

Inclusion by design for children and young people with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)



What is DLD?

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) is a diagnosis given to children and young people who have language difficulties that:

Create barriers to communication or learning in everyday life.

Are unlikely to resolve by 5 years of age – they will have lifelong difficulties with language.

Are not associated with a known biomedical condition such as autism, brain injury, neurodegenerative conditions, hearing impairment or genetic disorders (such as Down's syndrome).

It is a lifelong condition, so children and young people with DLD will not grow out of their difficulties or “catch up” to their peers. They are likely to need some level of support or adaptations throughout their education and potentially into their adult lives.

How many children and young people have DLD?

~7.6%

DLD affects approximately 7.6%¹ of all children in primary school, which equates to roughly two children in every average class of 30 in the UK.

What does it look like?

Difficulties in any or all of the following areas can be characteristic of DLD:

Attention and listening

Presenting as looking ‘blank’, not listening or not paying attention due to their difficulties processing and understanding language.

Understanding language

Difficulty following instructions, listening to and understanding explanations, responding to questions, learning and understanding academic vocabulary.

Talking/expressive language

Immature or less sophisticated vocabulary and grammar, jumbled up word order, word-finding difficulties, use of non-specific words (such as *stuff, thingy*), trouble telling a story or recounting an incident.

Forming friendships and interacting with peers

Even though they may be socially motivated, these children and young people may struggle to keep up in interactions with peers due to their language difficulties.

Literacy skills, reading comprehension and written expression

All of these skills depend on having a solid foundation of spoken language skills to build upon.

Academic attainment

As all teaching and learning in education takes place through language.

¹ Surrey Communication and Language in Education Study (SCALES), an epidemiological study in the UK (Norbury et al, 2016). Based on assessment of a population sample of children in state-maintained classrooms in the first few years of school. The researchers estimated the total population prevalence of language disorder to be 9.92%. The prevalence of language disorder of unknown origin was estimated to be 7.58%, while the prevalence of language impairment associated with intellectual disability and/or existing medical diagnosis was 2.34%. These estimates are consistent with previous population studies in the United States (7.4%, Tomblin et al. 1997). The researchers advise that these are estimates and precise numbers in a given community may vary depending on the diagnostic criteria and assessments employed to identify children, and the local context (estimates may be higher in areas of socio-economic disadvantage).

How can I support children and young people with DLD in the classroom?

Support for children and young people with DLD is best viewed under the model of universal, targeted and specialist provision across the whole setting, and includes:

Universal

A foundation of inclusive high-quality teaching practices that support the speech, language and communication skills of all children and young people:

Create a **communication-supportive environment**.

Adapt adult language to support the communication skills of all children and young people.

Explicitly teach **vocabulary**.

Encourage all children and young people to **monitor their own understanding** and ask for help.

Plan opportunities to develop and use communication skills.

Targeted

An offer of targeted support for children and young people with DLD (and other types of SLCN):

Small group, targeted interventions with a sound evidence base which shows they work to increase children and young people's language and communication skills.

Planned differentiation of work and activities for children and young people with DLD based on language abilities.

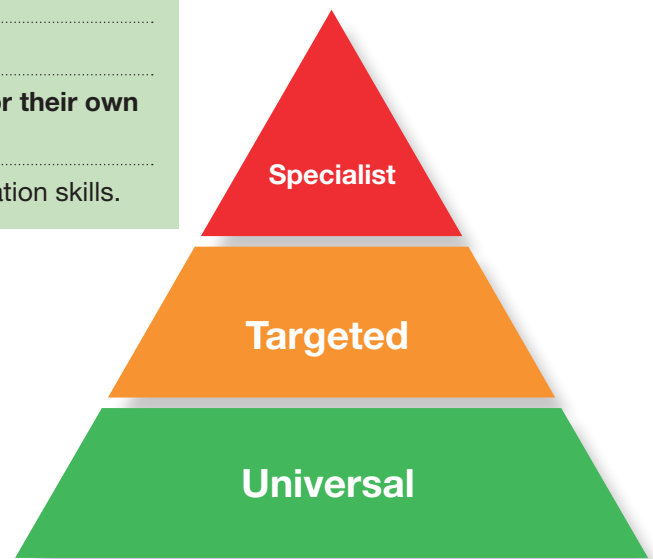
Practices that support the child or young person's **emotional wellbeing and self-advocacy**.

Planned support for developing **friendships** and skills in **social interaction**.

Arrangements to enable children and young people with DLD to **access academic assessments** and the curriculum.

For primary-aged children, adults should use additional strategies to **scaffold and support the spoken language skills** of children with DLD.

For secondary-aged young people, explicitly teach **organisational strategies, revision techniques and study skills**.



Specialist

Speech and language therapists and/or **specialist advisory teachers** may work directly or indirectly with children and young people with DLD. The availability of specialist services and what they offer varies depending on geographical location, key stage, and the child or young person's level of need.

To make the most of specialist support:

- **Work collaboratively** to support generalisation.
- Plan when progress will be **reviewed**.
- Plan when **follow up practice** will take place, who will provide it and what opportunities they have for coaching and support.

Where can I go to find out more?

I CAN: www.ican.org.uk/dld-webinar-series

Whole School SEND gateway: www.sendgateway.org.uk/resources

