

# SASC CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT for 2022-3

## Welcome to this 2023 AGM.

Once again I would like to begin by reviewing who we are and what we do. SASC and its subcommittees are a collaborative group of professionals working in a similar field to agree standards of practice. No single organisation or individual dominates. SASC represents multiple professional organisations and training organisations across the UK and includes representatives from these organisations as well as expert independent assessors on its decision-making Board. Members of the SASC board, STEC and other subcommittees contribute their time voluntarily.

STEC, the SASC Test Evaluation Committee, a key sub-committee, reviews and pilots tests, produces guidance on the standardisation, reliability, validity, advantages and disadvantages of those tests, and consults with publishers, academics and practitioners:

- To ensure that use and selection of tests is evidence based and follows best practice.
- To promote quality and consistency in assessment across all age groups.

Julia Kender, our STEC vice-chair, will present the STEC annual report later in this meeting.

SASC and STEC strive to bring about change through consensus. Decisions and guidance go through a consultation process with the organisations involved in SASC and where possible with a wider audience of individual practitioners, academics and tutors.

SASC's work has involved **four key elements**:

- **First**, to maintain a publicly accessible **list of qualified assessors**.
- **Second, to identify a selection of tests** that can be used by appropriately trained and qualified professionals, **alongside guidelines for practice and training**.
- **Third**, to propose **standards and a code of practice** for all those involved in assessments including the production of **reports in an agreed and accessible format**.
- As one of the DfES' Working Group's 'overall aims' was to establish evidential requirements that (organisations) could confidently regard as providing a reliable professional judgement that a student has a SpLD(s),
- the **fourth** area of work was to support **the implementation of updated guidance around the assessment of SpLDs**, providing advice about identifying, assessing and referring students with any of the named SpLDs.

Joining the board this year are Chivonne Preston as BDA representative and Jane Miller as ADSHE representative. Jane Miller replaces Jane Warren who we thank for her significant contributions in advising, presenting, revising guidance and feeding into SASC consultations, activities and initiatives. Also standing down from the board is Nichola James who we thank for her positive contributions and liaison with the BPS. The thirteen (13) current directors and 3 observers are named at the end of this report.

SASC Board members attend at least four Board meetings a year and also contribute to the work of the Board in a number of other ways. A cross-standardisation sub-committee, comprised of representatives from the three main accreditation bodies, meets regularly to set standards for APC applications and renewals and to discuss queries arising. We have also initiated regular monthly meetings to review and respond to queries received.

Our Conference theme this year is Collaboration and Communication. SASC continues its core remit by working in a highly collegiate way to ensure that best assessment practice is available and maintained.

Set out as goals from last year's AGM were

- To prepare a SASC response to SEND Green Paper.... by July 2022
- To hold a series of structured discussions with practitioners and stakeholders regarding the policy implications of the literacy and dyslexia consultation paper by December 2022.
- To take forward further liaison with BPS working groups. September-December 2022
- To redraft the consultation paper, re-wording the proposed definition and diagnostic criteria for dyslexia. November 2022 - April 2023
- To launch the new SASC website making it more accessible with information easier to find.
- To continue to review current guidances

ALSO, To consider:

1. A protocol for a shorter report format for assessors carrying out formative/interim assessments in schools.
2. A protocol for a shorter report format for an optional post-16 re-assessment.
3. Guidance for independent assessors on opportunities for establishing closer links with schools.

### *Response to Green Paper*

In July 2022 SASC responded to the government's Green Paper. This response is available to download from the SASC website. We felt strongly that, as the standard setting body in this field, we were ideally placed to play a prominent and key role in advising on proposed changes in National Standards for special educational needs, with particular consideration of children with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia. We could advise on typical types and forms of assessment, from screening materials, interim and formative assessments, digital assessment models, to full diagnostic assessment. We have expertise in the types of interventions and support that can assist a learner with a specific learning difficulty.

We suggested that:

- There is a need to implement a consistent, equitable, and state-funded assessment and intervention system that addresses the majority of reading difficulties at primary school level. A needs-led system that **also** incorporates a nationally accessible, state-funded pathway to the identification of specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia is required.
- Specialist teachers could be employed or contracted by schools to help coordinate and commission additional support from outside agencies.
- Progressively more specialist assessment and interventions should be implemented for those who require additional and longer-term support in literacy and other key skills acquisition, despite standard interventions.
- Schools should comprehensively assess any child still not showing signs of significant age-related progress in literacy acquisition by 8/9 years old.

The Green Paper proposed national standards to set consistent processes for decision-making on how a child or young person's needs are identified and recorded, and to instruct on how and when an assessment should take place. The KS1 Phonics Screening Check needs to be re-thought, moving it away from a pass/fail test and adding in oral language and listening comprehension elements, to check readiness to read. The outcomes of this diagnostic check could then be used as an early indicator of those children who require additional and immediate intervention. Criteria should be established for onward referral to progressively more specialist assessment and intervention when required.

The purpose of identification should always be focused around refining and improving effective interventions.

The Universal Screener proposed by Professors Joel Talcott and Susan Gathercole and described at our conference this year looks to address some of these areas.

### *SASC Consultation on Literacy and Dyslexia*

In April 2022, our SASC Consultation Paper on *the identification of and effective intervention for literacy difficulties in children and adults. Implications for the assessment of dyslexia*, was published on the SASC website, alongside an invitation to respond to the consultation via an online survey. Results of that survey were reported at our 2022 annual conference.

