

POLICY BRIEF

DEVELOPMENTAL LANGUAGE DISORDER

HOW WE CAN IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DLD

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD):
A condition causing significant problems with expressive and receptive language. DLD begins in childhood, continues throughout adulthood, and has no known cause.

It is estimated the 7.6% of the population have Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) (1). This means approximately 2 in 30 people could have DLD.

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"We know that **mental health** is a **risk** for young people with DLD and yet there's little awareness of how these issues overlap. There's an **urgent** need to address these barriers."
Professor Nicola Botting, City, University of London

The following briefing document explains what DLD is and makes recommendations for Mental Health Professionals.

DLD has a significant impact on everyday functioning.

1. DLD makes it hard to understand what others are saying.
2. It can be hard to learn new vocabulary.
3. It can be hard to express one's thoughts and needs using language.

Many people with DLD also show differences in their attention, sensory processing, movement, and reading/writing skills. A high proportion of people with DLD have an additional diagnosis of:
-ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)
-Developmental Coordination Disorder
-Dyslexia

Separating speech from language:
DLD can be difficult to identify. Some people with DLD have co-occurring Speech Sound Disorder, however, not all will. People can be highly talkative with clear speech articulation and still have DLD. "Language" refers to the way a system of communication (speaking, writing, making signs) is used to convey *meaning*.

www.engage-dld.com

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WHAT CAN I DO TO SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL LANGUAGE DISORDER?

It is our collective responsibility to ensure that the needs of people with DLD are recognised by public services and to ensure that people with DLD can access the appropriate support.

DLD is frequently unidentified, and it is under-researched. Despite the high prevalence of DLD, between 2010 to 2019 there were fewer studies of DLD compared to ADHD, which is less common and has fewer long-term consequences (2). The cost of overlooking DLD is significant. Many long-term consequences are associated with DLD, including lower academic outcomes, lower financial literacy, and mental health difficulties. While DLD is pervasive, early intervention can help people with DLD to develop their language skills and may prevent or reduce some of these associated challenges.



To support people with DLD who access your services:

Use short sentences	Break your sentences down into smaller parts. This makes it easier to retain the information.
Reduce background noise	Less noise makes it easier to hear what others are saying, which facilitates language comprehension.
Explain what you mean in different ways	Give examples and *show* what you mean.
Give time to answer questions	It can take people with DLD longer to express their thoughts. Listen carefully and allow plenty of time when they are speaking.
Use visuals	Images provide additional information, which helps with comprehension. Give patients written documentation, containing key information discussed during the appointment, to take away with them. Ideally this should be in easy to read format.

Important note: DLD is a heritable condition (3). When a young person has DLD, their parent might also have DLD. Therefore, following the above steps for appointments with young people who have DLD can also support their accompanying parents.

Help to identify DLD:

Mental health professionals can support young people before a language disorder is identified by recognising the signs of DLD and directing the patient to the appropriate services. A Speech and Language Therapist/Pathologist (SLT/SLP) is qualified to diagnose and support children and adults with DLD. Clinicians can signpost families concerned about their local NHS SLT service (in the UK), local health service (in Australia), local school district (in the US/Australia) or a private practitioner may be able to help.

Search for private therapists on asltip.com if you're in the UK. A map of US SLPs with expertise in DLD is coming soon to DLDandME.org. In Australia, you can search for Speech Pathologists on the speechpathologyaustralia.org.au website.



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Learn more about Developmental Language Disorder:

RADLD – Raising Awareness of Developmental Language Disorder - An international campaign for DLD. RADLD organises a special DLD day annually. They provide resources to raise awareness of DLD, including a wide range of films.

DLD and Me - A US based organisation aiming to increase awareness of DLD and offer support and resources to parents, teachers and individuals with DLD.

The DLD project - An Australian based organisation working to be the most trusted provider of evidence based DLD information, resources and training in Australia.

ICAN -The UK's children's communication charity. They provide services to support children with speech, language, and communication needs, including two specialist schools.

Afasic - A UK, parent-led organisation, which provides information and training for parents and professionals to support families affected by speech and language

THIS BRIEF IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY E-DLD

ABOUT US

Engage with Developmental language Disorder (E-DLD) was co-founded in 2019 by Dr Michelle St Clair (University of Bath), Professor Nicola Botting (City, University of London) and Dr Jenny Gibson (University of Cambridge). We want to see an increase in high-quality research into DLD.

People with DLD or their families sign up to E-DLD forming a valuable database of people affected by DLD.

E-DLD connects individuals affected by DLD to research by:

- Creating easy-to-read research summaries.
- Hosting parent and professional events.
- Collating information about families with DLD over time.
- Establishing a database to help with research & policy decisions.

Engage with Developmental Language Disorder

YOU CAN SUPPORT E-DLD BY:

1) Visiting the easy-read research summaries

2) Telling your colleagues about E-DLD

3) Sharing information about E-DLD with families affected by language difficulties

For any questions, please contact E-DLD@bath.ac.uk

References:

(1) Norbury, C. F., Gooch, D., Wray, C., Baird, G., Charman, T., Simonoff, E., Vamvakas, G., & Pickles, A. (2016), https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12573

(2) McGregor, K. (2020), https://doi.org/10.1044/2020_LSHSS-20-00003

(3) Bishop, D. V. M., & Hayiou-Thomas, M. E. (2008), https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1601-183X.2007.00360.x

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