

Language Disorder Advice



Has your child recently been given a diagnosis of Language Disorder, or Developmental Language Disorder?

You might be feeling unsure, upset, surprised, or confused about what a Language Disorder is, and that's really normal.

We've created this advice sheet to help you learn more about them, and to help you feel more reassured.

What is a Language Disorder?



- Long-term difficulty understanding and/ or using language, that persists into school age and onwards.
- It is diagnosed from the age of 5+, when difficulties can no longer be classed as a 'delay'. This is because most children with delays catch up to their peers by the age of 5.
- It ranges in severity, from mild, moderate to severe.
- Children are born with it, but some are identified later in school, as language demands increase. As children are born with it, this means it is not caused by poor parenting.
- Affects a range of language skills, but each child is affected differently.
- It does not link to how intelligent you are. However, language difficulties can make learning at school harder, as most teaching is done through talking, reading and writing, which all use language.

How common is it?

7-10% of children have a Language Disorder (2-3 children in every classroom).

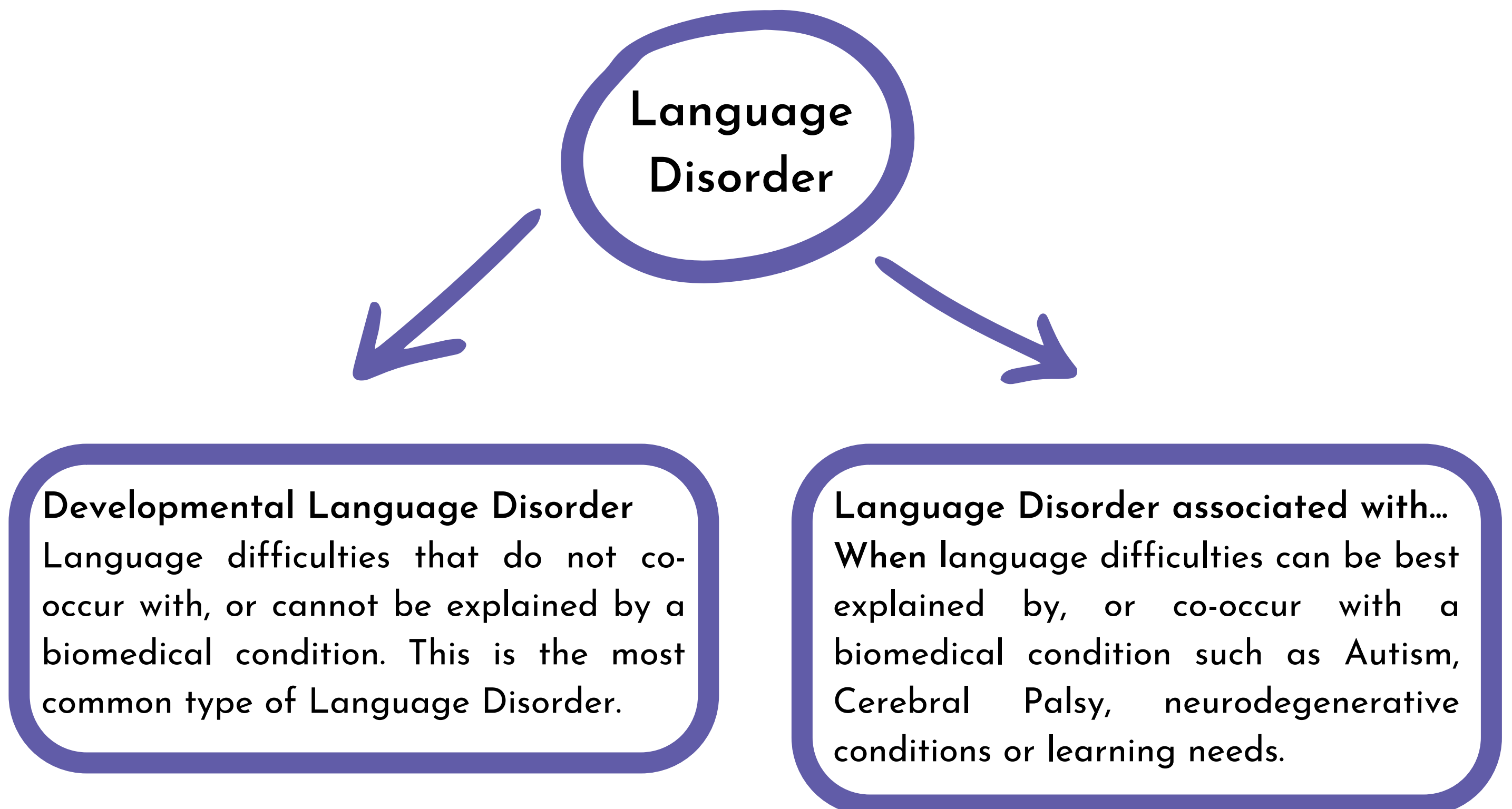
In comparison 1% of children have Autism.

