

DYSPRAXIA

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



What is dyspraxia?

Dyspraxia, or developmental co-ordination disorder (DCD) as it also known, is a condition that affects movement and physical co-ordination so a child seems clumsy when they perform some daily activities. Some children with dyspraxia may have other conditions, such as autism, ADHD, and/or dyslexia.

Characteristics of dyspraxia

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 rolling over, sitting up, crawling and walking.

As your child grows, you may also notice that he or she 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

- **For local clubs** and activities to try, refer to our handbooks *Making Sense of It All* and *Making Sense of Adult Life*, which both contain directories of organisations and leisure activities running in West Sussex. For further information, visit: www.reachingfamilies.org.uk/guides.html.
- **Compass Card West Sussex** – a free leisure discount card for 0 to 25 year olds with SEND, which is run by Amaze. Find out more at: www.compasscard.org.uk or by calling: **0300 123 9186**.
- **Short Breaks for Disabled Children** – commissions holiday clubs, after school clubs, buddy schemes and short breaks at home or in the community. Tel: **0330 222 2562** or email: SENDCommissioningTeam@westsussex.gov.uk.
- **Other resources** – The Ashdown Club, Worthing: **01903 528607**; Kangaroos, Haywards Heath: **01444 459108**; PACSO, Chichester: **01243 533353**; Springboard Project, Horsham: **01403 218888**.

Further reading and useful links

- **Making Sense of it All** – our handy parent/carer guide contains information and advice on benefits, support for your child at school, getting help from social services and accessing social & leisure activities – 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.
- **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 Local Offer** – go to <https://westsussex.local-offer.org> and search for 'dyspraxia'.

