provide GFE colleges with a useful tool for auditing support provision and highlighting areas to work on and develop. The present study uses and builds on previous research to help fill the gap in the field of support provision for learners with dyslexia in FE, by proposing a new way of thinking about a whole-college approach. It contributes to professional knowledge and understanding. In this way it attempts to answer the central problem initially identified as to how best provide for adult learners with dyslexia in a GFE college. The research approaches support from a specialist viewpoint and recognises that further research will be necessary to enable a range of viewpoints, as support develops in the different quadrants of the analytic framework, at main course level, service level and management level. Dissemination of the emerging model to participating colleges in the research would enable further refinement. Further research could be done into its global applications in other learning organisations.

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## Appendix 1 Questionnaire FE

### FURTHER EDUCATION QUESTIONNAIRE - DYSLEXIA

*ALL INFORMATION WILL BE TREATED WITH THE STRICTEST CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY*

For each question please **tick** all applicable responses. Thank you.

1. Is there a policy for dyslexia support?    Yes     No

If 'Yes', please enclose a copy

2. Who refers the learners with dyslexia?

Schools     Tutors     Self-declaration     Parents     Other

(Please specify)

3. How does the college initially identify learners with dyslexia?

Application form     Interview/Questionnaire during registration

Individual tutor interview     Computer screening Test

Paper screening Test     Other  (Please specify)

4. What screening process is in place for learners who have self-declared as having dyslexia or have been referred by tutors?

Paper Screening Test     Computer screening     Initial Interview

Other  (Please specify)

5. How are learners selected for specialist support?

Full time learners     Part-time learners     Course followed

Severity of need     First come first served basis

Other (Please specify)

6. What issues affect the provision of support and to what extent?

(Please circle the rating for impact on support)

- |                        |                          |      |        |     |
|------------------------|--------------------------|------|--------|-----|
| Location of courses    | <input type="checkbox"/> | high | medium | low |
| Staff shortages        | <input type="checkbox"/> | high | medium | low |
| Other (Please specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> | high | medium | low |

7. What services are currently provided for learners with dyslexia?

- Exam Access Arrangements  Diagnostic Assessment   
Advisory Service

Support in lectures: specialist tutor  Key Skills tutor   
learning support assistant

Specialist tuition by a specialist tutor:

- regular individual support  regular small group support   
occasional individual support  occasional small group support

Tuition by a Key Skills tutor:

- regular individual support  regular small group support   
occasional individual support  occasional small group support

Technical support:

- wordprocessor  computer  dictaphone  spellchecker   
specialist software  other  (please specify)

Drop in Sessions  Study Skills Sessions

Dyslexia support group  Other services  (please specify)

8. Are any specific approaches/methods of teaching/learning used?

Yes  No

If 'Yes', please specify

9. How do you assess progress of individual learners?

10. Which assessments are used?

Please give brief details of your objective in using each assessment

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11. How do you evaluate the provision for learners with dyslexia?

12. Numbers of learners with dyslexia and provision accessed: 2006/7

	<b>Approximate number of learners</b>
Total intake of all learners in the college 2006/7	
Learners with dyslexia who self-declared at registration	No. % of Total intake
Learners with dyslexia referred by tutors	
Learners screened for dyslexia	
Initial interviews conducted by the Dyslexia Team	
<u>Exam Access Arrangements</u> Learners tested by the Dyslexia Team	
<u>Full diagnostic assessments/reports</u> Specialist Dyslexia Tutors ----- Educational Psychologist	-----
Learners who received 1-1 tuition from specialist dyslexia tutors	
Learners who received small group support	
Other support (Please specify)	
Total learners with dyslexia supported	

13. Do you have a specialist team of dyslexia tutors? Yes  No

14. How many specialist tutors do you employ? Full time equivalent

15. What specialist qualifications do these dyslexia tutors have?

In each box, please indicate how many tutors have each specified qualification

Certificate in Specific learning Difficulties

Diploma in Specific Learning Difficulties

Higher Degree

Other  (Please specify)

16. How many learner contact hours are required from the specialist tutors?

Weekly

Annually

17. What college department is the dyslexia team part of?

18. Does the specialist dyslexia team provide training to other college staff?

Yes  No

19. If so please enclose details of training provided in the past academic year by the dyslexia team

20. Have the dyslexia team collaborated with other agencies to provide support for learners? Yes  No

If yes, which agencies?

Local Authority  Employers  Training providers

Others (Please specify)

21. Does the dyslexia team have a resource centre? Yes  No

22. How many teaching/assessment rooms do the dyslexia team have available?

23. What do you consider to be the barriers to effective practice?

24. Please list factors which you consider would help you be/become a more effective practitioner

Please feel free to add further comments

**All information will be treated with the strictest confidentiality and anonymity**

I would be grateful for your permission to contact you should I require any further clarification Yes  No

Contact name:

Position:

Telephone number:

Ext:

E-mail address:

Name of College:

Address:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require help with questions.

E-mail:

Please return in the envelope provided to:  
Barbara Chiappe (Address provided)

## Appendix 2 Letter to principals

E-mail

Address

Date

Name

The Principal

Name of College

Address

Dear Principal (name)

I am a research student studying for a Doctor of Education Degree at the University of Leeds supervised by Susan Pearson ([S.E.Pearson@education.leeds.ac.uk](mailto:S.E.Pearson@education.leeds.ac.uk)) and Professor David Sugden ([d.a.sugden@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:d.a.sugden@leeds.ac.uk)) in the School of Education. I am conducting research into the provision in General Further Education Colleges for learners with dyslexia. I have focused my research on the Yorkshire and Humberside region. My methodology includes a questionnaire, a sample copy of which is enclosed. At this stage I am asking for your permission to use your college in this initial part of my research. All information will be treated with the strictest of confidence and anonymity will be preserved. Colleges can withdraw at any point during the research. I shall follow up the questionnaire with telephone interviews with a few colleges. I shall then approach a selected group of colleges in order to conduct a semi-structured interview with a specialist tutor and a focus group interview with a small group of learners with dyslexia.

