

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)



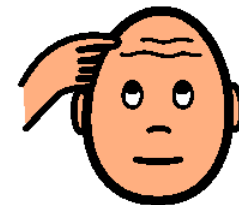
Information for secondary school pupils, parents and staff

What is it?

- DLD is a **language and communication** disorder
- Having DLD means that you have significant, on-going difficulties understanding and/ or using spoken language
- It affects all languages that a person speaks
- DLD was previously known as Specific Language Impairment (SLI)
- There is no known cause of DLD which can make it hard to explain.
- DLD is not caused by other medical conditions, such as, hearing loss, physical impairment, Autism, learning disability or brain injuries. However, children and young people with these difficulties may also have a **Language Disorder**.

What signs may a young person with DLD present with?

- Difficulty **understanding instructions, questions and information**
- Limited **vocabulary** or difficulties **finding words**
- Difficulty understanding **puns, idioms, jokes, sarcasm, slang** and **age-appropriate TV programmes/films**
- Difficulty **thinking flexibly**
- Difficulty **remembering what has been said**
- Difficulty **paying attention** in class
- Difficulty **learning to read** and **de-code texts**.
- Difficulty **making friends** and **maintaining friendships**
- Difficulty **understanding and managing emotions**
- Difficulty **telling narratives** (e.g. saying what they did during the day or what happened at break time)



DLD can look **different** in different individuals and their specific skills may change with time.

Language difficulties may also lead to **behavioural difficulties** such as **low self-esteem, anxiety** or **misbehaving in class**.

DLD can also occur alongside other difficulties, such as, Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Dyslexia and/ or speech sound difficulties.

How will DLD affect the young person?

- DLD is an ongoing condition that can have an impact on an individual's learning and academic progress
- DLD can affect young people's **social interaction skills** and their ability to **make and keep friends**.
- Students with DLD may find practical subjects such as PE, Design and Technology and Art easier.

How can I support a young person with DLD?

Use visuals: Students with DLD are usually visual learners. They will understand better through visual and/or practical methods such as acting stories out or looking at pictures alongside a piece of text.

Extra processing time: Students may take time to understand and then take time to plan. Ensure extra time is given to understand information, to use self-help strategies and to complete work.

Help them sequence: Providing frames for written work can be useful to encourage good sequencing of ideas. Task planners can also help with organisation skills so the student knows what they have to do, how and the equipment they need to do it.

Time to talk: Students may take longer to say what they want to because:

- ◇ They need time to plan
- ◇ They find organising their ideas in sequence difficult - it may take a few of attempts
- ◇ They can only manage to say a basic answer, but have other ideas they can't express so well

Give students plenty of time to respond when asking a question. Be prepared to support the student through an answer with scaffolding questions e.g. where? and why? Try to balance the amount of questions asked with comments on what the student is doing.

Finding words: Many students find it difficult to access the vocabulary they want to use. See if they can talk around the word and give key features or say what it begins with. If not, give a forced alternative, e.g. "is it vertebrate or invertebrate?" or gently supply the word. Word-webs are also a structured way to support the learning of new vocabulary.

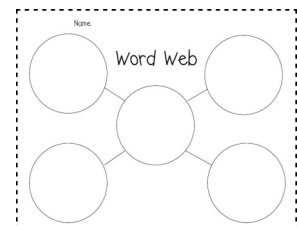
Literacy: Many students with language difficulties have literacy difficulties too.

Generally, if they don't say it, they don't write it. They may miss out words in writing that they miss out when speaking. Reading and spelling need consideration.

Encourage self-help: As children with DLD get older, they will need to take more responsibility over their learning and interactions. Encourage the young person to ask for clarification or to check the meaning of words, for example.

Talk about DLD: Provide a safe environment to talk about their difficulties and problem-solve together.

Adolescence is a key time for the young person to establish their identity, and talking about DLD openly may help the young person to understand their difficulties and strengths, and to learn about what helps them as an individual.



Who to speak to if you have concerns

- School SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator)
- GP
- Newham Speech and Language Therapy Service

Parents/carers and school staff can find more information about DLD from the following organisations:

Afasic www.afasic.org.uk

Raising Awareness Developmental Language Disorder (RADLD) <https://radld.org/>

Talking Point <https://talkingpoint.org.uk/>

ICAN <https://www.ican.org.uk/>