

A BRIGHTER FUTURE

for people with Developmental Language Disorder

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) is a life-long condition which can first be diagnosed in childhood. It affects how people understand and express language. Left unidentified and unsupported, DLD can reduce access to education, employment and social interaction.

DLD



Two children in every class of thirty, start school with DLD.¹

DLD is one of the most common neurodevelopmental disorders.

At a prevalence of 7.58%, it is nearly 7 times more common than autism spectrum disorder² and 46 times more common than permanent childhood hearing impairment.³

People with DLD can have difficulties with:

- Listening, attention, memory and language processing, particularly when lots of information is being given orally;
- Following instructions, understanding questions and narratives;
- Understanding and using vocabulary;
- Expressing what they want to say, including difficulties with word finding, grammar and sequencing their thoughts;
- Social interaction, including having difficulties joining in conversations, understanding jokes, and non-literal language;
- Using language to express their thoughts and feelings and to regulate their behaviour and their interactions with other people.

¹Norbury, C. F., Gooch, D., Wray, C., Baird, G., Charman, T., Simonoff, E., Vamvakas, G. & Pickles, A. (2016). The impact of nonverbal ability on prevalence and clinical presentation of language disorder: evidence from a population study. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 57(11), 1247-1257. ²Brugha et al., 2012. ³Fortnum et al., 2001.

The Impact of Developmental Language Disorder

Mental Health & Wellbeing



Adolescents and young adults with DLD are more likely to experience anxiety and depression than their peers.^{4,5}

Education



Children and young people with DLD obtain lower academic and vocational qualifications and were found to have left education significantly earlier than their peers.⁶

Employment



People with DLD have been found to be much more likely to be in non-professional occupations. Young adults with DLD have been found to be unemployed four times longer than their peers. A higher proportion of people with DLD were in part-time employment and more of their peers were in full-time employment.⁷

The role of speech and language therapy

With their knowledge and expertise in speech, language and communication, speech and language therapists are crucial in the diagnosis and management of DLD including providing therapy to people with DLD who need it, tailored to their individual needs.

The role of speech and language therapy includes:

- Identifying and diagnosing DLD and those at risk of it;
- Devising and delivering needs-led therapy;
- Supporting people with DLD, and those around them, including to understand their diagnosis and how it can impact on their lives, so they can advocate for themselves;
- Supporting schools to integrate strategies to foster children's language learning and use; and
- Maximising communication potential by skilling others in the use of facilitative strategies and/or use of augmentative communication aids.

⁴Conti-Ramsden, G. & Botting, N. (2008). Emotional health in adolescents with and without a history of specific language impairment (SLI). *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 49(5), 516-525. ⁵Botting, N., Toseeb, U., Pickles, A., Durkin, K. & Conti-Ramsden, G. (2016). Depression and anxiety change from adolescence to adulthood in individuals with and without language impairment. *PLoS one*, 11(7), 1-13. ⁶Conti-Ramsden, G., Durkin, K., Toseeb, U., Botting, N. & Pickles, A. (2018). Education and employment outcomes of young adults with a history of developmental language disorders. *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*, 53(2), 237-255. ⁷Ibid.

What you can do:

- Raise awareness of DLD by using our assets on your social media channels.
- Call on Welsh Government to provide guidance to teachers on ways to support learners with DLD.
- Call on the Minister for Health and Social Services and Health Education and Improvement Wales to increase speech and language training places to meet growing need.

For further information, please contact walesoffice@rcslt.org