Dyslexia: An examination of the experiences and perceptions of dyslexic police officers serving in Dorset Police**.**

It is my intention to undertake research within Dorset Police. The research will take place during a period where Dorset Police and their employees are subject to the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998, and the Equality Act 2010.

Research questions

## How do dyslexic police officers understand the nature of dyslexia and its relationship with the concept of disability?

## What motivates dyslexic police officers to disclose dyslexia; what are the experiences and consequences of disclosure?

## What are the operational challenges for dyslexic police officers?

**Introduction**

The significance 0f dyslexia research should not be seen as just a procedure but as part of the struggle to challenge the oppression they experience in their lives. The Equalities Act (2010) (EA), was an attempt to remove social barriers that prevented disabled people from entering the workplace. Within the EA a disabled person is described as; a person who has a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, the act also places a duty on an employer to make reasonable adjustments.

**The Research Question**

The experiences and perceptions of dyslexic adults in education continue to be an area for academic research, and this research study’s overarching aim will focus on the experiences and perceptions of police officers with dyslexia. The research is significant, in that there appears to be no up to date published research, which has explored the dyslexic-identity and self-concept of dyslexic police officers. There is however, a growing body of evidence in the literature which suggests that dyslexic police officers are being denied access to the support systems and processes (Simpson 2009). Hirst et al. (2004:6), states that many disabled staff in the public sector reportedly held the view that disclosure of a disability had a negative effect on colleagues’ attitudes to staff with hidden disabilities or mental health conditions. The findings of the research and those of the European Human Rights Commission (EHRC) inquiry: Hidden in Plain Sight (2011), records evidence of disability-related discrimination both in terms of the treatment of dyslexic police officers and the provision of police services across England and Wales. The significance of this pattern of systematic discrimination cannot be understated. Therefore the research will offer a unique insight into police officers experiences and perceptions and it is believed to be original in its concept. The area of dyslexia is well documented regarding children and adults but there are gaps in the literature regarding police officers who are dyslexic in the workplace. The research will explore that gap, whilst drawing on such leading authors such as Reid and Kirk (2001) and Fitzibbon and O’Connor (2002).

**Introduction**

The significance 0f dyslexia research should not be seen as just a procedure but as part of the struggle to challenge the oppression they experience in their lives. The Equalities Act (2010) (EA), was an attempt to remove social barriers that prevented disabled people from entering the workplace. Within the EA a disabled person is described as; a person who has a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, the act also places a duty on an employer to make reasonable adjustments.

**The Research Question**

The experiences and perceptions of dyslexic adults in education continue to be an area for academic research, and this research study’s overarching aim will focus on the experiences and perceptions of police officers with dyslexia. The research is significant, in that there appears to be no up to date published research, which has explored the dyslexic-identity and self-concept of dyslexic police officers. There is however, a growing body of evidence in the literature which suggests that dyslexic police officers are being denied access to the support systems and processes (Simpson 2009). Hirst et al. (2004:6), states that many disabled staff in the public sector reportedly held the view that disclosure of a disability had a negative effect on colleagues’ attitudes to staff with hidden disabilities or mental health conditions. The findings of the research and those of the European Human Rights Commission (EHRC) inquiry: Hidden in Plain Sight (2011), records evidence of disability-related discrimination both in terms of the treatment of dyslexic police officers and the provision of police services across England and Wales. The significance of this pattern of systematic discrimination cannot be understated. Therefore the research will offer a unique insight into police officers experiences and perceptions and it is believed to be original in its concept. The area of dyslexia is well documented regarding children and adults but there are gaps in the literature regarding police officers who are dyslexic in the workplace. The research will explore that gap, whilst drawing on such leading authors such as Reid and Kirk (2001) and Fitzibbon and O’Connor (2002).

**Methodology**

Deciding which research method to follow in order to gather data is one of the hardest decisions in terms of research. Knowing that the participants of this study are police officers with dyslexia and the questions asked will involve moments of their working everyday lives, meant that their answers would be lengthy and quite descriptive. A qualitative research approach therefore seems the appropriate method, as it can be focused on views and beliefs. As Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2) state:

‘Qualitative research is multi-method in its focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them ’Qualitative researchers are interested in meaning.

The research will be conducted using a positivist epistemological stance in that all genuine knowledge is based on sense experience and can only be advanced by means of observation and experiment and …”involves a definite view of social scientists as analysts or interpreters of their subject matter” . Cohen, L. Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2005: 8-9). In the context of the research, this relates to the experiences and perceptions of a sample of operational dyslexic police officers.

Quantitative researchers, on the other hand, aggregate large numbers of people without communicating face to face with them (Janesick, 1994). Quantitative data are enumerated as variable values and then statistically tested (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993, in Vierra, Pollock and Golez, 1998:120), and therefore would not be appropriate as a method for the research.

**Analysis**

The research will engage in primary discourse analysis in understanding how dyslexic police officers navigate the difference between being dyslexic and dyslexia in the workplace. Research will theorise how police organisations silence and foreclose the possibilities of group identity as according to (Farmer, Riddick and Sterling, 2002). The personal independence comes with its toll as they [dyslectics] have to cope with working in a new environment. The research question will be answered or not, directly from the participants own voices, with the data collated by means of questionnaires and semi structured interviews, using an action research methodology. All participants will be accessed through their individual HR / Diversity Departments by means of an invitation participant request, with ethical consideration, such as those recommended by the; British Educational Research Association. (BERA). Ethical Guidelines For Educational Research (2018).

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

The research will conclude with a review of the research process which will include possible recommendations.

References:

British Educational Research Association [BERA] (2018)*Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research*, fourth edition, London.https://www.bera.ac.uk/researchers-resources/publications/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018

Cohen. L, Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2005). *Research Methods in Education*. (5th ed). London: Rutledge Falmer.

Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (1994) (eds.). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Farmer, M., Riddick, B. & Sterling, C. (2002) *Dyslexia and Inclusion. Assessment & Support in Higher Education* London: Whurr.

Fitzgibbon, G. & O’Connor, B. (2002) *Adult Dyslexia: A Guide for the Workplace*.

Chichester: Wiley.

Hirst, M. Thornton, P. Dearey, M and Maynard-Campbell, S. (2004) *The Employment of Disabled People in the Public Sector: A Review of Data and Literature*. London: Disability Rights Commission.

Janesick, V.J. (1994). *The Dance of Qualitative Research Design: Metaphor, Methodolatry, and Meaning.* In Denzin, N.K. & Licoln, Y.S. (Eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research.* Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

LeCompte, M. D., & Preissle, J. (1993). *Ethnography and Qualitative Design in Educational Research* (2nd ed.). New York Academic Press.

Reid, G. & Kirk, J. (2001) *Dyslexia in Adults: Education and Employment.* Chichester: Wiley.

Vierra, A., Pollock, J., & Golez, F. (1998). *Reading Educational Research* (3rd ed.). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Simpson, A. (2009) *Disability Discrimination in the Police: Employment Tribunal Decisions*. [on-line] <https://www.xperthr.co.uk/law-reports/disability-discrimination-in-the-police-employment-tribunal-decisions/96590/> (accessed 22/06/2019)