



Introduction to Developmental Language Disorder

- from a professional perspective
- from a parent carer perspective – Ceri Reed

RCSLT vision statement

A world that includes everyone
with communication and
swallowing needs

RCSLT mission statement

To help people with communication
and swallowing needs to have
better lives

RCSLT

- **Policy and Public Affairs**

- Local and national influencing

- Put together resources to help SLTs make a case for service or to influence
 - React to new developments
 - Develop policy positions and responses
 - Influence and lobby Government

- **Professional Development**

Why is language important?

- **Words** allow us to label and express our thoughts and emotions.
- **Syntax** allow us to represent temporal and causal relationships between people, feelings, actions and consequences.
- **Narrative** are a key means by which we develop understanding of our own and others emotional experiences.
- **Discourse** requires us to use a common language code to facilitate social interaction and affiliation
- **Language can be used in powerful ways:** to argue, to persuade, to regulate, to empathise.
- Language allows us to **reflect on the world as it is and imagine hypothetical situations** – how the world could be.



RADLD

https://youtu.be/rwOfkj0dj_0?si=HykGDQ8t3IJxAi82

Lily Farrington's Amazing Developmental Language Disorder Animation

RADLD



Developmental Language Disorder

... is a lifelong condition which can first be diagnosed in childhood.

It affects how people understand and express language.

Left unidentified and unsupported, DLD can reduce access to education, employment and social interaction.

A previous label was specific language impairment but different criteria.



Prevalence

7.5% Developmental Language Disorder (Norbury et al. 2016)

7 times more common than autism spectrum disorder

46 times more common than permanent childhood hearing impairment

2.3% Language Disorder + additional condition (eg. Autism, intellectual disability)

Developmental Language Disorder

- child's **language abilities** are **below chronological age expectations**
- language deficits are **not explained by other developmental concerns** such as sensory impairment, autism, extreme deprivation, head injury, global developmental delay
- although language impairment is frequently associated with other developmental concerns
- language disorders **interfere with everyday life** at home or at school

Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th Edition) – DSM-V

- A. Persistent difficulties in the acquisition and use of language across modalities (i.e. spoken, written, sign language, or other), due to deficits in comprehension or production that include the following:
 - Reduced vocabulary (word knowledge and use).
 - Limited sentence structure (ability to put words and word endings together to form sentences based on the rules of grammar and morphology).
 - Impairments in discourse (ability to use vocabulary and connect sentences to explain or describe a topic or series of events or have a conversation).



DSM-V (cont)

- B. Language abilities are substantially and quantifiably below those expected for age, resulting in functional limitations in effective communication, social participation, academic achievement, or occupational performance, individually or in any combination.
- C. Onset of symptoms is in the early developmental period.
- D. The difficulties are not attributable to hearing or other sensory impairment, motor dysfunction, or another medical or neurological condition and are not better explained by intellectual disability (intellectual developmental disorder) or global developmental delay.



DLD

Speech, language and communication needs - an overview:

Developmental Language Disorder

- Syntax
- Morphology
- Semantics
- Word finding
- Pragmatics
- Discourse
- Verbal learning and memory

Speech Sound Disorder

- Dysarthria
- Verbal dyspraxia (CAS)
- Articulation disorder
- Orofacial structural defects

Language disorder associated with biomedical condition

Language Disorder

Language difficulties in under-5s with few risk factors

Voice disorders

Fluency disorders

Lack of familiarity with ambient language

DLD sits within the 'Language Disorder' category, which itself is nested within the overall SLCN category

Adapted from Bishop et al. (2016)

DLD

- **Under 3**

Prediction from late language emergence to subsequent language disorder at school age is surprisingly weak

- **3-4 years**

Prediction improves as children grow older.

In 4 year olds, greater number of areas of difficulty, the higher the likelihood that problems will persist