At the end of the research I am planning to develop, in collaboration with colleges, a model of working, which will provide a useful guide for a way forward. A summary of the research report will be sent to all participating colleges. This will contain details of the present position in colleges in Yorkshire and Humberside, based on the data gathered from tutors and learners. It will also include suggestions for improvements that would make provision more effective. I would be grateful for your permission to conduct this research at your college. If, at any point, you would like to have further clarification please do not hesitate to get back to me. I enclose my e-mail address. I would welcome your reply by *Date*.

Yours faithfully

Barbara Chiappe

✂-----

I give my permission to use \_\_\_\_\_ College in this research

Please direct communication to \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ (Principal) Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix 3 Focus group interview questions/prompts**

(First page only)

### **Introduction**

Thank the students for agreeing to participate in the research. Introduce myself and the young researcher and explain the research once more, the purpose, benefits and consequences. Answer any questions or queries that they may have. Ask for their permission again to conduct the research. Tell them that they can withdraw at any time. The young researcher will conduct the interview. They will start by disclosing themselves, getting to know the names of the students and making them feel comfortable and at ease.

### **Identification of learners**

**Can you talk about your first feelings when you started college?**

#### **Prompts**

- How did you feel about disclosing you dyslexia during application/registration?
- How could the disclosure process be improved?

### **Provision**

#### Screening

- Did the screening process make you more aware of your difficulties and strengths?

#### Support

**What are your views about the support provided for learners with dyslexia?**

#### **Prompts**

- Do you have access to one-one support?
- Is the support you are receiving meeting your needs?
- Is the provision of support flexible?
- How could it be improved?
- What other kind of support would you like to see in place?

### **Staff**

**Who supports learners with dyslexia?**

#### **Prompts**

- Have you access to specialist dyslexia tutors?
- Do you make use of dyslexia support staff in lessons?
- Are your personal/subject tutors aware of your needs?
- If not, would you like them to be?
- How would this help you?

### **Teaching**

**How does specialist support or teaching help you?**

**Can you talk about any specific teaching methods used?**

#### **Prompts**

- Are the teaching methods used helpful?
- Do you use any specific programmes?
- What do you think of these?
- How could teaching methods be improved?

**What skills do adult learners with dyslexia need to develop?**

## Appendix 4 Qualifications, Levels and meanings

Compiled from: The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)(QAA 2008); SASC Guidelines (2012); SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines (DfES 2005b); BDA (2013); Dyslexia Action (2013); PATOSS (2013)

Qualification	Level	Meaning
Practising Certificate in SpLD Assessment - PATOSS, Dyslexia Action, The Dyslexia Guild		Enables the holder to carry out diagnostic assessments and assessments for Access Arrangements for examinations. Updated every 3 years - evidence of CPD.
Accreditation of Prior Learning/ Accreditation of Prior Experience (APL/APE) (APEL)		For individuals who do not hold membership of a relevant professional body and who do not hold one of the approved qualifications
Membership of Professional Body - BPS, PATOSS, AMBDA		Requirement for Practising Certificate. British Psychological Society (BPS); Professional Association of Teachers of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties (PATOSS); Associate Membership of the British Dyslexia Association (AMBDA)
Approved qualification as a psychologist	8	
Higher Degree (Master's)	7	
Postgraduate Diploma in SpLDs - OCR/RSA, Dyslexia Action, LLU+	7	Enables the holder to teach and assess individuals with Dyslexia /SpLDs - Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR/RSA); Dyslexia Action; London South Bank University (LLU+)
OCR Diploma in Teaching and Assessing Learners with Dyslexia/SpLDs (AMBDA)	7	Enables the holder to teach and assess learners with Dyslexia /SpLDs
Postgraduate Diploma - Assessment for SpLD (Dyslexia) (AMBDA)	7	
Postgraduate Diploma in Dyslexia and Literacy (Dyslexia Action)	7	Enables holder to teach and assess individuals with Dyslexia/SpLDs
Certificate of Psychometric Testing, Assessment and Access Arrangements (CCET) (Dyslexia Action)	7	Qualifies holder to write access arrangements for public examinations
Certificate of Competence in Educational Testing (CCET) (Dyslexia Action)	7	Qualifies holder to write access arrangements for public examinations
Postgraduate Certificate in SpLDs	7	
Postgraduate Certificate in Structured Teaching Intervention for Dyslexia and Literacy (Dyslexia Action)	7	Develops understanding of teaching and assessing learners with Dyslexia/SpLDs
Postgraduate Certificate in Assessment for Dyslexia and Literacy (Dyslexia Action)	7	Develops understanding of assessment of learners with Dyslexia/SpLDs
Approved Teacher Status (ATS) Approved Practitioner Status (APS) (BDA)	7	ATS - for those with QTS (BDA) APS - for those without QTS (BDA)
Postgraduate Certificate - Teaching Adult Dyslexic Learners in HE & FE (ATS)	7	Qualified to teach learners with Dyslexia in HE & FE
Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)	7	
First Degree - Bachelor Degree	6	
OCR Diploma - Teaching Learners with Dyslexia/SpLD (ATS)	5	Qualifies holder to teach learners with Dyslexia
Certificate in SpLDs	5	BDA – Qualifies holder to offer learning support for learners with SpLDs and carry out screening. Can lead to APS

**Inclusive Support**

**Institutional Support** ←

*More at specialist support level mainly institutional*

	In place	Comment
College services support learners		
Initial learner needs identified - resources, services		
Transition planning: HE, employment		
Accommodation - Quiet areas for study		
Resources available to lend - cross-college resource centre/library		
Coloured overlays available		
Dyslexia friendly software on all college computers e.g. Texthelp		
Technological support: Wordprocessors, Laptops, computers, spellcheckers, Dictaphones, reading pens, Personalised Pen drives, Specialist software		
Training on use of technology and software		
Tests available for diagnostic assessments		
Diagnostic testing by Educ.Psychologists		
Dyslexia-friendly exams		
Review and evaluation of support - learner		
Dyslexia awareness training for services		
<b>Stage</b>		

