

*Global developmental delay*



Image source: Pinterest, (no date)

**Introduction**

According to Snap Cymru (no date) additional learning needs can be described as having learning difficulties or disabilities making it harder for a child to learn in comparison to children of the same age. Global developmental delay can be described as when a child takes longer to reach certain developmental milestones than other children of their age (Mencap, no date). According to Contact, (2024) state that whilst all children reach milestones at different times, there is usually a predictable pattern of the age at which it happens. Nevertheless, if they have failed to reach two or more milestones in all areas of development a child had global developmental delay (GDD). Whilst the signs might vary from different children it will be noticed before the age of 5 years old (LDnetwork, 2024). GDD usually affects 1-3% of the population of this age. Which makes this to be a common condition within paediatrics (Mithyantha, Kneen, McCann and Gladstone, 2017). The delay in some children's development maybe short term and with some extra support from parents or teachers will be enough for them to with overcome it. However, some children will have a more significant delay leading on to other learning disabilities which require specific additional support for longer. GDD can be diagnosed alongside other conditions such as Autism or Down's syndrome (Cafcass, no date).

**Identification and diagnosis**

Staff knowledge and experience is vitally important in identifying if a child in their care has an additional need (Curran, 2020). Early screening to identify and diagnose GDD, allows for better access to services sooner and for better outcomes for the child (Vallance, *et al*, 2021). LDnetwork, (2024) explain how thorough assessments should be conducted to ensure the right pathway of intervention is given. This key information is likely to come from the child's health visitor as part of the healthy child wales programme (2022) whilst carrying routine growth and development checks that monitor children under 5's development (Welsh government, 2022). Under the additional needs education tribunal (Wales) act health services must act in the child's best interests if they suspect an additional need and notify the correct local authority. Consequently, both health and education services will collaborate to support young learners (Welsh government, 2018). However, once an initial assessment has been done and referrals are in place there are usually long waiting lists for diagnosis. The Griffiths III assessment is a tool used by paediatricians for assessing the developmental state for early detection and diagnosis for children with GDD and other disabilities (Wang *et al*, 2021).

**Barriers**

Families who have a child with GDD can be under a high level of stress which can further affect the parent-child relationship and interaction, these negative emotions can impact the child's behaviour increasing pressure on the parent (Dong et al, 2023). Moreover, parents can prevent further intervention, and will disagree with referrals due to being in denial of their child's development delay, due to their own lack of understanding of the importance the referral will make towards their child's progression (Choo, Agarwal, How and Yeleswarapu, 2019). Yet, some parents are not ready to process and implement the information to their child for intervention and are likely to need some time before accepting support. Professionals need to be mindful of how to fully clarify the meaning of what the level of intervention will look like and the referral process. Rather, the importance of clear communication will maximise compliance of intervention that will ultimately improve the development of children with GDD and their long-term outcomes (Dong et al, 2023). According to Hall, (2011, p. 60) practitioners should respect and support parents with these worries ensuring they have full understanding of everything occurring, whereby creating open and honest communication. Consequently, it then ensures effective engagement from parents that will have a positive impact on their child's progress and behaviours. Dunsmuir, Frederickson, and Cline, (2024, p. 132) agree that parental involvement during assessments can assist with all decisions. However, it is historical from many reports that parents lack confidence in systems and the whole process has been described by parents as a stressful experience. According to Broomhead, (2019) regardless of their child's disabilities, studies show that parents feel there is often a stigma against the child and the disability whether it is visible or not.

**Strategies**

Since GDD can affect children in various ways, means strategies for children will differ to help them with their learning. Some examples could be targeting certain areas of delay such as speech and language therapy or physical therapy if a child needs support with their gross motor skills. Therefore, children with GDD are likely to benefit from an Individual development plan (IDP) or as previously know (IEP) Individual educational plan that includes strategies to support the child and their specific area of needs or needs that provides a person-centered approach (Welsh government, 2022). As stated in the additional learning needs code for wales 2021, the IDP document is usually devised by the local authority for children under compulsory school age; where they work with other services that have referred for intervention and the right provision for the child (Welsh government, 2021, p. 83-84)

**To conclude, early intervention is paramount for childrens long term outcomes in life. In addition, professionals who are knowledgeable in identifying GDD and other additional needs provide the best support strategy tailored to the individual child and need. Furthermore, parents should be involved and supported to ensure they understand and feel included throughout the whole identification and diagnosis process.**

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## ALN poster script

Good afternoon, my name is Rhian Moore and welcome to this webinar.

