



Dyslexia support

Wellington-based dyslexia practitioner **Mike Styles** has been working with Masterlink to assist the team in becoming a dyslexia friendly organisation.

Putting people first

MASTERLINK HAS RECENTLY resolved to become a dyslexia friendly employer. This is an industry first for the plumbing sector, and quite possibly for the wider trades sector.

Masterlink has long recognised that its most important resource is its people: the apprentices, the host plumbers and its own staff. Encouraging people to achieve their potential is at the core of what Masterlink aspires to do. It is important to nurture and support all of its people.

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(and possibly many more) people have dyslexia and related conditions. We know that people with dyslexia think differently and process information differently but are capable, talented people who have the potential to achieve at the highest level.

So, what is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a learning difference where people process information in a different way. It is a genetic condition that lasts a lifetime. The obvious challenges for people with dyslexia are difficulties handling text, time management and short-term memory. Along with the challenges come many advantages, including creativity, innovation and entrepreneurial skills.

What does a dyslexia friendly organisation look like?

The changes that Masterlink is making are long term, significant and often subtle, but will make a big difference to trainees and employers.

- Staff are being trained how to pick up dyslexia and to support those trainees who have it
- Recruitment and induction processes will change to be more accommodating for applicants with dyslexia
- The PR and advertising material will reflect that Masterlink welcomes applications from people with dyslexia
- Resource material will be easier for dyslexic learners to engage with
- Host employers will be given information on how best to engage with staff who are dyslexic. In this way, employers will be able to get better performance from staff who are dyslexic
- Apprentices will be given information about the technology available to support adults with dyslexia
- The changes that benefit dyslexic learners will benefit regular learners as well
- Subtle changes will be made to the way assessments are conducted

- Masterlink will work with The Skills Organisation to ensure learners with dyslexia are given every chance to succeed.

Dyslexia support is not a silver bullet, but it will make a significant difference to many Masterlink apprentices. It will take a while for the full effect to show.

Many people with dyslexia will not know they have it. Others will take a while to pluck up the courage to reveal that they are dyslexic. Many

have suffered a lifetime of ridicule as a result of the wider community's general ignorance about dyslexia.

At the forefront of industry training

In supporting learners with dyslexia, Masterlink is celebrating diversity and empowering a group of learners who have been severely disadvantaged in their lives to date. The school sector may have short changed them significantly over

many years.

Masterlink's actions in actively supporting them sets a benchmark for other employers and training organisations to follow. The ultimate beneficiary is NZ Inc, which will have some more productive people in its workforce. ■

For more information about Masterlink's dyslexia-friendly initiatives, call the team on 0800 502 102 or email admin@masterlink.co.nz

CASE STUDY: Luke Nilsson

Luke Nilsson is a Masterlink apprentice currently working for Mana Plumbing in Porirua, Wellington. He has completed the first year of his apprenticeship. Luke had his dyslexia diagnosed when he was at school.

Many people with dyslexia are not aware of it and struggle to hide the fact that they have difficulties with reading, writing and spelling. Luke is upfront about his dyslexia. He knows that he has some well-developed skills that compensate for his difficulties in managing text. Luke is very empathetic and reads people very

well. He has well above practical hands-on skills and is known as an alternative thinker, coming up with different solutions to problems. Luke will make a very good tradesperson once he finishes his training.

As part of the dyslexia support, Masterlink provided Luke with a mentor, Russell Jenkins. Russell and Luke work together to complete Luke's paperwork. Although Russell knows little about plumbing, he is able to help Luke to manage the paperwork part of his apprenticeship training.



Fees-free industry training

Under the new Fees-Free scheme, from 1 January 2018 the Government will pay the first two years of industry training for eligible learners enrolling in eligible programmes—which include plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying apprenticeships.

Learners can find out if they are eligible and how it works at www.feesfree.govt.nz

Fees-free covers training and assessment fees, but not professional registration costs, the occupational licensing fee, tools and equipment or any other charges paid by eligible learners and/or their employer.

Anyone considering a new apprenticeship through Masterlink can give the team a call at any time to discuss how the Government's fees-free scheme works in with the Masterlink apprentice training process.

Call Masterlink on 0800 502 102, or email admin@masterlink.co.nz

