

***Support for Parents whose children have
Speech & Language difficulties alongside
Literacy difficulties of a dyslexic nature***



Firstly, it is not unusual to find children who have had speech and language difficulties going on to develop literacy difficulties or indeed, dyslexia. Early language difficulties put children at risk of developing dyslexia.

There is a commonality between some aspects of specific language impairment (SLI) and dyslexia, and so it is hardly surprising that many children with SLI go on to show the type of dyslexia associated with weak language skills.

Some children's speech and language difficulties appear to resolve themselves with minimal support as the child develops and especially if it was a speech production problem.

Some children overcome their early speech delay but continue to have language problems that affect reading and spelling.

Some children continue to display severe language difficulties which affect all learning.

Whilst dyslexia and SLI can co-occur, they are separate developmental disabilities and so any support should take into account each area of need.

When a child has speech & language difficulties and dyslexia, their spoken language needs may be very different to their reading and writing needs. It could also mean that the child has specific difficulty with phonological processing which can impact upon both written and spoken language skills. This may be the area where speech & language and dyslexia link or co-occur.

*Speech & Language difficulties (also known as **Specific Language Impairment - SLI** or **Developmental Language Disorder - DLD**) are nearly always identified first as easier to spot if developmental milestones are not reached.*

Identification of dyslexia often takes longer.

Key things to know about *Specific Language Impairment*

- *Large numbers of children are affected by SLI*
- *Typically, children with SLI were late talkers*
- *Children may have expressive language difficulties or receptive language difficulties, or both*
- *They may have difficulty in producing speech sounds accurately (phonological problems) which makes speech unclear and difficult to understand*
- *Children may have difficulty in using language for social communication finding it hard to take turns in conversation, follow social cues, understand jokes and irony - children who have severe difficulty with this may be on the autistic spectrum but only if they also demonstrate complex behavioural needs*
- *SLI can affect the memory as information is harder to remember if it has not been fully understood*
- *This may result in finding it harder to concentrate*

Key things to know about literacy difficulties/dyslexia - taken from the Herts guidance for identifying dyslexia

*Dyslexia is a term used to describe difficulties with developing and acquiring accurate and fluent word reading and/or spelling, which is **severe and persistent** in nature despite personalised learning opportunities (ie differentiated learning based on identified strengths and difficulties) and evidenced-based intervention, (ie there is strong research to suggest that the interventions produce the expected and desired outcomes.)*

Dyslexia is underpinned by difficulties in some or all of the following:

- **Phonological awareness:** the ability to identify, perceive and manipulate sounds in words
- **Verbal memory:** the ability to store, process and manipulate verbal information
- **Verbal processing speed:** the ability to retrieve familiar words quickly and accurately
- **Visual processing speed:** the ability to visually recognise familiar words/ symbols/patterns quickly and accurately

Remember that: -

Dyslexia should be recognised as a continuum (from mild to severe) across a range of abilities rather than a discrepancy between intelligence and literacy skills.

Co-occurring difficulties may be seen in aspects of language, motor coordination and personal organisation, but these are not by themselves markers of dyslexia.

An assessment of dyslexia is a process not an event and should happen over time, taking into account a child/young person's patterns of strength and needs.

Visit the Hertfordshire Specific Learning Difficulties Service webpages for further information on literacy difficulties and dyslexia as well as ways to support learners.

www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/specificlearningdifficulties

Which SLI weaknesses lead towards developing literacy difficulties?

- *Poor awareness of the sounds in words*
- *A weak memory of speech sounds, letter names, parts of words, word naming*
- *A difficulty in physically producing sounds or syllables*
- *Poor vocabulary*
- *Difficulty with spoken and written grammar*

What can be done to support these areas?

- *Remember that SLI and dyslexia can co-occur, but they are separate conditions and so will require separate attention*
- *Generally, children who have difficulty in producing the speech sounds will also have weak phonological skills - they will have difficulty in putting sounds together to form words - this, in turn affects the ability to blend and therefore read*
- *Developing the phonological skills of segmenting and blending is key to making progress*

Speech therapy will determine if there are: -

Speech sound errors - Does your child replace long sounds e.g 's', with shorter sounds e.g 't'? Or do they delete sounds at the beginning or end of words?

Phonological errors - Phonological skills enable us to hear the individual sounds in words for spelling. Can your child use rhyme and syllables in their speech? Can they segment words? Can they blend sounds?

Language weaknesses in general - How is your child's expressive and receptive language?

Expressive language difficulties affect the ability to put words in the right order in a sentence or tell stories in sequence. Speech can be jumbled; grammar may be incorrect and children may have difficulty in learning vocabulary and using it to explain or describe things.

Receptive language difficulties affect the ability to understand what others are saying and respond appropriately. Children may have difficulty with following instructions, understanding stories, jokes, using irony and making friends.

Things to do at home

- *Model correct speech yourself*
- *Give instructions one at a time*
- *Use gestures or visual cues to help your child*
- *Try and be clear, avoid ambiguous language*
- *Encourage active listening - look at the person when they are talking*
- *Give thinking time*
- *Use pictures, objects and photos to help the remembering of new vocabulary*
- *Draw attention to sounds, rhyming words and syllables in words*
- *Praise good speech*
- *Praise good interactions*

Useful websites of games, activities and resources to use

www.speechandlanguagekids.com/dyslexia/

Scroll through and find 'How to do Phonological Awareness Therapy and improve Phonological Awareness skills'. Activities to try.

Also click on 'Expressive Language Delay Resource Page' or 'Receptive Language Delay Resource Page' for lots of ideas and activities to try.

www.bdadyslexia.org.uk has an area in their Advice section entitled 'How can I support my child?'. Click on Reading or Spelling. This section includes a 'Sound Check Booklet' which has lots of activities and games to try.

www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/speech-language-impairment

This gives further information and lots of teaching activities suitable for school and home. Choose Teaching Resources, Teaching Primary (or Secondary), Find practical resources for your primary classroom, Activities - then try some of them out. A favourite game in the 'Definitions' section (Level 3) is 'Get rid of it'.

*Should you wish to print this Booklet, please
select 'Print on both sides' and 'flipped on short
edge'.*

Thank you.