I am joined here this afternoon by four other members to discuss supporting children with different additional learning needs. In attendance, we have Stacey Jones, Ashley Macdonald and Cheryl Davies. Thank you all.

I have sent out the agenda to you all for you to look at what topics each person will be discussing before this webinar today.

***Did you all receive it and have a chance to look over it?***

Before I make a start, I would like to add that if there are any questions, please raise your hands at the end of each presentation and the presenter will endeavor to answer them.

I will now share my screen to show the poster I have devised and make a start on my presentation.

### Introduction

The Additional Learning Needs topic I will be discussing today will be Global developmental delay. Looking at how it is identified and diagnosed. I will be looking at possible barriers and challenges that can be faced before or during diagnosis, and the importance of parental involvement and staff training to provide inclusive practice.

I will also look at a support strategy that can be put in place to support the child with GDD and their learning effectively.

According to Snap Cymru (no date), additional learning needs can be referred to as learning difficulties or disabilities, making it harder for a child to learn compared to children of the same age. Indeed, Global developmental delay can be described as when a child takes longer to reach certain developmental milestones than other children of their age (Mencap, no date). According to Contact, (2024) states that, whilst all children reach milestones at different times, there is usually a predictable pattern of the age at which it happens. Nevertheless, if they have failed to reach two or more milestones in all areas of development a child has global developmental delay (GDD). Whilst the signs might vary from different children it will be noticed before the age of 5years old (LDnetwork, 2024).

GDD usually affects 1-3% of the population of this age. Which makes this to be a common condition within paediatrics (Mithyantha, Kneen, McCann and Gladstone, 2017).

The delay in some children's development may be short term and some extra support will be enough for them to overcome it sooner. However, some children have a more significant delay leading on to other learning disabilities, which require specific additional support long term. In addition, GDD can be diagnosed alongside other conditions such as Autism or Down's syndrome (Cafcass, no date).

However, it is important to note that not all children always follow development in the 'normal' pattern, and this does not mean there is GDD present. Variants can be bottom shuffling instead of crawling or maybe later at walking or may completely miss out the crawling phase and begin walking. Other variations to some delay in development could be due to family history, environmental factors such as lack of stimulation in play or not attending preschool. Usually, these children will eventually catch up if there are no other factors of risk involved (Choo, Agarwal, How and Yeleswarapu, 2019).

However, according to (Dornelas, 2016), where there are risk factors that are multifactorial it can negatively influence a child's development. Nevertheless, (Choo, Agarwal, How, and Yeleswarapu, 2019) emphasise that practitioners should be able to recognise where a child's development could be showing other red flags meaning that more exploration is needed to assess development further.

### **Identification and diagnosis**

Staff knowledge and experience is vitally important in identifying if a child in their care has an additional need (Curran, 2020). Early screening to identify and diagnose Global Developmental Delay, allows for better access to services sooner and for better outcomes for the child (Vallance, *et al*, 2021). GDD has many signs and symptoms, some of these can be identified as babies however, others may not be as apparent until they are at school age.

Welsh government (2018, p. 28) agrees with how timely and early detection of additional learning needs is paramount in providing adequate support for the child. Appropriate early intervention for the child will prevent the need for more costly interventions later in life where this is less likely to be as effective for the young person.

LDnetwork, (2024) explain how thorough assessments should be conducted to ensure the right pathway of intervention is given. This key information provided is likely to come from the young child's health visitor as part of the healthy child Wales programme (2022) whilst carrying out routine growth and development checks that monitor children under 5's development (Welsh government, 2022).

Notably, primary health carers have huge significance in early identification through developmental checks and screening to identify development delays in young children. Therefore, it is paramount that they will have the knowledge and skills in identifying possible GDD and put the necessary referrals in place (Choo, Agarwal, How and Yeleswarapu, 2019).

Under the additional needs education tribunal (Wales) act health services must act in the child's best interests if they suspect an additional need and notify the correct local authority. Consequently, both health and education services will collaborate to support young learners (Welsh government, 2018).

