

## Developmental language disorder

Developmental language disorder (DLD) means a person has difficulty with spoken language (the person's language does not work the way we expect it to).

For people with DLD, this makes talking and understanding hard.

### About DLD

DLD is a **common**, but **hidden**, disorder. About 7% of people have DLD (this is about 1 in 14 people).

There is **no clear cause** of DLD. Many things may influence whether a person has DLD, including genes.

Parenting **does not** cause DLD.

A person with DLD does not have another known biomedical condition, such as brain injury or autism.

The language difficulties of DLD usually start to show in **early childhood**.

DLD persists into adolescence and adulthood because it is a lifelong disorder. However, the right support can really help people with DLD.

### Effects of DLD

DLD affects spoken language, which is our ability to talk and understand others using words, sentences and conversations. People with DLD may struggle to communicate with others.

DLD can affect:

- **everyday interactions and social communication** – DLD makes it harder to have conversations, join in and participate in play, develop and keep friendships, and solve social problems
- **learning and academic skills** – DLD can affect reading, spelling, writing and/or maths skills
- **attention** – DLD can make it hard to listen and pay attention
- **social, mental, and emotional wellbeing** – people with DLD are at higher risk of experiencing low self-esteem, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression.

### Common difficulties

Every person with DLD has unique issues which often change over time. Some of the common difficulties experienced by children with DLD include:

#### Talking (expressive language)

This may show up as difficulty with:

- using correct grammar and sentence structures
- finding the right words (vocabulary)
- saying thoughts and ideas clearly, and in an organized way
- joining in and participating in conversations.

#### Understanding what is said (comprehension)

This may show up as difficulty with:

- following instructions (especially long instructions with lots of information)
- understanding specific vocabulary
- understanding and answering questions
- following conversations.

### How speech pathologists help with DLD

Speech pathologists assess, diagnose and support people with DLD.

They can help find out which areas of language (talking and understanding) are easier or more difficult for a person with DLD.

They can then recommend strategies and support that may help the person with DLD.

### Find out more

For more information, visit:

- Raising Awareness of Developmental Language Disorder (<https://radld.org/>)
- I Can (<https://ican.org.uk/educational-support-for-children-with-developmental-language-disorder-dld/>)
- The DLD Project (<https://thedldproject.com/>)