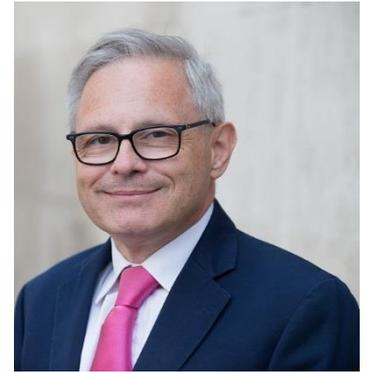


Simon, 57 years old from London



### **How does Dyspraxia affect you?**

I am dyslexic as well as dyspraxic. It is difficult to tell the difference between the two conditions. I have great difficulty in understanding some visual information – particularly maps. I also have difficulty with fine motor movements, and find writing by hand almost impossible.

### **When were you diagnosed?**

Although I experienced considerable problems during my school years, and was referred to an educational psychologist, I was only formally diagnosed with dyspraxia in my 30s.

### **What is your experience of seeking a diagnosis as an adult?**

I worked in the civil service. It took a lot of persuasion but, eventually, my HR department paid for a referral and diagnosis.

### **What does having a diagnosis means to you?**

Being diagnosed means I understand why there are some things I find challenging. It has changed my life. At school, I was frequently mocked by teachers for my bad handwriting – now I know it is because of dyspraxia. After diagnosis, I knew I wasn't simply stupid – it dramatically changed my estimation of myself.

### **Have you received any support? (if yes, please include brief details)**

Yes. I was diagnosed shortly before undergoing a promotion Assessment Centre in the civil service (several days of tests and exercises), and before taking an exam with the Open University. I was able to have more time as a reasonable adjustment for both -and allowed to type my answers. I would otherwise have had to handwrite my answers in the exam – which would almost certainly have resulted in my failing. In fact, I got the promotion, and graduated from the Open University with a 1<sup>st</sup> Class Honours degree and, subsequently, a Master's. I left school at 16 with just one O level and joined the civil service as the most junior grade. When I took early retirement three years ago, after 38 years' service, I was a senior civil servant.

### **What are the most difficult aspects of living with dyspraxia?**

I find many physical tasks difficult – dressing, tying shoe laces, basically anything physical. Although I rely heavily on technology (such as a mobile phone and laptop), I often find things very difficult to do. I had to give up driving because I couldn't judge distances. I find complex information difficult to deal with. I am semi-retired, having left the civil service three years ago and am now a self-employed consultant. Whilst I was in the civil service, I had a number of managers who refused to accept that dyspraxia existed (even after I had been diagnosed) and fought aggressively against "reasonable adjustments"

suggested by companies engaged to advise by my HR department. I often felt severely disadvantaged as a result – even during the time I was a senior civil servant.

### **How would you like to see things change for adults with dyspraxia?**

I'd like there to be more awareness and more acceptance. Despite the Equality Act (and people often don't accept dyspraxia as being covered by the Act) far too much depends on the attitude and behaviour of individual managers, and HR staff. DWP, too, need to be fully aware of the implications of dyspraxia – particularly those staff or contractors assessing PIP applications

### **Please add any additional information you feel would be relevant to our campaign here**

As a former senior civil servant, I wonder if I could help the Dyspraxia Foundation. I previously acted as an Ambassador for Dyslexia Action (now, sadly, defunct). I am used to working at board level in the civil service, and briefing Ministers.