However, once an initial assessment has been done and referrals are placed, there are usually long waiting lists for diagnosis. This is for the Griffiths III assessment, a tool that is used for assessing the developmental state for early detection and diagnosis of children with possible GDD and other disabilities (Wang *et al*, 2021).

Also, family participation in detecting and recognising that their child does not appear to be developing as expected, is an important factor in assisting with the diagnosis that can get the correct support early. In order to achieve this, parents need information that can guide them through their child's development process that reduces stress in supporting them to gain knowledge and the necessary skills to help with their child's learning (Al-Onizat, 2019).

Additionally, there is clear definition under the Children's act (1989) that effective multidisciplinary working between health professionals and education is needed to accommodate specific learning needs of children who have been identified with difficulties during a development assessment (Wall, 2012, p. 19).

Likewise, the English Special Educational Needs and Disabilities legislation and the principles laid out in its code of practice; explain how great efforts continue to be made to help coordinate this effectively between services working together. Where families benefit from a holistic and family centered approach allowing them to be involved throughout the whole process of assessments, identification and intervention (Dunsmuir, Frederickson, and Cline, 2024, p 135).

### **Barriers**

However, despite these efforts, in some cases parents may be reluctant to acknowledge their child's development delay or the concerns they have initially regarding the diagnosis process and what is involved. Furthermore, some parents can have concerns with how an additional learning need is perceived (Holland, Pell and KIDS, 2018). Families who have a child with GDD can be under a high level of stress, which can further affect the parent-child relationship and interaction; these negative emotions can affect the child's behaviour increasing pressure on the parent (Dong et al, 2023). Moreover, parents can prevent further intervention, and will disagree with referrals, due to being in denial of their child's development delay, caused by their own lack of understanding of the importance the referral will make towards their child's progression (Choo, Agarwal, How and Yeleswarapu, 2019). Yet, some parents are not ready to process, then implement the information to their child for intervention, and are likely to need some time before accepting support. Professionals need to be mindful of how to fully clarify the meaning of what the level of intervention will look like and the referral process. Rather, the importance of clear communication will maximise compliance of intervention that will ultimately improve the development of children with GDD and their long-term outcomes (Dong et al, 2023).

According to Hall, (2011, p. 60) practitioners should respect and support parents with these worries ensuring they have full understanding of everything occurring, whereby creating open and honest communication. Consequently, it then ensures effective engagement from parents that will have a positive impact on their child's progress and behaviours.

Dunsmuir, Frederickson, and Cline, (2024, p. 132) agree that parental involvement during assessments can assist with all decisions. However, it is historical from many reports that parents lack confidence in systems and parents have described the whole process as a stressful experience. This was highlighted in the Lamb inquiry (2009) and how the special educational needs system (SEND) in England was looked upon with low expectations and had failed to fulfil the needs of children and families. These findings remain to be considered, as some legislative responses to the inquiry remain unresolved (Lamb, 2009).

According to Broomhead, (2019) regardless of their child's disabilities, studies show that parents also feel there is often a stigma against the child and the disability whether it is visible or not. Furthermore, parents have reported that where their child displays behaviours that are deemed inappropriate, this leads to negative reactions from others such as comments and hostility. Notably, having a traumatic effect on the parent. Moreover, this coincides with another concern raised from the Lamb inquiry, which was about the way parents had been spoken to and what attitudes they had encountered. However, there have since been major reforms and changes because of the Lamb inquiry that are still ongoing to make improvements in these areas along with many others (Dunsmuir, Frederickson, and Cline, 2024, p. 133).

### **Strategies**

This last part of this presentation leads to early intervention support strategies that can be used to support children with GDD. Referring to the Warnock report (1978), her recommendations were that intervention must start as early as possible and in the earliest years parents should be regarded as the one of the main supports for their child (Crutchley, 2018, p. 115). Thus, parents can play a crucial role in early intervention activities together with practitioners as part of the additional learning provision put in place. For example, with play ideas for at home, speech and language assistance and possibly parenting groups from other services, whether that be in the home or in a pre-school setting such as flying start. This forms part of the additional needs code for Wales (Welsh government, 2018, p. 58). It is important that a collaborative approach around the support strategy consider the unique child regarding their specific need and wishes of both the child and parent. Furthermore, thought must be taken to how these arrangements can impact the child and their parents (Welsh government, 2017).

