



**Kent Community Health**  
NHS Foundation Trust



**East Kent  
Hospitals University**  
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# Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)

*Information for parents*



## What is DLD?

- DLD stands for Developmental Language Disorder. Having DLD means that a child or young person has severe, persistent difficulties understanding or using spoken language.
- DLD was previously known as Specific Language Impairment (SLI).
- DLD is diagnosed by a Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) only and is used for children over the age of 5 years.
- There is no known cause of DLD which can make it hard to explain. DLD is not caused by emotional difficulties or limited exposure to language.
- A child with DLD may also have other difficulties such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Dyslexia or speech sound difficulties.
- DLD is not caused by other medical conditions such as hearing loss, physical impairment, Autism, severe learning difficulties or brain injuries. However, someone with these difficulties may also have a Language Disorder and be given a diagnosis such as Language Disorder associated with ASD.

## What signs may a CYP with DLD show?

- A child may talk less than their peers and find it difficult to express themselves verbally.
- Language they use may sound immature for their age, or they might struggle to find words or use varied vocabulary.
- They may have difficulty putting a sentence together or may not understand or remember what has been said.
- Difficulty telling stories, for example saying what they did during the day or what happened at break time.
- Language difficulties may also be wrongly interpreted as behavioural issues such as anxiety or misbehaving in class.
- DLD looks different for each individual. The child's specific difficulties can also change as they get older and need to develop more complex skills

## How will this affect my child or young person?

- DLD is a long-term condition that can have a severe impact on a child's learning and achievement at school.
- A child or young person with DLD are at risk of reading and writing difficulties and DLD can sometimes affect social interaction skills and the ability to make and keep friends.
- Someone with DLD usually can learn and understand better through visual and practical methods. For example, they may understand a story better if they watch it being acted out or learn easier through multisensory experience.



## How can I support my child or young person at home?

- Get your child's attention; say their name before asking questions or giving instruction so they know they have to listen.
- Ensure they can see your face to support their attention and listening.
- Use simple language and repeat if necessary to support memory and provide as many opportunities for them to hear, see and use words.
- Talk calmly and slowly to support their ability to process words and give them more time to respond to help them process information.
- Provide a picture or use gestures and symbols to represent new words or concepts to support their understanding visually.
- Encourage your child or young person to communicate with you however they can; accept gestures, pointing and facial expressions.
- Check they have understood instructions or new information.
- Help them learn skills to join in with other children. For example, playing games at home to support turn taking and listening to others.

# Speech and Language Therapy Services in Kent

Children and young people with DLD in Kent may be able to access extra support from Speech and Language Therapists and Specialist Teachers.

## Who to contact

For more information please contact your local Speech and Language Therapy Team or talk to the SENCo at pre-school or school.

## Our contact details

Please use the NHS website in your area on “how to refer” and for a video presentation providing more detail on DLD.

## Useful websites:

- [www.naplic.org.uk/dld/](http://www.naplic.org.uk/dld/)
- [www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk](http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk)

Did you know that DLD is predicted to affect 7% of children and young people in the general population? This is more common than Autism. However, DLD is not as widely known about.

