

CONSULTATIONS AND ASSESSMENTS

CONSULTATIONS

Anyone wishing to arrange an initial 30 to 40 minute consultation, should phone DSF to make an appointment. For individuals who are unable to attend an appointment at the DSF clinic, a telephone consultation can be arranged. Consultations provide an opportunity to discuss: concerns about academic achievement; language development; difficulties with learning; self-esteem issues; further education; or, career prospects. A consultation is generally recommended prior to booking an assessment. If the purpose of a consultation is to discuss a child under 15 years of age there is no need for the child to attend. The purpose of the consultation is to explore available options. It is not possible to make clinical judgements or diagnoses from a consultation alone.

Parents booking a consultation to discuss their child's difficulties will need to send copies of: original unedited samples of work; recent school reports; and any other relevant reports (e.g. psychologist, occupational therapist, speech pathologist, hearing, vision etc). It is important that these documents are sent prior to the consultation to provide sufficient time for the psychologist or speech pathologist to consider the information.

If a telephone consultation has been arranged, these reports must be sent prior to the appointment.

An adult should send in advance a sample of their own writing, a completed biographical information form, and any other evidence that might be relevant to their situation.

ASSESSMENTS

An assessment is generally requested to identify a person's learning strengths and weaknesses, and to ascertain whether an identifiable learning or language disorder exists.

Individuals attending the DSF Clinic for a psycho-educational assessment have usually struggled with one or more of the core academic skill areas (e.g. reading, writing, spelling, mathematics) for an extended period of time. The degree to which they struggle is often unexpected given their apparent capabilities in other areas and the educational opportunities they have been provided with. It is also generally the case that attempts to remediate

the difficulty have not been successful (or at least have been less successful than would have been expected). Those individuals attending the clinic for a speech and language assessment may also be struggling to achieve academically but will also have apparent language-related issues.

All assessments are conducted by a fully registered psychologist, with clinical experience in the field of educational psychology or a fully registered speech pathologist, with experience in speech and language development. All information gathered remains confidential and only appropriate and approved professional assessment tools and methods are used. Most people (including children) find the various assessments tasks quite interesting and generally quite enjoyable.

The questions asked change according to age so that people will not be asked questions that are too challenging. There are usually opportunities to do practice items before each test so that people know what to expect. There is always time, both before and after the assessment, to ask the psychologist or speech pathologist questions.

DSF Clinical Services offers two types of psycho-educational assessment specifically developed to investigate learning strengths and difficulties and a single or extended speech and language assessment.

Functional Assessment of Literacy (FAL)

The Functional Assessment of Literacy examines an individual's reading, spelling and writing skills, in addition to their phonological processing skills, working memory ability and processing speed. A short measure of intellectual ability is also undertaken. This assessment is conducted by a Psychologist.

In most cases, the FAL will provide enough evidence to determine whether a specific learning disability (such as dyslexia or dysgraphia) is evident. (In some situations, further assessment by the psychologist or a DSF speech pathologist may be recommended.)

The FAL is completed in one 2 to 2 ½ hour session. A 10 to 12 page report is provided approximately three weeks after the assessment with details of evidence-based strategies for remediation, and suggestions for accommodation (if warranted), included.

CONSULTATIONS AND ASSESSMENTS (cont)

Full Assessment

The Full Psycho-Educational Assessment examines the factors affecting an individual's performance at school, or in the workplace, in greater depth than in the FAL. It is useful for children or adults where more intensive investigation into the individual's unique abilities and specific difficulties may be required.

Additional testing may include (where appropriate) the assessment of attention, executive function, memory, visual perception, behaviour and adaptive functioning. A more comprehensive assessment of intellectual ability will also be undertaken.

This assessment is most suitable when there are additional factors that may be affecting the individual's academic performance.

Speech and Language Assessment

The Speech and Language assessment is conducted by a Speech Pathologist and focuses on an individual's expressive and receptive language skills, including articulation, vocabulary, phonological processing, comprehension and social use of language (where appropriate). It is of most value when it appears that an individual's language difficulties may be impacting on the development of literacy skills.

It will highlight areas of strength and difficulty in an individual's speech, and language skills, and may determine whether a language impairment is present.

The Speech and Language Assessment is completed in either one or two 1.5 hour sessions. It will be decided at the initial assessment appointment whether a second session is needed. A three to five page report is provided approximately two to three weeks after the assessment with recommendations for appropriate intervention and/or support provided.

For more information regarding fees and charges please contact DSF or review the Fees and Charges schedule.