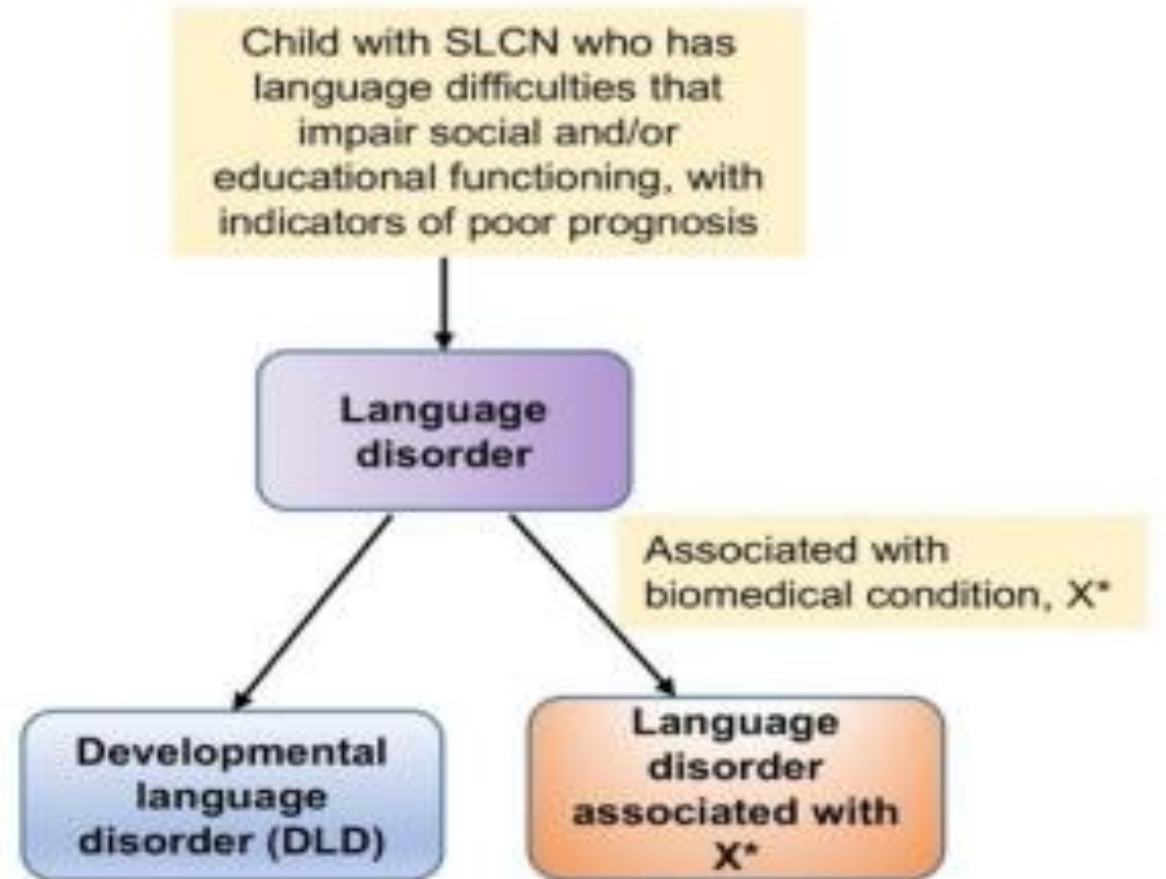
- **5 years and over**

Language problems that are still evident by 5 years are likely to persist



DLD

Speech & Language Therapy Assessment



*includes genetic syndromes, a sensorineural hearing loss, neurological disease, Autism Spectrum Disorder or Intellectual Disability



DEVELOPMENTAL LANGUAGE DISORDER











Children with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) have significant, on-going difficulties understanding and/or using language which can affect their behaviour and progress at school.



Afasic
voice for life

What signs should parents/carers look out for?

If your child has DLD, they may struggle with...

- EXPRESSING IDEAS**  sharing thoughts and feelings, talking about something that has happened, expressing their needs
- VOCABULARY**  learning, remembering and using new words
- FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS**  understanding and remembering what to do, particularly with non-routine instructions
- CONVERSATION**  following and joining in with conversations, especially in a group
- MAKING SENSE**  putting words together to make a spoken or written sentence that others can understand
- CONCENTRATION**  maintaining attention, so may tire easily
- READING & WRITING**  making links between letters, sounds, words and meaning for reading and writing
- BEHAVIOUR**  managing emotions, which may lead to frustration, avoidance, anxiety and being unusually upset
- FRIENDSHIP & PLAY**  making friends, joining in with play, following the rules of a game
- CONFIDENCE**  using and understanding language without significant adult support

Further support and guidance for parents can be found at:

afasic.org.uk
moorhouseinstitute.com/dld

Moor House Research & Training Institute, Mill Lane, Hurst Green, Oxted, RH8 9AQ

Icon credit: Freepik



What is the impact? (1 of 2)

- **Words**

- Trouble understanding/learning words
- Trouble recalling words
- Uses non-specific words

- **Sentences**

- Missing parts of words
- Missing key/whole words
- Difficulties ordering words

- **Speech sounds**

- Mixing up sounds
- Difficulty working with sounds
- Difficulty relating sounds to letters

What is the impact? (2 of 2)

- **Learning and Memory**

- Difficulty remembering sounds/words
- Difficulty following directions
- Trouble learning a pattern

- **Social Language**

- Communicating in different situations
- Difficulties having conversations
- Missing social cues

- **Discourse**

- Hard to follow stories
- Out of sequence
- Difficulties reading between the lines



COULD IT BE LANGUAGE?



