

LATE DIAGNOSIS OF DEVELOPMENTAL DYSPRAXIA (DCD)



What is Dyspraxia?

Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD), also known as dyspraxia, is a common disorder affecting fine and/or gross motor coordination in children and adults (Movementmatters.uk). The Dyspraxia Foundation adds to the Movement Matters description, recognising the many non-motor difficulties that may also be experienced by people with the condition and which can have a significant impact on daily life activities. These include memory, perception and processing as well as additional problems with planning, organising and carrying out movements in the right order in everyday situations. Dyspraxia/DCD can also affect articulation and speech. (Dyspraxia Foundation, 2015)

Although dyspraxia/DCD may occur in isolation, it frequently coexists with other conditions such as Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), Dyslexia, language disorders and social, emotional and behavioural impairments.

It is important to remember that not all adults with dyspraxia/DCD fit a description exactly, 'everyone is different'. It is worth remembering that adults with dyspraxia/DCD are often very creative, empathetic, hardworking, persistent, direct and honest.

When and how to seek an assessment for dyspraxia/DCD?

- **General Practitioners**¹ (GP's) are advised by the British Medical Association (BMA) to refer over 16's with suspected dyspraxia/DCD to an occupational therapist or other appropriate professional (eg clinical psychologist, neurologist). Advice can be sought from Movement matters <http://www.movementmattersuk.org/> Sometimes it pays to do a little local research to establish if there is someone in your area who is interested and sympathetic to the difficulties you experience.
- Find the service to suit you, and then apply!
- **Funding** If you are unable to get a referral/assessment under the NHS there are private practitioners but these can be expensive and sometimes require traveling long distances. Some local charities may help you or try your local Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) for current advice and information.
- **Assessment** If you are going to college or university you will be entitled to an assessment of your needs and these are usually quite thorough and productive and will advise as to what is needed to allow you to function on an equal footing with your peers. Visit the learning support department or disability advice service for information about any allowances you may be entitled to (Disability Students Allowance for example). See our factsheet for Further/ Higher Education for more details.

- If you are **unemployed** a diagnostic assessment will identify your strengths and should help with 'reasonable adjustments' for you at work. If you are actively seeking work, an assessment may be paid for by Job Centre Plus. You may need to find a therapist who will assess you first, and give Job Centre Plus their details. (See our factsheet on employment)
- If you are facing an employment tribunal or disciplinary proceedings and you think undiagnosed dyspraxia/DCD is a cause, a diagnostic report will help ensure that you get the protection of the disability provisions of the Equality Act 2010. Human Resources (HR) and Union officials are increasingly aware of dyspraxia/DCD and the need for assessments in the workplace under their duty to the Equality Act. Ask HR or your Union for help.
- Low self-esteem, stress, depression, anxiety are experienced by a number of adults with dyspraxia/DCD and this is something that may need to be addressed. An occupational therapy assessment can look at the sensory stressors you are coping with, and provides you with practical strategies to help alleviate these. You may find some counselling useful and your GP is able to refer you for that. To find a private Occupational therapist in your area, visit www.cotss-ip.org.uk for directory of independent occupational therapists and a help line.
- By joining our Facebook support group (Dyspraxia Foundation National Adult group) you will be able to 'chat' with others who may find themselves experiencing the same things as you are, or there may be a support group in your area. It is always better to find others who can listen and share experiences with you.
- Regular exercise can enhance your mood and keep you in good shape. Swimming, martial arts and horse riding can be excellent choices but if none of these appeal just taking a walk is a great idea and many areas have social groups relating to activities like these.

What does an assessment involve?

- **An Occupational Therapist** with specialist training in dyspraxia/DCD assessments offers a holistic assessment covering education, learning styles, visual and auditory processing, employment and sensory integration with practical every day strategies to help.
- **Psychologists** will assess for cognitive profile with a *WAIS-IV* Test. If the verbal IQ is significantly higher than the non-verbal IQ, dyspraxia/DCD may be 'indicated'. However, the *WAIS-IV* was not designed to be diagnostic of dyspraxia/DCD by itself. So the psychologist may conduct additional tests and/ or refer on to an occupational therapist for further assessment.
- **Work place assessments** are available from specialist services such as Dyspraxia UK and Key 4 Learning Ltd. These are not diagnostic but aim to analyse the work you do and help identify any difficulties you may be experiencing. (See our employment factsheet).
- Ensure you check costs with any professional and their individual qualifications. Ask about their experience of dyspraxia/DCD. You might request a sample report and check if any follow-up or coaching is available. A good relationship with your assessor can be invaluable and could offer you occasional support for many years.
- Be prepared. Take some notes about the things you find difficult and how they affect your life. Take some information on dyspraxia/DCD or take a friend/advocate to help you to remember things.

Diagnosis: what next?

- An assessment should help you manage your difficulties and provide strategies to improve your organisational skills, which reduces stress and improves work performance.
- If your dyspraxia/DCD impacts severely on your communication, you may want to seek advice or intervention from a **Speech and Language Therapist**. A speech and language therapist will provide a holistic assessment of the different areas of communication. NHS funding for speech and language therapy services for adults with developmental conditions are scarce. Ask your GP to refer you to your local Adult Learning Disability speech and language therapy service if available. Seeking a private assessment may be the most viable option. The following website provides information on independent Speech and Language Therapists in the UK <http://www.helpwithtalking.com/>.
- Dealing with a diagnosis can be an emotional and daunting process. There are many on-line chat groups for adults on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube including: Dyspraxia Foundation; Dyspraxia Foundation National Adult Support Group; Dyspraxia UK; Dyspraxia USA and many others. Several local support groups organise social meetings which you may find beneficial. Just put Dyspraxia Support into Google and see what comes up.
- Celebrate dyspraxia! Being sensitive and creative, seeing the larger picture, thinking outside the box, caring for others, being loyal and persistent, and getting things done are fantastic assets!

SUMMARY

- Diagnosis in childhood is ideal however 'late diagnosis' is increasingly common.
- There are times when it is especially useful to seek an assessment and diagnosis such as on entering further of higher education to university or taking a job.
- Not everyone wants a label and diagnosis is a choice. However, getting a diagnosis means you can develop understanding, and effective strategies to support your individual situation.
- The Dyspraxia and Foundation has a number of leaflets, books and other resources that you may find helpful.

Further information available from:

Dyspraxia Foundation, 8 West Alley Hitchin Herts SG5 1EG

Helpline Tel: 01462 454986

Admin Tel: 01462 455016

Fax: 01462 455052

Web: www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk

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