It is one of the most common childhood disabilities, but the least well-known.

It is sometimes called 'the invisible disability'.

What's the difference between a Language Disorder and Developmental Language Disorder?

There are two 'types' of Language Disorder:



On your child's report, you might see 'Language Disorder/ DLD characterised by difficulties with...'. This is so we can explain what your child's Language Disorder 'looks like', as every child is affected differently.

What causes a language disorder?

A Language Disorder can be linked to a biomedical condition, which may explain why a child is finding it harder to understand or use language. However, in most cases, the cause of Language Disorder is not known.

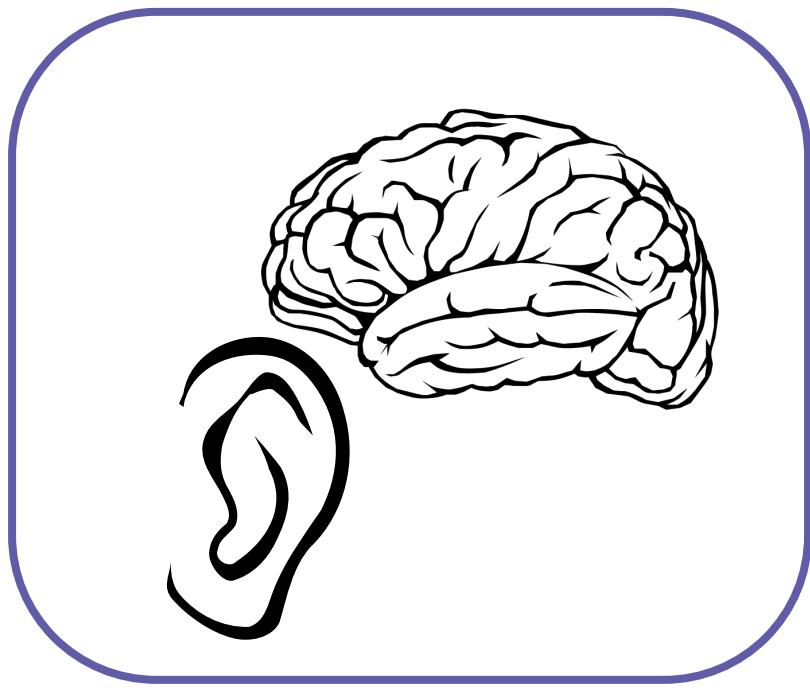
Research suggests children with a Language Disorder have differences in the way their brain is wired to learn language. Their brains find it harder to learn and pick-up language.

Sometimes there is a genetic element, with children whose parents have language difficulties more likely to experience language difficulties themselves. Language disorders are also slightly more common in boys than girls.



What does a Language Disorder affect?

A Language Disorder can present in lots of different ways, and it is unique to each child. Some struggle to understand language, whilst some struggle to use it. Or some find it hard to understand and use it.



Understanding language



Using language



Understanding and using language

'Language' is made of lots of different skills, and any or all of them can be affected. The severity of the difficulty is also unique to each child. Difficulties can range from mild, moderate to severe.

