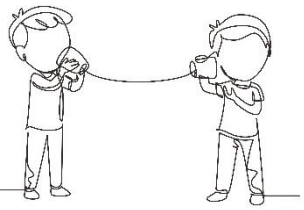
Language Disorder (LD)



Language Disorders (LDs) are diagnosed when someone has difficulty developing language.

There are two main types of Language Disorder:

- **Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)** – This is diagnosed when we don't know why they are having difficulties learning language. Even though it is called 'developmental', it can be diagnosed at any age.
- **Language Disorder associated with (another diagnosis)** – This is diagnosed when someone has difficulties learning language and they already have another diagnosis. This might be Autism, an Intellectual Impairment, Hearing Impairment, or other condition.

The information in this handout is helpful for people with either type of Language Disorder.

What is a Language Disorder?

People with a Language Disorder have brains that are **wired differently**. It is harder for them to attach meaning to symbols (words – spoken, signed, or written). But people with Language Disorders *can* be supported to build their language skills. People with a Language Disorder *may*:

- find learning new words hard.
- not be able to express their thoughts clearly.
- get muddled over future tense and past tense.
- get muddled over where words should go in a sentence.
- get sounds in words wrong.
- have difficulty with reading and writing.
- not get language-based jokes.
- misunderstand what is said to them.

Sometimes people talk about an "**Expressive Language Disorder**" or "**Receptive Language Disorder**". An **Expressive Language Disorder** might be diagnosed if the person only has difficulties telling people information (*expressing* information). It means they can understand language, but they have trouble using language to speak and to write. A **Receptive Language Disorder** might be diagnosed if a person has trouble *understanding* (r) what people tell them. Receptive language is another way to say 'understanding of language'.. Sometimes a DLD or Language Disorder will be diagnosed without saying if it's expressive or receptive. This usually means there are language weaknesses in both expressing and understanding. We want you to know that there are a few different ways that people talk about and write about language disorders. These differences are all helpful and valid.

Language Disorders, including DLD, are lifelong conditions.

During schooling a Language Disorder can create difficulties with learning to read and write, and with academic learning. Children with DLD are four times more likely to find maths challenging, and six times more likely to find reading and writing challenging[1]. DLD can also affect social relationships, independence, employment opportunities, mental health, and quality of life. But there is also good news – **with the right support many of these risks can be minimised or avoided**[2].

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[1] The DLD Project: https://thedldproject.com/ sourced Dec 2023

[2] Sowerbutts A. & Finer A (2020) DLD and Me: *Supporting Children and Young People with Developmental Language Disorder*, Routledge, Abingdon.

A diagnosis of a Language Disorder does not change who someone is as a person.

Rather, a Language Disorder describes a specific group of skills that are difficult for the person. A diagnosis may help the person, their family and their teachers, to support them better. Children with Language Disorders are as able, healthy, and curious as other children. The difference is that they have more trouble understanding and using language. For this reason, Language Disorders are sometimes known as a **hidden disability**.



How do I know if my child's difficulty with language is actually a Language Disorder?

There are three features to go toward a diagnosis of Developmental Language Disorder: **significant** language difficulties that have **persisted** over time, and that have a **functional** impact on the child's activity and participation. A speech pathologist would usually make this diagnosis after assessment and discussion with the family and school. This diagnosis does not change with time. The impact that a language disorder has on a person's life can change – sometimes having more impact, and sometimes having less impact. Language therapy really helps. A person can choose to work on improving their language at any age. It is always possible to make progress and helpful gains.

More information and resources:

- *Get To Know Me handout, ideal for creating the right supports at school and with new people:* https://thedldproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/The_DLD_Project_-_Get_to_know_me_template.pdf
- *A podcast all about DLD*: https://thedldproject.com/developmental-language-disorder-dld/the-talking-dld-podcast/
- *A short film by RADLD about DLD*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tQ-s02HWLb0
- https://radld.org/about/dld/

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