Since GDD can affect children in various ways, means strategies for children will differ to help them with their learning. Some examples could be targeting certain areas of delay such as speech and language therapy or physical therapy if a child needs support with their gross motor skills. Therefore, children with GDD are likely to benefit from an Individual development plan (IDP) or as previously know (IEP) Individual educational plan that includes strategies to support the child and their specific area of needs or needs that provides a person-centered approach (Welsh government, 2022).

As stated in the additional learning needs code for wales 2021, the IDP document is usually devised by the local authority for children under compulsory school age; where they work with other services that have referred for intervention and the right provision for the child (Welsh government, 2021, p. 83-84). The importance of this early intervention is widely acknowledged, ensuring that all children are given the opportunities to reach their full potential. All IEPs are reviewed at regular times, with parents views being sought and consulted with throughout (Wall, 2011, p. 143). However, issues were highlighted by Mitchell, Morton and Hornby, (2010) concerning parental involvement that argued even though parents should be involved in the IEP/IDP this was not always the case which created problems for building relationships with parents. Social and cultural reasons were identified from parents lack of participation due to language and educational jargon (Hirsh, 2013). Similarly, Nutbrown and Clough, (2010, p. 35) explain that parents engagement comes from how well the practitioners' approach is to share information, with the use of language used in order for parents to not feel excluded. However, in many other cases parents noted that during planning and evaluating the provision needed for their child they received good sensitive communication regularly, and practitioners were engaging in a way that allowed them to feel included with opportunities for their voices to be heard as a right for their child. Notably, this was due to the fact staff working with their child had been given training opportunities that prepared them for supporting a child with GDD (Gov.uk, 2021). Indeed, when staff have received adequate training that enhance their skills to successfully provide inclusive provision, they feel more confident and empowered in supporting the child, whereby influencing shared values and visions between the parent and child. Whereas, there had been some concern from practitioners that they had felt ill-equipped with no extra training to support and as a result children were less likely to make any progress (Crutchley, 2018, p 132-133). Likewise, early year's practitioners who provide care in various settings explain how they do not get the recognition and support deserved whilst providing effective support to children with ALN. For instance, lack of staff training, resources and time needed to plan all have a negative impact on their work (Rees-Edwards and Greenway, 2021). As a result, gaps in understanding the child's specific development needs highlights the significance for practitioners to receive adequate training to support the child with GDD to avoid possibly providing intervention activities that do not suit the child (Gov.uk, 2021). Furthermore, Nutbrown, (2014, p. 31) agrees by also adding that inclusive practice is a process and by continuous professional development and planning, practitioners can be well-equipped to provide effective strategies within the setting that is suitable for each child's differing needs.

To conclude, early intervention is paramount for childrens long-term outcomes in life. In addition, professionals who are knowledgeable in identifying GDD and other additional needs provide the best support strategy tailored to the individual child. Furthermore, parents should be involved and supported to ensure they understand and feel included throughout the whole identification and diagnosis process.

Thank you for listening. If there are no questions we will move on to the next speaker Ashley Macdonald who will be talking to us about Autism: speech and language disorder

Thank you Ashley – as no one has any questions we will move on to Stacey Jones who will be talking about Downs syndrome

I have one question i would like to ask Stacey

Thank you for that. We will now move on to our last speaker Cheryl Davies who will be sharing with us an Interpretation of Tourettes syndrome

Thank you everyone for this, it has been a really interesting and informative webinar with lots of important points made. I have enjoyed listening to each one of the topics, as I am sure you all have as well. I have noticed how there are some common threads running throughout each one of the topics that include how important it is for educators to fully understand the specific additional need of the child so they can provide the best holistic support. In addition, some barriers were noted and how specialist services for intervention can be limited, however changes are being made that recognise previous barriers highlighted and improvements are being made. Furthermore, welsh government are supporting young learners with ALN to overcome any barriers that could prevent them from reaching their full potential, that creates a combined framework to ensure children with ALN have the right support available.

That brings this webinar to a close – thank you all for your input.