

Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD)

Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD)

Dyscalculia (numbers); Dysgraphia (writing); Dyslexia (reading); Dyspraxia (co-ordination).

It is important to spot the signs of SpLDs such as Dyslexia and Dyspraxia as early as possible, although a formal diagnosis is not required for providing support. By offering support at a young age, we can prevent students from struggling in silence, and help them to achieve their full potential by getting them access to the correct support throughout school and beyond.

Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD), also known as Dyspraxia

Symptoms of DCD

Early developmental milestones of crawling, walking, self-feeding and dressing may be delayed in young children with DCD. Drawing, writing and performance in sports are also usually behind what is expected for their age.

Although signs of the condition are present from an early age, children vary widely in their rate of development. This means a definite diagnosis of DCD does not usually happen until a child with the condition is 5 years old or more.

When to seek medical advice

If you're concerned about your child's health or development, talk to a GP or health visitor, or speak to a nurse, doctor or special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) at your child's school.

They may refer your child to an occupational therapist, paediatrician, or another health professional who can assess them and try to identify any developmental problems.

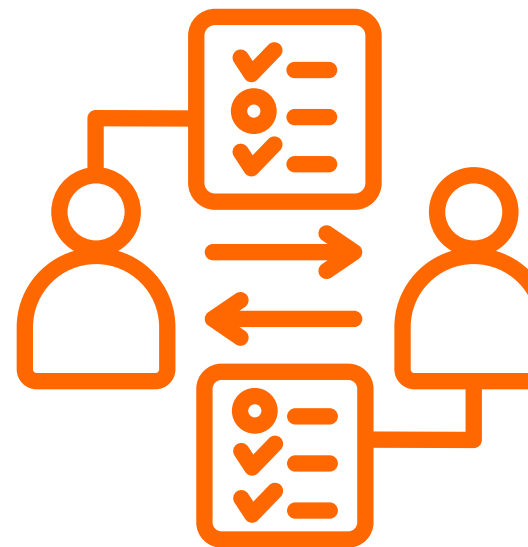
Causes of DCD

Doing co-ordinated movements is a complex process that involves many different nerves and parts of the brain.

Any problem in this process could potentially lead to difficulties with movement and co-ordination. However, a number of risk factors that can increase a child's likelihood of developing DCD have been identified.

These include:

- being born prematurely, before the 37th week of pregnancy,
- being born with a low birth weight,
- having a family history of DCD, although it is not clear exactly which genes may be involved,
- the mother drinking alcohol or taking illegal drugs while pregnant.



Treating DCD

There's no cure for DCD, but a number of therapies can help children to manage their problems.

These include:

- being taught ways to do activities they find difficult, such as breaking down difficult movements into smaller parts and practicing them regularly.
- adapting tasks to make them easier, such as using special grips on pens and pencils so they are easier to hold.



Although DCD does not affect how intelligent a child is, it can make it more difficult for them to learn and they may need extra help to keep up at school.

Treatment for DCD will be tailored to your child and usually involves a number of different healthcare professionals working together.

Although the physical co-ordination of a child with DCD will remain below average, this may be less of a problem as they get older and develop coping strategies. Some children may continue to have problems.

However, difficulties in school – particularly producing written work – can become more prominent and require extra help from parents and teachers.

Dyspraxia or DCD?

While many people in the UK use the term Dyspraxia to refer to the difficulties with movement and co-ordination that first develop in young children, this term is used less often by healthcare professionals.

Instead, most healthcare professionals use the term Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD) to describe the condition.

This term is generally preferred by healthcare professionals because Dyspraxia can have several meanings. For example, Dyspraxia can be used to describe movement difficulties that happen later in life because of damage to the brain, such as from a stroke or head injury.

For more information, please see the NHS website: 'Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (Dyspraxia) in children'

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/developmental-coordination-disorder-dyspraxia/symptoms/>

Family Action **NeurodiverCity** Sheffield
neurodiverCity.sheffield@family-action.org.uk



family-action.org.uk

Family Action. Registered as a Charity in England & Wales no: 264713.
Registered as a Charity in the Isle of Man no: 1206. Registered Company
Limited by Guarantee in England and Wales no: 01068186.