To advance that work SASC held a series of online discussion sessions to take forward key policy and practice implications of the dyslexia paper. There were three main areas of discussion. ~~Each session was focused on one of these 3 areas~~

- The proposed SASC definition of and diagnostic criteria for the identification of dyslexia.
- Developing a protocol for a shorter/flexible report format for practitioners carrying out assessments in schools, and producing guidance for independent assessors on establishing closer links with schools and understanding the instructional needs of young children struggling with literacy acquisition.
- A protocol for a flexible post-16 report format, including an option to carry out an optional re-assessment, and b) exemplar assessment reports. A good or bad thing?

To take some of this work forward we have initiated a Delphi consensus study which will aim to reach consensus around a definition and identification criteria for dyslexia. This study will be led by Professor Maggie Snowling (Oxford University), Professor Julia Carroll (Coventry University), Paul Thompson (Warwick University) and Lynn Greenwold and Caroline Holden (Chair and Vice-Chair of SASC). 71 academics, practitioners (including psychologists and specialist assessors), representatives from stake-holding organisations and other interested individuals across the UK, Europe and internationally, have been invited to take part. We aim to conclude the study in no longer than six months but hope that this study will represent the best possible UK, European and international consensus statements on these issues.

### *Maths difficulties and dyscalculia guidance*

SASC recently invited specialist assessors, psychologists, course providers and accrediting bodies to explore a number of issues concerning standards in the assessment of maths difficulties / dyscalculia. Following discussions, the SASC Board has decided on the following actions:

1. To establish a working group, chaired by Janet Goring, a member of STEC who has considerable expertise and interest in this area, to update the current SASC guidance on assessing for maths difficulties and dyscalculia in the light of the need to
  - include relevant new research,

- consider how literacy and numeracy attainment should be included in report formats,
  - update the STEC Lists of Approved Tests, and
  - consider if remote assessment via online platform is a valid and reliable tool for the identification of maths difficulties/dyscalculia.
2. Secondly we aim to engage all relevant SpLD course providers and accrediting bodies, as a matter of some urgency, to discuss how best to resolve the following issues:
- The SASC guidance on dyscalculia states that diagnostic assessment of difficulties in mathematics should form part of a holistic assessment. However, most current Level 7 courses focus more on literacy and dyslexia than on maths/dyscalculia. There may not be sufficient assessors with specialist knowledge to undertake assessments that identify maths difficulties and dyscalculia.
  - There is a growing demand for assessments which can examine maths difficulties/the possibility of dyscalculia.
  - Level 7 post-graduate diploma courses in dyslexia or dyscalculia are available. How viable would it be to create Universal Level 7 specialist teacher/assessor SpLD courses, with modules explicitly and equally covering attainment areas of maths and literacy? Advice regarding CPD and additional qualification and training requirements would best serve assessors and their clients.

We continue to update guidance in response to questions received and to address updates on SASC work, updated assessment guidance and new developments. These are announced on the website and circulated to SASC members by email. Topics addressed during the past year included:

- Updated test lists issued in June 2022
- Our response to the Green Paper in July 2022
- Staying professional on social media guidance August 2022
- Updated guidance on additional tests reviewed by STEC to support information on the test lists
- Updates on the literacy and dyslexia consultation
- Updates on other SASC initiatives

#### **Planned work for 2023-2024**

- To update current SASC guidance on assessing for maths difficulties and dyscalculia -September 2023
- To establish ongoing opportunities to meet with course leaders and accrediting bodies to discuss areas of mutual interest, including training for dyscalculia assessment.

- To establish liaison between the BPS's Committee for test standards and STEC regarding access to tests.
- To complete the Delphi consensus study to reach a consensus around a definition and identification criteria for dyslexia.
- To produce further guidance for assessors on a definition and identification criteria for dyslexia by autumn 2023
- To launch new SASC website making more accessible with information easier to find.
- To continue to review current guidances.

We will continue to consider:

4. A protocol for a shorter report format for assessors carrying out formative/interim assessments in schools.
5. A protocol for a shorter report format for an optional post-16 re-assessment.
6. Guidance for independent assessors on opportunities for establishing closer links with schools.
7. Guidance on how to characterise profiles that do not meet the diagnostic criteria for dyslexia.

I would like to thank all members of the SASC board, STEC and our Cross-Standardisation committee as well as all the advisors who have contributed to our consultations and policy development. They have given so generously of their time, and expertise; and also you, our members, who through your communications and collaboration help develop policy and bring further issues to be explored. Working together we strengthen guidance and standards in assessment practice and training.

Once again, I want to invite others to join in supporting our consultations and developing practice. Please write to us with your interests.

Directors	Institution Represented (or Affiliation)	Term
Lynn Greenwold (Chair)	Independent	2020-2024
Caroline Holden (Acting Vice Chair)	Independent	2022-2026
Julia Kender (Financial Director)	Independent	2020-2024
Sarah Bevan	Patoss	2022-2026
Kate Blundell	Independent	2021-2025
Helen Duncan	Independent	2020-2024
Katherine Kindersley	Independent	2021-2025
Jennifer McDermott	Independent	2022-2026
Rachael McMullen	HADC	2022-2026
Chivonne Preston	BDA	2023-2027
Anna Smith	DA	2022-2026
Mark Turner	Independent	2022-2026
Jane Miller	ADSHE	2023-2027

Observers: Hannah Farndon BPS, Denise Thornton ACHIPP, Lynn Lovell BDA