**Stages:** 4 - No/very few criteria met (Focusing)  
 3 - Some criteria met (Developing) 2 - Many criteria met (Establishing)  
 1 - Most/all criteria met (Enhancing)

**Model of Support** Bottom left hand quadrant

→ **Personalised Support**

*More at specialist support level mainly personalised*

	In place	Comment
Qualified specialist tutors employed		
Variety of support provided - flexible		
Individual Initial interview		
Specialised screening		
Diagnostic assessment by specialists		
Exam access reports by specialists		
Variety of dyslexia-specific, multisensory teaching methods		
Learner well-being considered		
Model of self-empowerment, metacognition		
One-to-one tuition		
Small group support		
Advisory service		
Quiet, confidential accommodation, individual teaching and testing rooms		
Dyslexia resource centre		
Wide range of specialist resources		
Appropriate records kept		
Regular reviews of progress		
Evaluation of support		
Staff awareness training by dyslexia tutors		
<b>Stage</b>		

**KEY:** F - Fully in place P - Partly in place

**Specialist Support**

Bottom right hand quadrant

**Appendix 5 Analytic framework checklist**

College

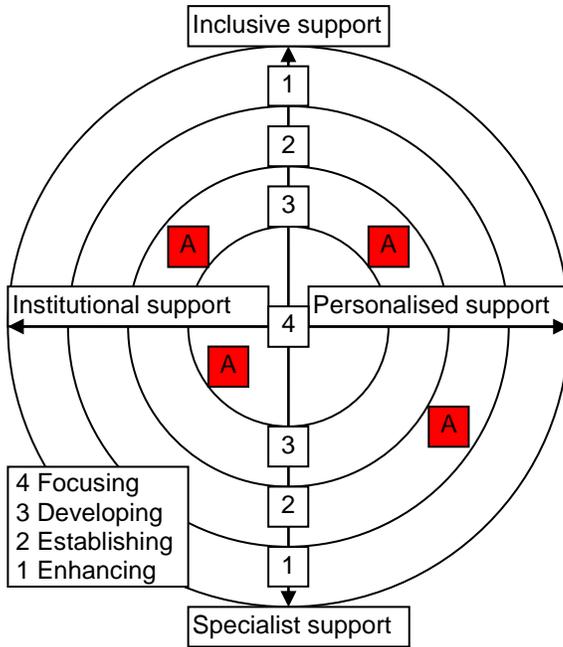
<b>Model of support</b> <i>Bottom right hand quadrant (3<sup>rd</sup>) More at specialist support level mainly personalised</i>	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
<b>Specialist support</b> - Qualified specialist tutors employed		✓F												
Variety of support provided - flexible	✓F	✓F		✓F	✓P	✓F	✓F		✓F	✓P	✓F	✓F	✓F	✓P
<b>Identification</b> - Individual Initial interview	✓F		✓F	✓F		✓F								
Specialised screening	✓F	✓P	✓P	✓P	✓F									
<b>Assessment</b> - Diagnostic assessment by specialists		✓F		✓P	✓F	✓F	✓P		✓F	✓P	✓F	✓F	✓F	✓F
Exam access reports by specialists		✓F		✓F		✓F	✓F	✓F	✓F	✓P	✓F	✓F	✓F	✓F
<b>Teaching and learning</b> - Variety of dyslexia-specific, multisensory teaching methods	✓P	✓F	✓F		✓F	✓F	✓F	✓P	✓F	✓P	✓F	✓F	✓F	✓F
Learner well-being considered	✓F			✓P		✓P	✓P	✓P		✓P	✓F		✓F	
Model of self-empowerment, metacognition						✓P					✓F		✓F	
One-to-one tuition	✓F	✓P												
Small group support		✓F		✓F	✓F	✓F	✓F				✓F			
Advisory service	✓F	✓F	✓F	✓F	✓P	✓F	✓F			✓F	✓F		✓F	
<b>Accommodation</b> - Quiet, confidential accommodation, individual teaching and testing rooms	✓P	✓F	✓P	✓F	✓P	✓P	✓F	✓P	✓P	✓F	✓P	✓F	✓P	✓P
<b>Resources</b> - Dyslexia resource centre		✓P		✓F	✓P	✓F		✓F				✓F	✓F	
Wide range of specialist resources	✓P			✓P		✓P			✓P		✓P	✓P	✓F	✓F
<b>Review and evaluation</b> - Appropriate records kept	✓F	✓F		✓P	✓F	✓F	✓P	✓P	✓F	✓P	✓P	✓F	✓F	✓P
Regular reviews of progress	✓F													
Evaluation of support	✓F	✓F		✓F	✓F	✓F	✓F			✓F	✓P	✓F	✓F	✓F
<b>Dyslexia awareness</b> - Staff training by dyslexia tutors	✓P	✓P	✓P	✓F	✓F	✓F	✓F	✓P		✓F	✓F	✓P	✓F	✓F
<b>Stage of Development</b>	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	1	2
4 - Focusing (No/very few criteria met)														
3 - Developing (Some criteria met)														
2 - Establishing (Many criteria met)														
1 - Enhancing (Most/all criteria met)														