The language skills that could be affected are:

Understanding questions, words and sentences

Limited word knowledge and vocabulary

Word finding difficulties

Making sense of (processing) and remembering language

Making sentences with correct grammar and word order

Story telling and explaining skills

Higher level language (explain, problem solve, predict, inference)

Conversation skills

How is it assessed and diagnosed?

Language skills are assessed by a Speech and Language Therapist. During assessment, they might:

- Talk to parents and teachers
- Observe your child in school
- Talk to your child
- Carry out activities with your child to see how they compare to other children their age, and find out their strengths/needs
- Assess home language skills
- Monitor your child's progress with their language skills over time



Speech and Language Therapists are the only professionals who can diagnose a Language Disorder.

What does this mean for my child?

Are still able to succeed in education, form and maintain friendships and relationships, get jobs and lead a happy life.

They are more at risk of experiencing difficulties in these areas, including behaviour and mental health difficulties, however this is less likely if the right support is in place.

Often show strengths with their visual, practical, and social skills.

They can excel when learning is made as repetitive, visual, and hands-on as possible, instead of relying on talking, reading and writing.

Children with Language Disorders

Have language skills that are around 2-3 years behind their peers. They don't catch up to their peers, and you can't 'cure' or 'fix' a Language Disorder.

However, children continue to make ongoing, steady progress with their language skills.

Tend to do better at tasks, activities and jobs that are not as language-heavy.

e.g. painting, computers, maths, drawing, dancing, sports, cooking, photography.

Please note that the language outcomes of children with a Language Disorder associated with another condition, will be influenced by their other needs/ conditions.

Your Speech and Language Therapist will help by:

- Identifying what your child is struggling with, and what they are doing well.
- Recommending strategies that will help support your child's communication in daily life.
- Setting targets to work towards, that will develop your child's language skills further. Children with a Language Disorder need specific language skills teaching to them, as they find it hard to pick it up naturally, like other children do.
- You and your child can also suggest language targets that you'd like to work towards.
- In some cases, the therapist may do direct work with your child, with additional practice being done by home and school.
- Reviewing your child regularly, to monitor their progress.
- Talking to you about your child's needs, and answering any questions you might have.
- Discharging your child from Speech & Language Therapy with ongoing recommendations, when this is appropriate and has been discussed with you.



What if my child is bilingual?



Language Disorders are just as common in bilingual children as monolingual children. Being bilingual does not cause language delays or disorders. Bilingual children with Language Disorders usually have similar difficulties across both languages. If your child prefers to communicate in one language most of the time, their difficulties will be more noticeable in their stronger language.

What happens next, and how can I help my child?

Making sure people are aware of your child's Language Disorder, and how they can help them. This helps other people be more understanding, and make adaptations for your child.

Therapy to help develop language skills, or learn how to manage and overcome language difficulties. This is usually done by home and school, and overseen by the Speech & Language Therapist, because you see your child the most often.

Using strategies to help your child work around and overcome their difficulties (think of it as being similar to giving a person glasses to help them see better).

Supporting your child to manage their difficulties as they get older. This includes knowing how to ask for help if they need it, and embracing their strengths.

Adapting learning by making it visual, repetitive, hands-on, and trying a range of ways to help your child understand and express themselves as successfully as possible.

Being open and positive with your child about their diagnosis, to help your child feel positive and confident about themselves. Provide opportunities for your child to explore their strengths.

Where can I find out more?

You can find out more about Language Disorder through the following websites.

- <https://radld.org/>
- <https://ican.org.uk/media/1293/developmental-language-disorder.pdf>
- <https://www.rcslt.org/speech-and-language-therapy/clinical-information/developmental-language-disorder>
- <https://childdevelopment.com.au/areas-of-concern/diagnoses/language-disorder/>
- <https://www.acamh.org/topic/developmental-language-disorder/>
- <https://ican.org.uk/>
- <https://www.afasic.org.uk/>
- <https://ican.org.uk/i-cans-talking-point/>
- <https://dldandme.org/>
- <https://thedldproject.com/>
- <https://www.engage-dld.com/>

