

DEVELOPMENTAL LANGUAGE DISORDER

WHAT IS DLD?

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder whereby children have language difficulties which cannot be accounted for by another diagnosis (e.g. Autism, hearing loss or brain injury) and are evident despite adequate language learning opportunities. These language difficulties significantly impact their ability to communicate, learn and participate in activities of everyday life.



WHO DOES DLD AFFECT?

- DLD is estimated to affect **7% of the population**. That is approximately **2 children in every classroom**.
- It is estimated that more than **38,000 WA young people** have DLD.
- DLD affects **society and the economy more broadly**
 - It is estimated that DLD costs the Australian economy more than **\$1.36 billion per year**. This makes sufficient **early intervention and research based, targeted support** even more important.
 - **Communication is essential for the success of society**. It is essential for strong relationships, successful participation in work and play; good mental health outcomes; for justice to be upheld and administered; and for freedom of speech.

*Individuals with DLD contribute a lot to society, but also often need **support and understanding** from others. When all members of society are supported to communicate, **we as a society benefit**.*



WHAT IS THE CAUSE?

DLD is an area undergoing growing research, with no single cause known at present. Sometimes DLD runs in families. This means that we need to be mindful when communicating with families, to ensure families understand how they can support their child's language development effectively. DLD is diagnosed by a multidisciplinary team.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

DLD affects every individual differently, with a variety of ways these difficulties can present and persist over time. Children with DLD may have difficulties with:

- **Semantics:** A child with DLD might know the difference between dogs and cats, but always accidentally use the word 'cat' when talking about a 4 legged animal.
- **Grammar:** A child with DLD might have difficulty with grammatical tense and say "The boy just jump" instead of "The boy just jumped".
- **Discourse:** A child with DLD might include some the parts of a story, but put them in a confusing order, or miss a part of the story all together.
- **Pragmatics and social skills:** A child with DLD might have compromised social skills. This may decrease their confidence in social interactions and conflict resolution. A child with DLD may have difficulty understanding when they need to take turns or make eye contact.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE? cont.

- **Literacy:** Children with DLD may have difficulty with the skills required to read and write well. This includes difficulties in letter-sound knowledge, segmenting and blending words which leads to poor reading fluency, and may impact comprehension abilities.
- **Verbal learning / memory:** A child with DLD may require multiple repetitions of the same instruction/task, in a structured, explicit manner to enable them to comprehend and retain the information.

CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

Since most classroom teaching is delivered through oral or written language, children with DLD are likely to respond well to **explicit intervention** across **all areas of the curriculum**. Research indicates that when teachers modify their instructional language, **positive outcomes** and learning can result. This includes: **introducing and highlighting key vocabulary**, **emphasising and restating key points**, **providing multimodal learning experiences (e.g. visual support)**, **checking for understanding**, and **providing opportunities for the child to demonstrate knowledge in another way (e.g. drawing or acting)**.



For all students, including those with DLD, **high quality whole class instruction** is needed. However, it is likely that a child with DLD will require additional support from a specialist professional, such as a speech pathologist. **Early identification and intervention** is key to ensuring children with DLD are able to access the curriculum across all areas.

HOW FAMILIES CAN ACCESS SPEECH PATHOLOGY SERVICES

A **private speech pathologist** can be located through the Speech Pathology Australia website at www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au or the Private Speech Pathologists Association of Western Australia at www.pspawa.com.au. For private speech pathology services, a rebate on sessions through a **Chronic Disease Management Plan** may apply. Families should consult their GP for further information.

The **Child Development Service (CDS)** provides free services for children in the Perth metropolitan area who are experiencing developmental delays or difficulties. Information about referrals can be found here on the [Child Development Service website](http://www.cds.wa.gov.au).

PROFESSIONAL INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

To find out more about DLD or identifying and supporting students with language difficulties, contact the **NEMLDC Outreach Service** on 9275 5511 or visit our website at <http://northeastldc.wa.edu.au/>

LINKS TO KEY RESOURCES FOR PROFESSIONALS:

- **DLD awareness and resources:** <https://radld.org/>
- **Quick reads**
 - **Developmental Language Disorder: The most common childhood condition you've never heard of.** Article in The Guardian by Professor Courtney Norbury: <https://www.theguardian.com/science/head-quarters/2017/sep/22/developmental-language-disorder-the-most-common-childhood-condition-youve-never-heard-of>
 - **Social Impact of DLD** <https://www.dldandme.org/social-impacts-of-dld>
- **Supporting DLD in the classroom videos:**
 - **Classroom strategies:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKegRIHFqH4>
 - **Where's that word:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7TJ7Th8cY>