Key

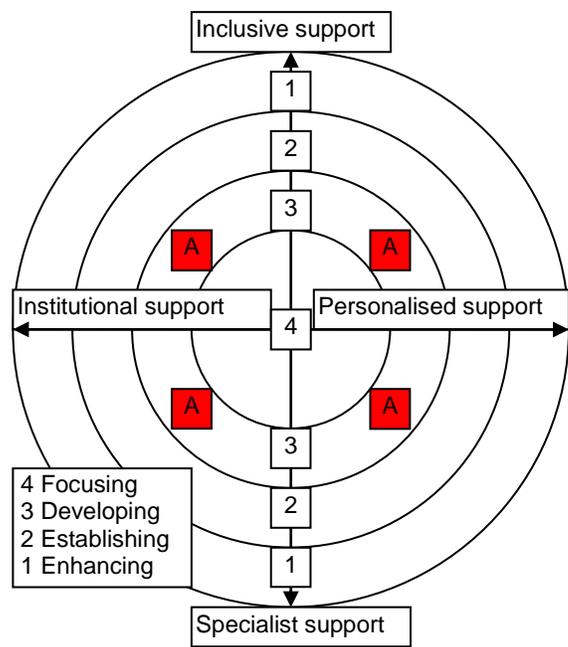
F - Fully in place P - Partly in place (sample page)

**Appendix 6 Results of analysis of support in 14 GFE colleges**

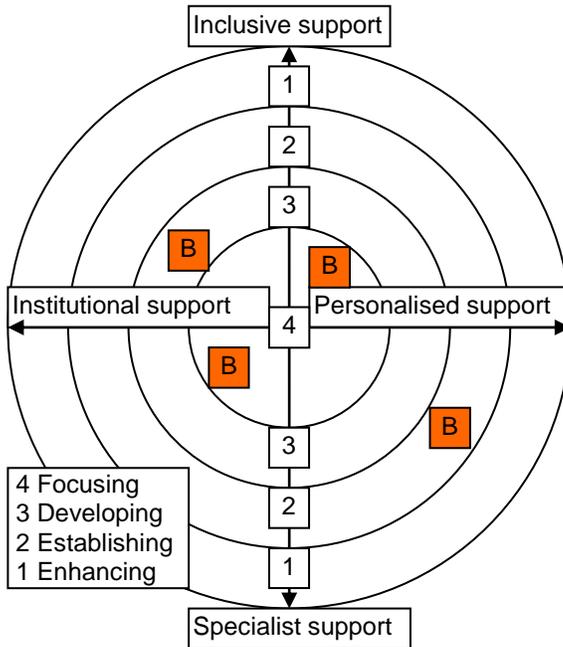
## Appendix 7 Individual overviews of colleges



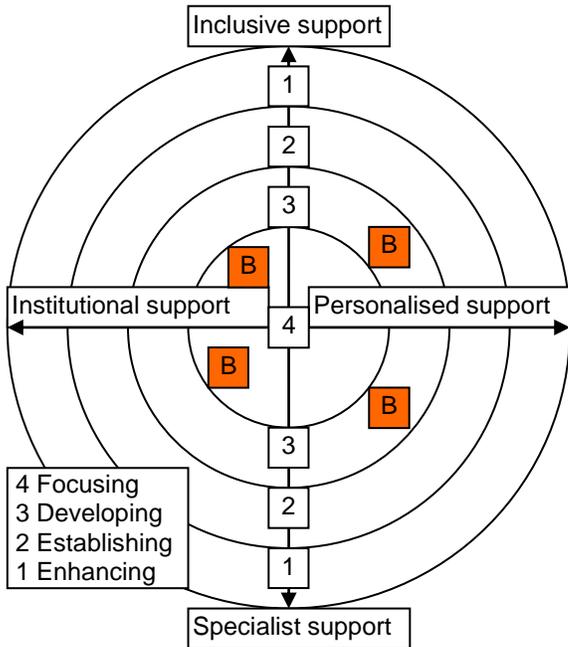
Analysis of Support - Overview College A



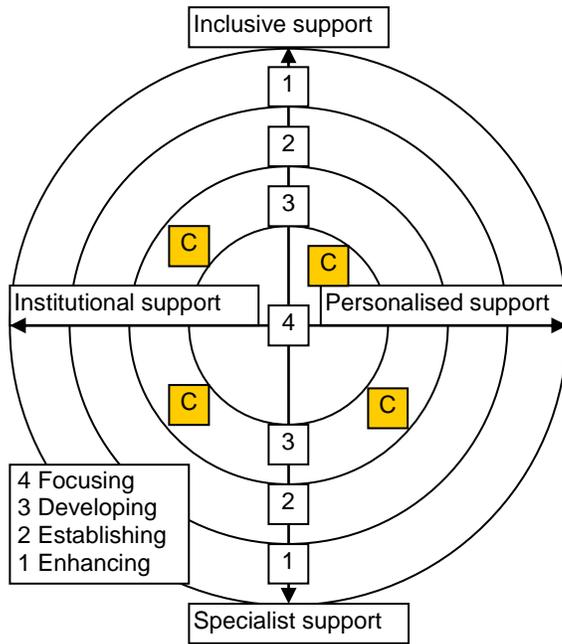
Analysis of communication and collaboration



