

# Dyscalculia (Adults) Information Sheet

## What is Dyscalculia?

Dyscalculia is a lifelong hidden condition that affects people in different ways, but it is fundamentally to do with how individuals understand and process numbers. Research into dyscalculia is relatively new and rapidly progressing, with a focus on how the brain processes number values and how some people can look at a group of objects and 'just know' how many there are or give a sensible estimate and for other people this is much more difficult.

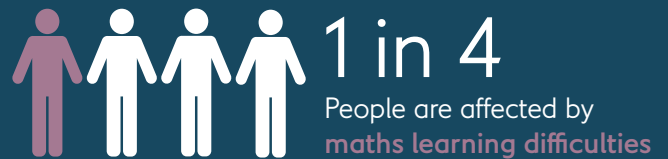
Dyscalculia has a number of definitions which can cause confusion with identification.

**6%**  
POPULATION

It is estimated have this sort of difficulty in one form or another.



As it is related to brain function, it tends to be hereditary and run in families.



Adults with dyscalculia share many characteristics with maths learning difficulties including:

- Retrieving and remembering maths facts such as multiplication facts or times tables
- Understanding maths language
- Remembering how to do calculations.
- Understanding maths concepts
- Reading and writing numbers, place value and decimals.
- Difficulty with telling the time and understanding money.
- Working memory and being able to process information before it is lost.
- Slow processing speed

# Dyscalculia in Adults

Adults with dyscalculia struggle to see relationships between numbers and appreciate their values and magnitudes. This can make everyday tasks very tricky.

## Signs and Indicators

The following may be signs of an adult with dyscalculia:

- Has a history of difficulty with maths and numbers but not with other subjects.
- Can follow a process for a calculation. But can't explain what they are doing or apply the same calculation in a different context.
- Can do geometry or algebra but find arithmetic and numbers hard.
- Struggle to use an analogue clock and understand terms such as "5 past" when the hand is pointing to the number 1.
- Struggle to make sense of big numbers. Matching money to an item does not come automatically.
- Struggle to understand a restaurant bill, or check a till receipt is correct.
- Never check their bank account, and struggle to manage a budget.
- Can't remember pin numbers or telephone numbers.
- Can't work out travel times or distances. Or read timetables.
- Numbers can make them feel sick.

## Assessment and Diagnosis

BDA recommends that an assessment for dyscalculia and maths learning difficulties should be carried out by a Specialist Teacher Assessor with a level 7 qualification in the assessment of dyscalculia or equivalent AMBDA dyscalculia award.

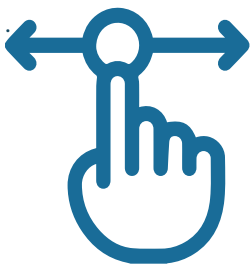
The assessment report should include recommendations for support and intervention which have been selected to address the individual needs of the person. There are some computer programmes to screen for dyscalculia, but these **cannot diagnose dyscalculia**, they can only suggest that someone is showing characteristics similar to dyscalculia.



Most universities and apprenticeships require GCSE maths or equivalent. But with a diagnosis of dyscalculia, they may consider an exemption. This would be at the discretion of the university and may depend upon the course being applied for.

Dyscalculia meets the criteria to be classified as a cognitive impairment and because it can have a substantial and long-term adverse effect on day-to-day activities, it can be a recognised disability under the Equality Act 2010.

The Equality Act prohibits discrimination in the workplace and provides legal protection for employees. Employers have a duty to ensure that they do not discriminate when someone who is disabled would be at a substantial disadvantage because of their disability compared with people who don't share that disability. As dyscalculia is a hidden disability, challenges may not be seen. A formal diagnosis is not required to receive reasonable adjustments, but an individual will need to be able to evidence that they have an impairment that causes a substantial adverse effect on normal day to day activities to be covered by the Equality Act.



#### The sort of adjustments that an employer may make:

- Use of a calculator and digital clock
- Extra time for numerical tasks
- Support from a colleague for certain tasks
- Assistive Technology

## Definition of Dyscalculia

The BDA uses the following definition of dyscalculia which recognises dyscalculia can be a disability under the Equality Act.

Dyscalculia is a specific and persistent difficulty in understanding numbers which can lead to a diverse range of difficulties with mathematics. It will be unexpected in relation to age, level of education and experience and occurs across all ages and abilities.

Mathematics difficulties are best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and they have many causal factors. Dyscalculia falls at one end of the spectrum and will be distinguishable from other maths issues due to the severity of difficulties with number sense, including subitising, symbolic and non-symbolic magnitude comparison, and ordering. It can occur singly but often co-occurs with other specific learning difficulties, mathematics anxiety and medical conditions.

(BDA definition 2019)