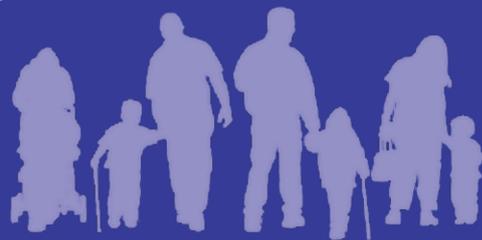


DYSPRAXIA OR DEVELOPMENTAL CO-ORDINATION DISORDER (DCD)

This fact sheet has been written by parent carers for parent carers.
Clinical information has been approved by West Sussex practitioners.



What is dyspraxia or developmental co-ordination disorder?

Dyspraxia, or developmental co-ordination disorder (DCD) is a condition that affects movement and physical co-ordination. A child or young person with dyspraxia/DCD typically finds it harder to learn and perform practical skills & activities. This can make someone appear to do things less speedily, smoothly or accurately than might be expected for their age. It can also cause them to tire easily because they require extra physical and mental effort to carry out movements that others perform easily.

Whilst difficulty co-ordinating large and/or small body movements is the main feature of dyspraxia/DCD, many people also find other skills such as organisation, planning and emotional regulation can be affected. These symptoms can often result in frustration and low-self-esteem. Getting the right support and adaptations, however, to meet your child's physical, social and emotional needs can help them to reach their full potential. It is thought that around 5% of school age children are affected by dyspraxia/DCD, and some will also have other conditions, such as autism, ADHD, or dyslexia.

Characteristics of dyspraxia/DCD

Dyspraxia mainly causes difficulties with co-ordination and physical movement; and the planning, organisation and carrying out of movements in the right order. It can be diagnosed by professionals such as a paediatrician, occupational therapist (OT), physiotherapist or an educational psychologist.

When your child is very young, you may notice that he or she takes slightly longer than peers to reach developmental milestones such as rolling over, sitting up, crawling and walking.

As your child grows, you may also notice that they have difficulties in the following areas:

Movement and co-ordination difficulties

- Your child has difficulties with motor skills such as hopping, skipping, jumping and running.
- He or she may have poor hand-eye co-ordination, which means they may find activities such as catching a ball or riding a bike tricky.
- He or she may have difficulties with fine motor skills such as holding a pencil, handwriting, cutting with scissors and using cutlery.
- They may also find getting dressed, doing up zips and buttons and tying shoelaces difficult.

Although not all children with dyspraxia have issues in other areas, it can also cause difficulties with:

- concentration and memory.
- organising and sequencing a set of instructions. This means your child may find it tricky to follow instructions, copy down information and organise their schoolwork.
- clarity of speech, due to problems with co-ordinating movements to make speech sounds – this is known as verbal dyspraxia.
- picking up new skills – your child may take longer to master them and may need more practice.
- frustration and low self-esteem.

Types of treatment

Although there is not a 'cure' for dyspraxia, with help and treatment it has been found that many children find their condition easier to manage as they grow older. The types of help available for dyspraxia depend on how the condition affects your child. Some children will need help from a number of healthcare professionals. This may include:

- **Occupational Therapy (OT)** – they can help with everyday skills such as dressing. They can also help with skills such as handwriting, either by suggesting adaptations such as pencil grips, or a writing slope to help children maintain a good posture. As a child gets older, if handwriting remains an issue, it may be that the OT suggests that a laptop is used in school and that your child has extra time in exams.





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- **Physiotherapy** – this can be useful if a child needs support with their posture and gross motor skills. The physiotherapist will do an assessment and devise a therapy plan to improve their skills.
- **Speech and Language Therapy (SALT)** – can be useful in helping children with producing speech sounds and in the movement of their tongue and lips to help with the clarity of their speech if this is an issue.

Ask About

- **Disability Living Allowance (DLA)** – your child may qualify for DLA, a state benefit that will help with their care. For further information visit: www.gov.uk/disability-living-allowance-children.
- **Learning and Behaviour Advisory Team (LBAT)** – Offers consultation & training to schools around learning and behaviour when a pupil's progress is being affected by these issues. Ask your child's school for details & visit: <https://westsussex.local-offer.org/services/229>.
- **Reaching Families** – provides training, information & other fact sheets related to this topic. We also offer benefits advice, peer support, a Facebook group & handbook (see below) for parent carers of children & young people with SEND in West Sussex: See: www.reachingfamilies.org.uk.
- **Sensory Processing Differences** - These are closely related to the movement and co-ordination challenges faced by children with dyspraxia/DCD. The Reaching Families fact sheet on *Sensory Processing Issues* and/or our training course *Understanding Sensory Processing Differences* are a good introduction.
- **Single Point of Access (SPoA) West Sussex** - a dedicated route to access specialist emotional wellbeing and mental health support for those aged 4-17. Anyone can refer to SPoA including children & parent carers. Referrals will be directed to the most appropriate help from Youth Emotional Support, YMCA Dialogue or Sussex Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Alternatively, signposting to other sources of support may be given. To make a referral, use the online form at: <https://e-wellbeing.co.uk/support> or Tel: **0300 304 0462**.
- **West Sussex Children's Services** – support from health and social care. If your child is under 18, contact the Integrated Front Door (IFD) for West Sussex Children's Services. Tel: **01403 229900** or email: WSChildrenservices@westsussex.gov.uk. The IFD is also an entry point for the Children with Disabilities (social care) service for children & young people with severe and/or complex disabilities. Eligibility criteria apply – See: <https://westsussex.local-offer.org/services/265>. For over 18s call the Adults' CarePoint: **01243 642121**, or email: socialcare@westsussex.gov.uk.

Further reading and useful links

- ***Making Sense of it All: From Birth to Adulthood*** – Reaching Families' handbook for parent carers of children and young people with SEND in West Sussex. This provides essential information on money matters, including claiming DLA and PIP, as well as social care, health, leisure, travel, education and employment. Go to: www.reachingfamilies.org.uk/guides.html.
- **Dyspraxia Foundation** – for information and resources tel: **01462 454986** or go to: <https://dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk> or email info@dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk.
- **NHS Health A-Z** has information on this condition at: www.nhs.uk/conditions/developmental-coordination-disorder-dyspraxia.
- **Understood** – a website for learning and attention issues has a whole section on dyspraxia. For more, go to their website at: www.understood.org and search for 'dyspraxia'.
- **West Sussex Libraries** – For books on this topic available to borrow for free, go to: <https://arena.westsussex.gov.uk/welcome> and search the library catalogue for 'dyspraxia'.
- **West Sussex Local Offer** – go to <https://westsussex.local-offer.org> for local services, support and details of *Short Breaks* providers for children & young people aged 0 - 25 years with SEND.