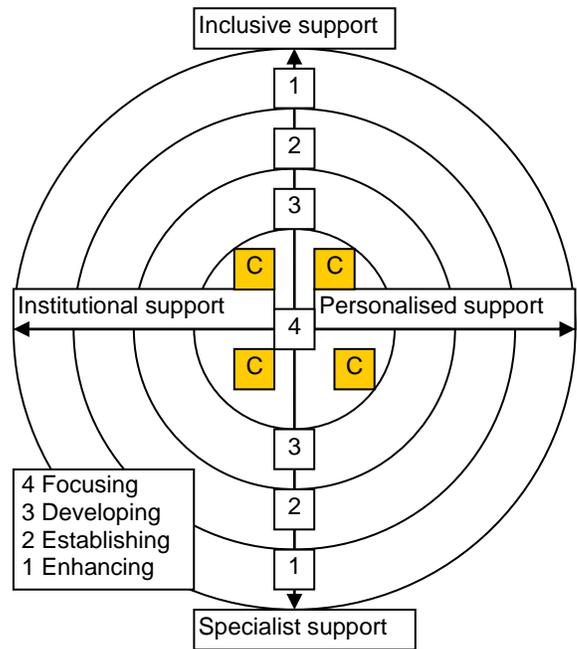
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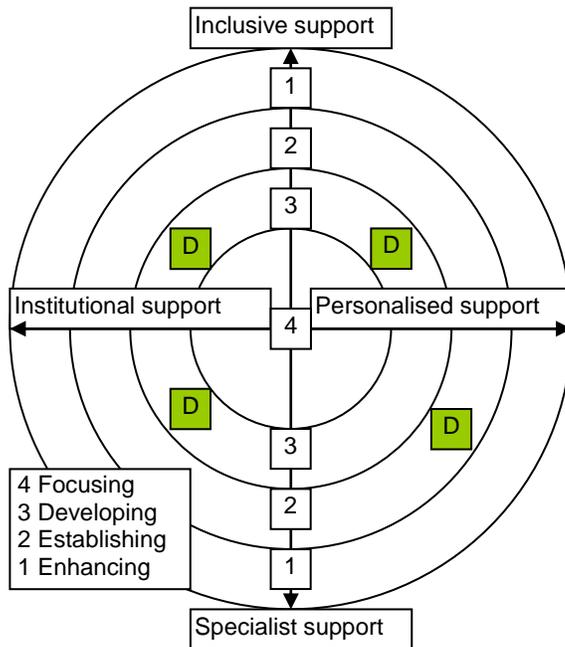
Analysis of communication and collaboration



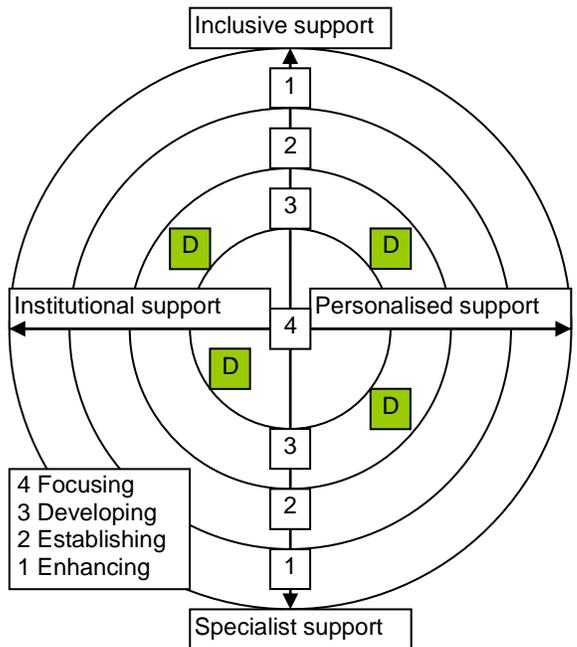
Analysis of Support - Overview College C



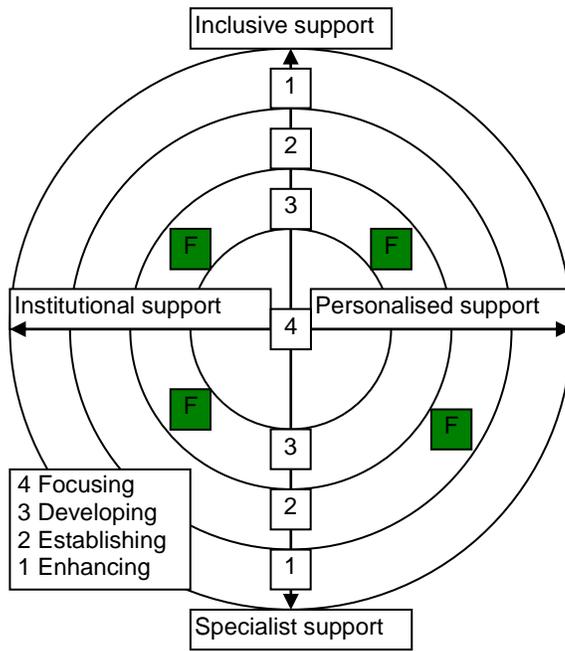
Analysis of communication and collaboration



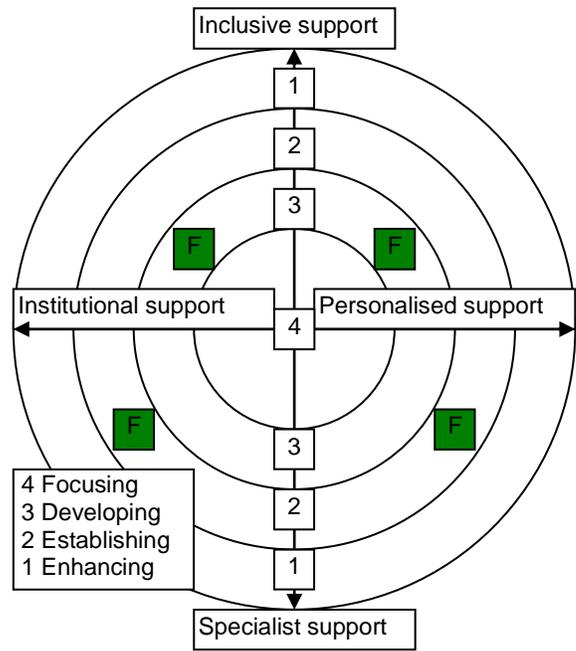
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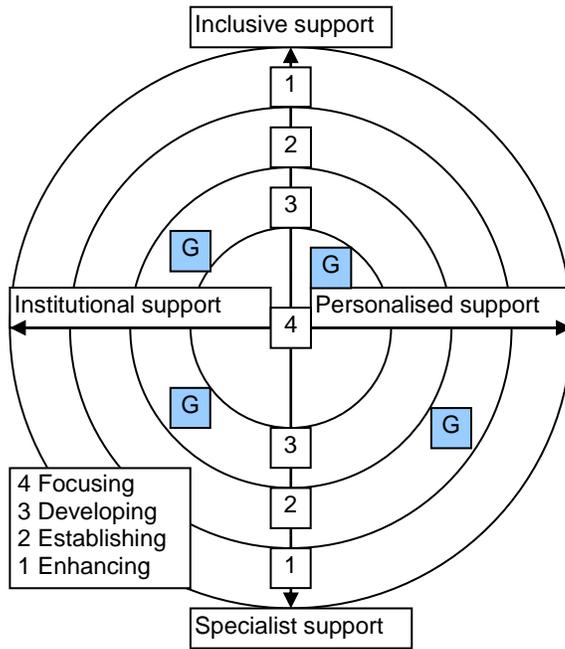
Analysis of communication and collaboration



