



'Getting a diagnosis of dyspraxia' for under 18s

Dyspraxia (which falls under the umbrella of DCD, (Developmental Coordination Disorders)) can be identified (but not diagnosed) by parents, teachers, friends or even the child/teenager. It is useful to make notes of the difficulties being experienced to keep you focused during any meetings as seeking a diagnosis can be an emotional process and it is easy to become pre occupied by the information you are receiving.

These notes may include:-

- Greater difficulties dressing compared to other children of the same age.
- Unable to tie shoe- laces.
- Unable to ride a bicycle.
- Difficulties with handwriting especially at speed.
- Tripping over or knocking into objects.
- A tendency to spill things.
- Poorly organised.
- Problems following instructions.

The difficulties your child experiences at home may be different from those they are experiencing at school and therefore your child's class teacher may be able to give further input and information.

In the first instance you will need to visit the G.P. who will then be able to refer your child to the relevant professionals. Each professional cannot confirm the diagnosis by themselves but will be able to contribute to the diagnostic process. Whilst we appreciate that diagnosis can be a difficult and sometimes contentious process it is important that relevant health professionals are involved if the diagnosis is to be meaningful.

There is more to dyspraxia than just motor skill deficits, and it often overlaps with other conditions such as dyslexia or ADHD and so the various professionals will be able to assess the child as a whole, resulting in a more thorough and complete picture of the difficulties being experienced.

For a diagnosis there are two specific areas that must be considered.

1. The acquisition and execution of coordinated motor skills is substantially below that expected given to the individual's chronological age and opportunity for skill learning and use and that this significantly and persistently interferes with activities of daily living. (DSM-5). This part of the diagnosis is carried out by either an occupational therapist or physiotherapist. Where there are speech and language difficulties, your child will be referred to a speech and language therapist (SALT).
2. The motor skill difficulties are not better explained by an intellectual disability, visual impairment or a neurological condition affecting movement. (DSM-5) This part of the diagnosis is carried out by a paediatrician or paediatric neurologist.

Your child may be referred to the child development team where there is a multidisciplinary team of professionals (such as a paediatrician, physiotherapist, occupational therapist and speech and language therapist) who will assess your child.

The occupational therapist or physiotherapist will be able to assess your child's movement, motor skills, coordination skills and difficulties in the planning and organisation of movement and executive function... A speech and language therapist will assess your child's speech and language development. A paediatrician or paediatric neurologist will ensure that the difficulties your child is experiencing is not due to another medical condition,

In addition, your child may be referred to see an educational psychologist to help your child with their school work.

If you are unsure about anything that is happening during the assessment do not be afraid to ask. You should receive a comprehensive report of the findings during the weeks following assessment, and you may want to ascertain how long that will take. We appreciate that you will be very keen to know what the professionals think and you can ask if they can give you some idea of their thoughts on the day.

NB The Dyspraxia Foundation sells a wide range of publications that you may like to refer to. See Publications list and Order form:

<http://www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/shopping/product-category/books>

There is also free book to members and other information available in the members only section.

This can be an unsettling time and you may feel rather alone. The Dyspraxia Foundation has a number of regional support groups, and a helpline which may be useful to you. Call 01462 454986

Reference:

- DIAGNOSTIC AND STATISTICAL MANUAL OF MENTAL DISORDERS, Fifth Edition, (DSM –5) published by the American Psychiatric Association (APA)

*DSM is a classification system published by the American Psychiatric Association and used internationally by researchers and clinicians. Importantly it lists the central features of each disorder to help clinicians make an accurate diagnosis.

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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