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Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)

Information for parents

Kent County Council

What is DLD?

- DLD stands for Developmental Language Disorder. Having DLD means that a child or young person has severe, persistent difficulties understanding or using spoken language.
- DLD was previously known as Specific Language Impairment (SLI).
- DLD is diagnosed by a Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) only and is used for children over the age of 5 years.
- There is no known cause of DLD which can make it hard to explain. DLD is not caused by emotional difficulties or limited exposure to language.
- A child with DLD may also have other difficulties such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Dyslexia or speech sound difficulties.
- DLD is not caused by other medical conditions such as hearing loss, physical impairment, Autism, severe learning difficulties or brain injuries. However, someone with these difficulties may also have a Language Disorder and be given a diagnosis such as Language Disorder associated with ASD.

What signs may a CYP with DLD show?

- A child may talk less than their peers and find it difficult to express themselves verbally.
- Language they use may sound immature for their age, or they might struggle to find words or use varied vocabulary.
- They may have difficulty putting a sentence together or may not understand or remember what has been said.
- Difficulty telling stories, for example saying what they did during the day or what happened at break time.
- Language difficulties may also be wrongly interpreted as behavioural issues such as anxiety or misbehaving in class.
- DLD looks different for each individual. The child's specific difficulties can also change as they get older and need to develop more complex skills

How will this affect my child or young person?

- DLD is a long-term condition that can have a severe impact on a child's learning and achievement at school.
- A child or young person with DLD are at risk of reading and writing difficulties and DLD can sometimes affect social interaction skills and the ability to make and keep friends.
- Someone with DLD usually can learn and understand better through visual and practical methods. For example, they may understand a story better if they watch it being acted out or learn easier through multisensory experience.

How can I support my child or young person at home?

- Get your child's attention; say their name before asking questions or giving instruction so they know they have to listen.
- Ensure they can see your face to support their attention and listening.
- Use simple language and repeat if necessary to support memory and provide as many opportunities for them to hear, see and use words.
- Talk calmly and slowly to support their ability to process words and give them more time to respond to help them process information.
- Provide a picture or use gestures and symbols to represent new words or concepts to support their understanding visually.
- Encourage your child or young person to communicate with you however they can; accept gestures, pointing and facial expressions.
- Check they have understood instructions or new information.
- Help them learn skills to join in with other children. For example, playing games at home to support turn taking and listening to others.

Speech and Language Therapy Services in Kent

Children and young people with DLD in Kent may be able to access extra support from Speech and Language Therapists and Specialist Teachers.

Who to contact

For more information please contact your local Speech and Language Therapy Team or talk to the SENCo at pre-school or school.

Our contact details

Please use the NHS website in your area on “how to refer” and for a video presentation providing more detail on DLD.

Useful websites:

- www.naplic.org.uk/dld/
- www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk

Did you know that DLD is predicted to affect 7% of children and young people in the general population? This is more common than Autism. However, DLD is not as widely known about.