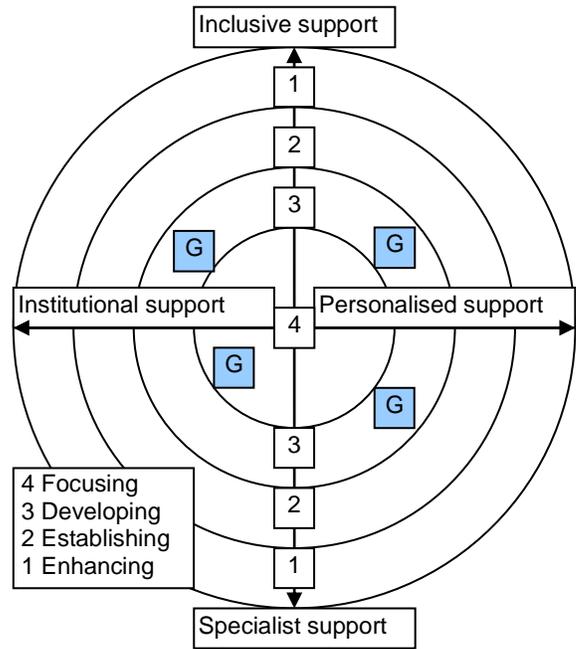
Analysis of Support - Overview College F



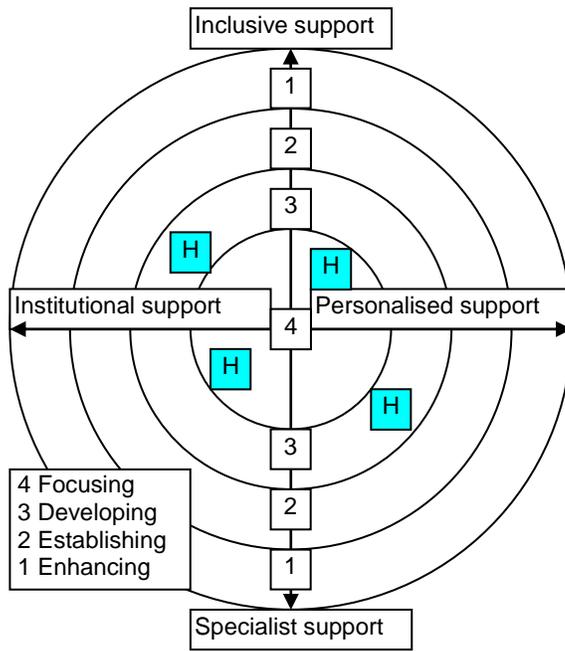
Analysis of communication and collaboration



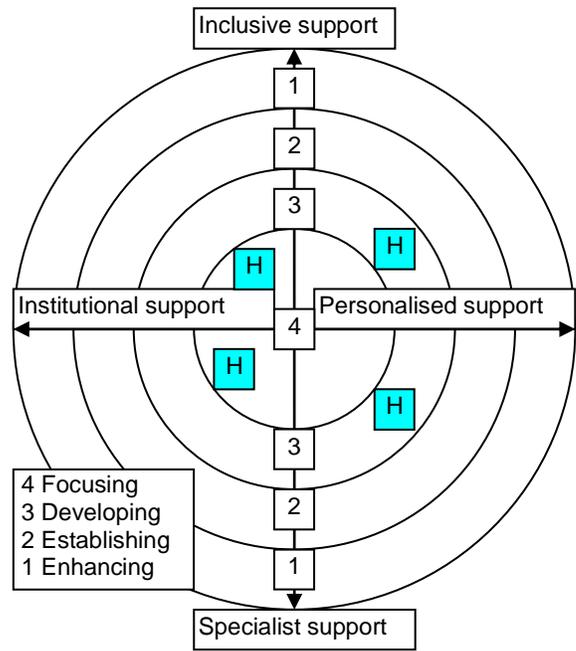
Analysis of Support - Overview College G



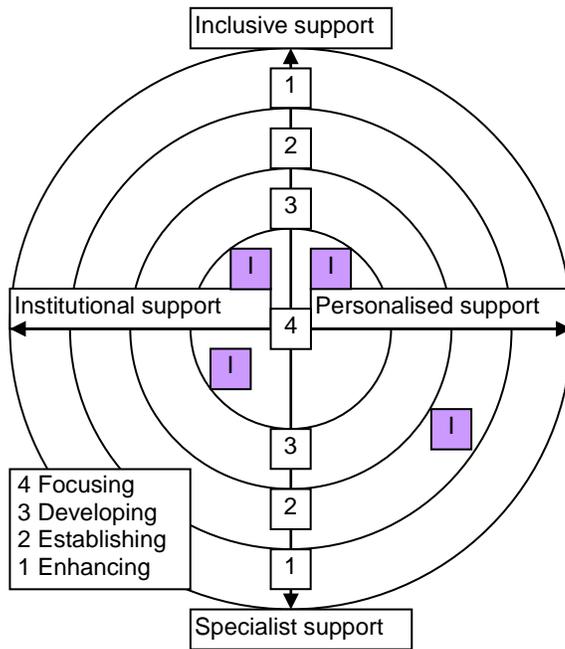
Analysis of communication and collaboration



