



**Kent Community Health**  
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# Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)



## New terminology for 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. DLD is only identified when a child continues to have severe Language and Communication Needs (LCN) following targeted intervention.
- There is no known cause of DLD which can make it hard to explain. DLD is not caused by other biomedical conditions (such as ASD, hearing loss), emotional difficulties or limited exposure to language.
- **LCN** is the term used for all children with language difficulties under the age of 5 years and is also used for a school aged child who does not have DLD or a Language Disorder associated with a biomedical condition, but presents with language difficulties.
- These terms replace language delay in all age groups.
- DLD can co-occur with other difficulties such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), dyslexia and speech sound difficulties.
- **Language Disorder associated with a Biomedical Condition** is the term given by an SLT when a CYP has severe persisting language difficulties over and above a known biomedical condition such as hearing loss, physical impairment, ASD, severe learning difficulties or brain injuries. For example 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.
- Limited vocabulary or finding words.
- Difficulty understanding instructions or information.
- Difficulty putting a sentence together.
- Difficulty using grammar correctly.
- Difficulty paying attention in class.
- Difficulty understanding and managing emotions.
- Difficulty learning to read and decode texts.
- Language difficulties may also underlie behavioural difficulties such as low self esteem, 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.



## What will be the impact of DLD?

- DLD is a long-term condition that can have a severe impact on a CYP's learning, achievement at school and in all areas of their life.
- A CYP with DLD is at risk of literacy difficulties and sometimes DLD can affect their social interaction skills and their ability to make and keep friends.
- A CYP with DLD usually learns and understands better through visual and/or practical methods and may show strengths in more practical subjects such as PE, Design & Technology and Art.

# 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.

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

## 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.

