



## Children's Therapy Team

### Speech and Language Therapy Advice Sheet

# Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)

## What is DLD?

Children and young people with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) have difficulties using and understanding language.

We use the term DLD when we can see that the child's language difficulties are having an impact on their day-to-day life (such as education and peer relationships) and when we expect that their difficulties will be long-term. Being diagnosed with a long-term condition can feel overwhelming at first - but what we know about children with DLD is that they can thrive when people around them know how best to support them.

DLD is very common, but is under-identified and under-diagnosed - the latest research indicates that it is 5 times more common than autism and on average affects 2 children in a class of 30 (Norbury et al., 2016).

There is no known cause of DLD - but we know it is not caused by:

- being bilingual (speaking more than one language)
- parenting
- emotional difficulties
- other medical conditions such as autism or hearing impairment

It can run in families, and can exist alongside some other diagnosed conditions such as dyslexia.

## What challenges might a child who has DLD have?

Every person with DLD experiences it differently. Someone with DLD may have difficulty with:

- Following and understanding spoken language
- Processing and following instructions
- Understanding and use of vocabulary
- Expressing themselves, including finding the right words to use, ordering their thoughts and articulating their ideas
- Keeping up with the pace of peer interactions
- Associated difficulties with reading and writing
- Some children may have difficulties with their speech sounds (unclear speech) - but not always
- Some children with behavioural difficulties may have unrecognised DLD. If in doubt 'think language' - could the behaviour be a result of a language difficulty?

## **What can I do to support a child who has DLD?**

Every child with DLD is different, and what works to support one child may not be right for another child with the same diagnosis.

Children and young people with DLD may require a different approach in the classroom, and you will need to use a range of strategies to support them. When supported in a 'communication friendly environment', children with DLD can achieve well in school.

For further information on how you can support a child with a diagnosis of DLD, please see the 'How to support children with language difficulties in the classroom' advice sheet on our website.

If you are concerned about the impact of a child's speech, language and communication needs or you think they may have DLD, you can:

- Contact your Health Visitor, Early Years Setting or School for advice
- Look on our website for further training, information and advice:  
<https://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/childrens-centre/your-childs-hospital-journey/therapy-services/slt>
- Contact us via our 'Request for Help' line – see our website for further details
- You can also access further information from the following websites:

[www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/help-for-families/developmental-language-disorder-awareness](http://www.speechandlanguage.org.uk/help-for-families/developmental-language-disorder-awareness)

[www.naplic.org.uk/resource/dld-bubble-toolkit](http://www.naplic.org.uk/resource/dld-bubble-toolkit)

[www.radld.org](http://www.radld.org)

[www.dldandme.org](http://www.dldandme.org)

[www.thedldproject.com](http://www.thedldproject.com)