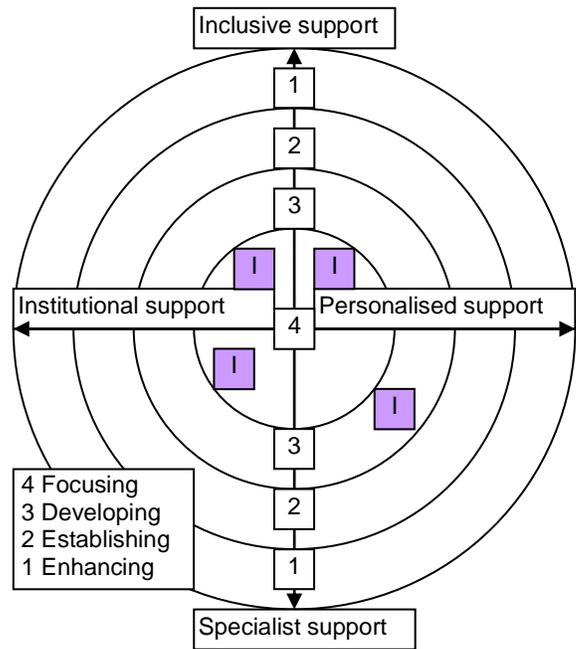
Analysis of Support - Overview College H



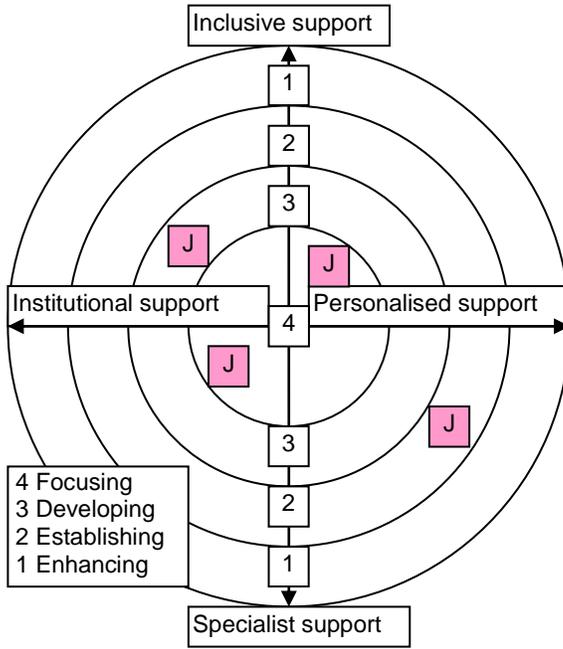
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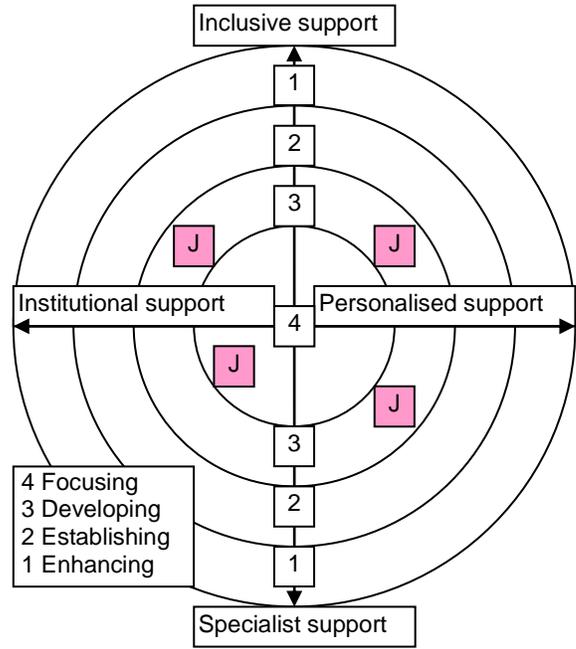
Analysis of Support - Overview College I



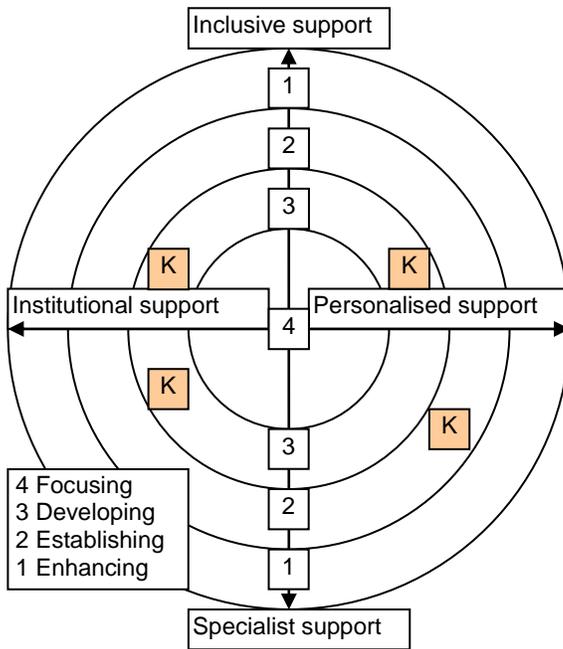
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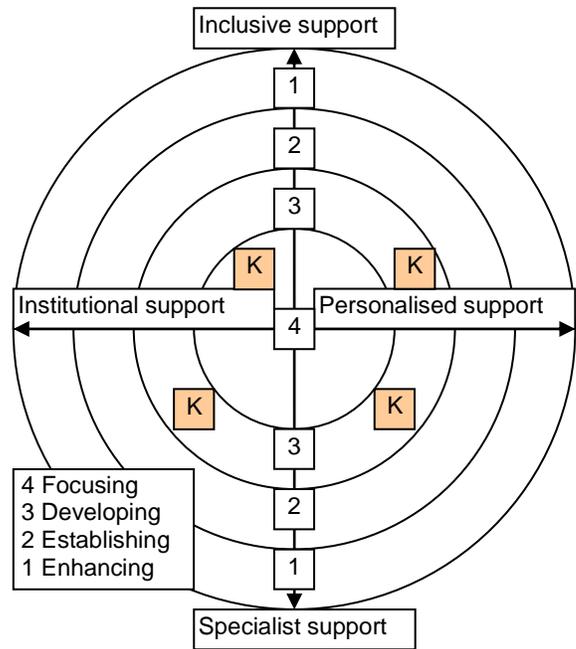
Analysis of Support - Overview College J