Children with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) have significant, on-going difficulties understanding and/or using language which can affect their behaviour and progress at school.

What are the signs of DLD?

Children with DLD may struggle with...

PROCESSING LANGUAGE

listening to, understanding, remembering what others say



FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS

understanding long or complex sentences

VOCABULARY

understanding and using words accurately



GRAMMAR

understanding and using grammar (spoken and written), getting words in the correct order with the correct tenses

EXPRESSING IDEAS

saying how they feel, telling a story, explaining their ideas



ASKING AND ANSWERING QUESTIONS

talking in class discussions

MATHS

understanding word problems and topics with a heavy language load



READING

understanding what is happening in a story/narrative/factual text

LITERACY

understanding and using sounds for spelling and reading (phonological awareness)



SOCIAL INTERACTION

using language in social situations/making and maintaining friendships

Find out more about DLD and training for teachers at:
moorhouseinstitute.com/dld

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DEVELOPMENTAL LANGUAGE DISORDER



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voice For life

Children with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) have significant, on-going difficulties understanding and/or using language which can affect their behaviour and progress at school.

How can I support my child's communication?

GET THEIR ATTENTION

say their name and get down to their level to support their listening



USE SIMPLE LANGUAGE

keep sentences short; use simple words; repeat if necessary

KEEP INSTRUCTIONS SHORT

say exactly what you want them to do; give one instruction at a time



SLOW DOWN

talk calmly and slowly; give them time to respond

HELP THEM SEE IT

use gestures, facial expression, pictures and symbols to help them understand what you say



CHECK THEY'VE UNDERSTOOD

ask them to repeat what you have said; if needed, say it again and show them

LET THEM CHOOSE

reduce the number of choices; show them or point to the options



FOCUS ON WORDS

talk about new words; explain their meaning and use them often in play and shared activities

STOP AND LISTEN!

make positive comments; repeat what they say with correct grammar



ENJOY TIME TOGETHER

model language while you play; practise taking turns and listening to each other; have fun!

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Icon credit: Freepik

What helps children?

- **Memory**

- Breaking spoken information and instructions into short chunks in a logical order
- Repetition of key information and summaries using straight forward language
- Use of visual support whenever possible so they not having to process purely spoken information





What helps children?

- **Language**

- Repetition of key vocabulary and give repeated definitions
- Having lists of upcoming key topic words to look up meanings at home
- Having straightforward definitions of words
- Checking 'do you know what X means?' when you think they are not sure but haven't asked you
- Giving matter of fact feedback if they have said something inappropriate



What helps children?

- Written Language
 - Simplification of written information and instructions to match level of reading comprehension.
 - Presentation in bullet form where possible.
 - Having time to re-read a page to help process the information
 - Having shorter written assignments where possible so they can be finished
 - Provision of writing frames to help plan work



COULD IT BE LANGUAGE?

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) is a hidden but common condition when a child has difficulty using and/or understanding language and is a sub category of SLCN (Speech, Language and Communication Needs)



Key strategies to support language disorders in the classroom

TIME

to process information and instructions



VISUAL SUPPORT

visual templates, language rich displays and clear/simple signage

SIGN IT

gesture, facial expressions and body language



DO IT

multi-sensory teaching approach

MODIFY YOUR LANGUAGE

rate of speech, one instruction at a time, keep it short



CHUNK INFORMATION

pause, repeat, be explicit, use literal language

WORDS

explicitly teach key vocabulary



SMALL STEPS

break down tasks

REPEAT IT

recap previous learning, do activities more than once



MODEL IT

whether spoken or written, model the language

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- Lower levels of academic attainment
- Fewer academic qualifications
- More likely to leave formal education early
- Literacy a particular barrier to academic success
- 50% of young people unable to read simple texts
- More than 80% struggling to comprehend what they read
- At 19, young people with DLD are twice as likely as peers to be not in employment, education or training

A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR PEOPLE
WITH DEVELOPMENTAL LANGUAGE
DISORDER





Organisations

NAPLIC

<https://www.naplic.org.uk/>

Speech and
Language UK 
Changing young lives.

<https://speechandlanguage.org.uk/educators-and-professionals/dld-educational-support/>

Afasic
voice for life

<https://www.afasic.org.uk/>

RA DLD RAISING
AWARENESS OF
DEVELOPMENTAL
LANGUAGE DISORDER

<https://radld.org/>

 **RCSLT**
WALES
CYMRU



Organisations

Afasic
voice for life

<https://www.afasic.org.uk/>

- [The Afasic Helpline - Afasic](#)
- 0300 666 9410
- **Monday & Wednesday: 10.30am to 4.00pm.**

