



What is Developmental Language Disorder

Trish.Hicken@lincolnshire.gov.uk

ECLIPS@lincolnshire.gov.uk

What is DLD?



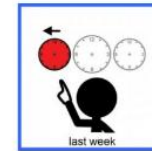
DLD is a persistent type of speech, language and communication need that cannot be explained by an obvious cause and results in functional impairment in everyday life.



Children with DLD can have difficulties in understanding what people say to them and/or struggle to communicate and articulate their ideas and feelings.

How d we communicate?

Communication is a complex skill



Input (receptive)

- Hearing
- Listening and attention
- Understand the words
- Understand the sentences
- Understand the body language
- Get the speaker's intention

I get it!



conversation

Output (expressive)

- Have something to say
- Know what is appropriate
- Find the words
- Form the words into sentences
- Use the right body language and facial expression
- Send the message to the speech muscles

I say it!

What is DLD?



1. The child has language difficulties that create obstacles to communication or learning in everyday life,
2. The child's language problems are unlikely to resolve by five years of age, and
3. The problems are not associated with a known biomedical condition such as brain injury, neurodegenerative conditions, genetic conditions or chromosome disorders such as Down Syndrome, sensorineural hearing loss, or autism spectrum disorder or intellectual disability.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Developmental_language_disorder

DLD Profile

DLD diagnosis should be accompanied with specification of the **impact** on domains of:

1 Phonology



4 Semantics



2 Grammar (syntax and morphology)



5 Word finding



3 Verbal learning and memory



6 Pragmatics/ language use



Many symptoms persist into adolescence and beyond

DLD profile: no child will be the same



1. **Phonology:** speech sounds, but also literacy related skills such the blending sounds together to form words (phonological awareness)
2. **Grammar:** ability to order words into sentences, but also tense. 'I goed away' instead of 'I went away,' or shorter, simpler sentences.
3. **Verbal learning and memory:** ability to retain words and sentences

DLD profile: no child will be the same



4. **Semantics:** this means vocabulary. Many children with DLD understand and use a limited number of words.
5. **Word finding:** linked to semantics, but even when the child knows a word they might struggle to recall it. A bit like 'tip of the tongue.'
6. **Pragmatics/language use:** does the language used fit the social situation. May be naïve, talk too much, not understand humour.

You may have heard of

Other terms



- **Specific Language Impairment (SLI):** the old term (pre-2016). Refers to a smaller group of children who we now identify as DLD.

NO LONGER USED

- **Language delay:** widely used for young children, but even school aged. No longer considered acceptable. **NO LONGER USED**
- **Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN):** largely used in schools. Umbrella term which includes a wider group of conditions than just DLD. **OK, BUT VAGUE**

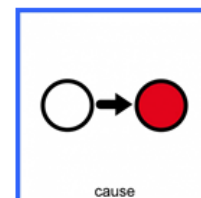
Diagnosing DLD



- Case history and discussion with family and school
- Standardised assessments
- Informal assessment
- Response to intervention
- Observation (in natural situations)

- Judgement
- Children respond differently on different days and in different situations (especially those with DLD!)

Causes of DLD



- **PARENTS DO NOT CAUSE DLD**
- **Genetic basis**, but not one known gene. Therefore no blood test
- Identical twins (same genetics) have very similar language profiles. Non-identical twins in the same family (similar genetics) can have different language profiles. **This points to genetics.**
- **In summary:** it's complicated and no one knows the specific gene, but it is likely to be several.
- **Intervention is still important**, but it is not the cure. **Anyone saying they have a cure is misleading.**

Finding out more about DLD

These websites have reliable information



naplic.org.uk/dld

collection of lots of websites

dldandme.org

American website aimed at parents

RADLD.org

Includes parent stories

[RADLD on YouTube](#)

Lots about DLD. Parents and professionals

[Aileen Burnett on YouTube](#)

parent viewpoint