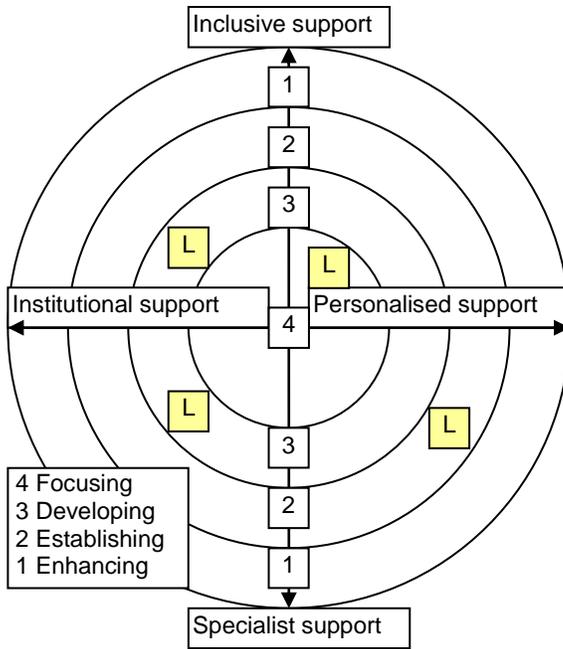
Analysis of communication and collaboration



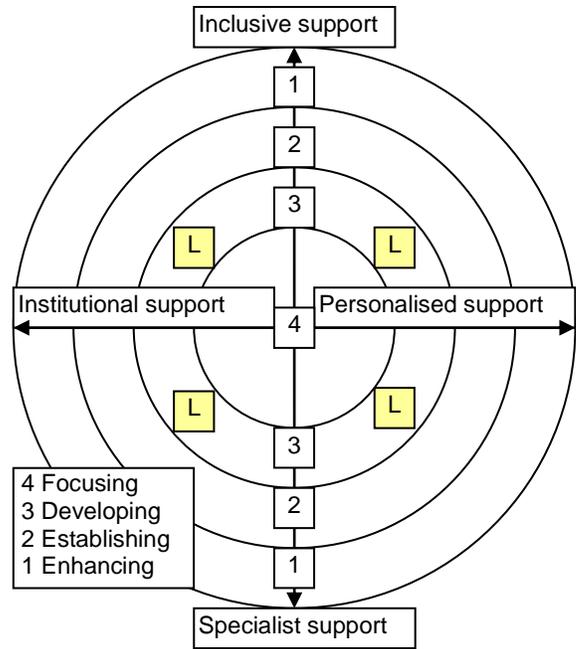
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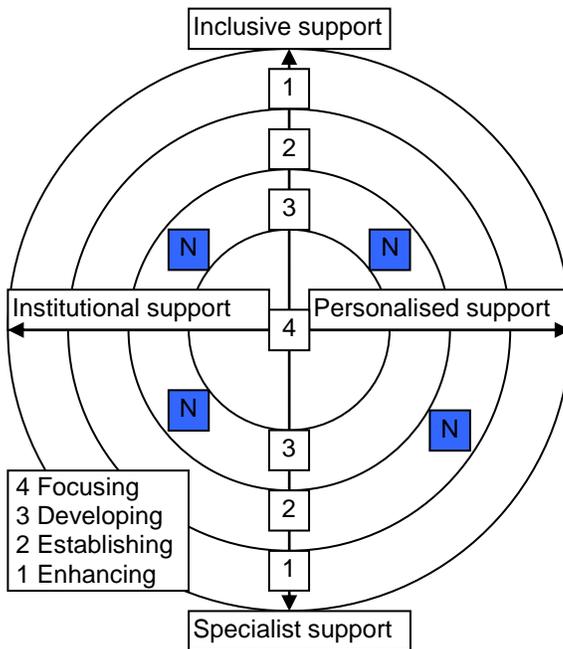
Analysis of communication and collaboration



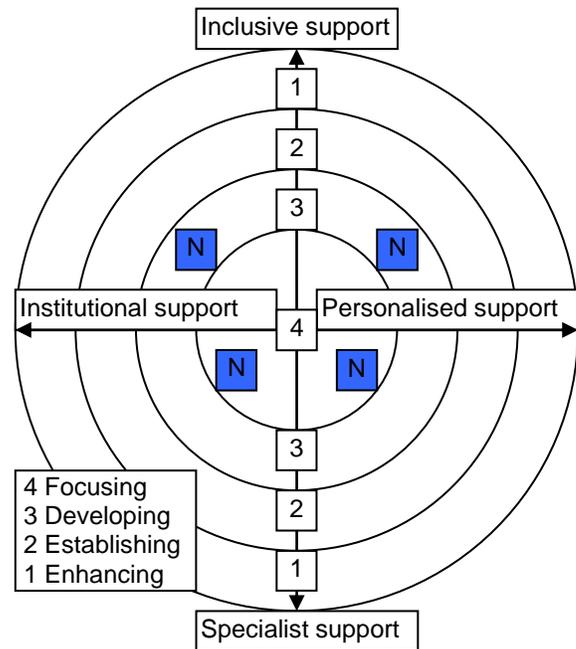
Analysis of Support - Overview College L



Analysis of communication and collaboration



Analysis of Support - Overview College N



Analysis of communication and collaboration