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Introduction

Children and young people that have learning difficulty or disabilities need extra or different support to be able to learn compared to their peers, in Wales this is referred to Additional Learning needs (ALN) (Welsh Government, (no date). In addition, the Additional Learning needs and education tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 states, children and young people have additional learning needs if they have a disability or learning difficulty which requires additional learning provision, regardless of if the disability or learning difficulties occur from a medical condition or otherwise (legislation, 2018). Snapcymru (no, date) states that there are close to one in five children in Wales who have ALN. However, the legal definition of ALN refers to children and young people with learning, physical or sensory needs which make it difficult and harder for these children to learn than other children of the same age (Dewis, 2023). Therefore, In the Curriculum for Wales there is a child centred approach that early years practitioners must use to teach in the way that is best to meet the child's individual needs, overcoming and breaking down barriers in providing outstanding educational opportunities for all children (Welsh Government, no date). The ALN I will be discussing is Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD) which is also known as Dyspraxia and how this condition is identified and diagnosed the impact of barriers with this Additional learning need and the support that is given to children and their families.

What is DCD.

Historically identified as clumsiness and not recognised as a condition. DCD is a neurological and developmental disorder known for having poor motor coordination and difficulty learning motor skills than other children their own age that affects 1 in 20 primary aged children and is often identified more in boys than girls (Health direct, 2025). Furthermore, both the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) and the international classification of Diseases (ICD-11) that is used by health professionals worldwide to classify mental and developmental disorders refers the condition as (DCD). Therefore, not all individuals with DCD have the same symptoms, but it often impacts and affects fine motor and gross motor skills, coordination which may cause frequent falls or trips. DCD also impacts children's hand-eye-coordination. Usually, children with DCD may find carrying out multiple actions that need doing simultaneously or sequencing (SASC, 2010).

The diagnosis and testing

There is no test for DCD but the disorder is diagnosed by a team of medical professionals ranging from a pediatrician, physical therapist, child psychologist who will assess the child's physical cognitive development.

However, the signs of DCD are displayed from an early age, the signs can be easily missed as children develop at different rates and stages because of this the diagnosis does not happen until the age of 5 years old or possible older (Cleveland Clinic, 2025).sing child fine and gross motor skills.



Impact and barriers .

The main one that is been discussed is a social model that early year's practitioners can lack awareness, understanding and training in this condition these barriers often cause children with DCD delayed identification and not have the additional support that are needed and missed opportunities for early innervation. Supporting this Cairney et al 2011 stated that limited understanding of how to identify children with DCD from educational settings and parents and how to make accommodations and support the needs of children with this condition, results in unmet needs of the children with DCD who then often go on to develop mental health and secondary physical challenges (Cheryl et al 2012) Similarly to this (Purcell et al, 2024) highlighted that DCD in a wider society is less well understood by teacher, health provisions and the general public. This frustration led by parents about the lack of professional awareness of DCD has driven parents to raise awareness of this condition. Hunt et al's, 2020 research results suggest that professionals have poor awareness of DCD and the social and psychological effect of DCD and that 82% of teach in the research believed that they should play part in identifying early warning signs of this disorder. Furthermore, confusion from early years practitioners and professionals in medical teams who may not know DCD is another word for dyspraxia (NHS, 2023)

To reduce this barrier there needs to be training for practitioners about DCD through integrating awarenesses of DCD by incorporating it into ALN especially DCD into the mandatory child development training programs. This will make sure that all early year's practitioners regardless of their role or level will understand DCD and the impact it has for children and know how to support the needs and development so that the child is able to successfully participate in the foundation stage of learning (Department of education, 2023).

In December 2024 the Welsh government allocated £10 Million to support ALN provision providing financial help to improve educational standards and provision in Wales to meet the needs of children and young people with ALN (Welsh Government, 2024).

In Conclusion, children with DCD are still facing challenges in the early years may be due to a lack of awareness and confusion from early practitioners and professionals between the DCD and Dyspraxia and not knowing that they are the same disorder. This lack of awareness is causing missed and delayed diagnosis. Which impacts not only on child learning and physical development but also their social skills, confidence and long-term mental health. However, despite these barriers there are strategies that can make a real difference including incorporating DCD awareness into early years training and early years settings accessing the funding such as Additional Support Grant We must raise the awareness and improve the knowledge of this disorder so children can overcome their difficulties and thrive to reach their full potential.

Usefully links

[advice for parents of children will DCD \(NHS, 2025\).](#) [NHS 111 Wales - Health A-Z : Developmental co-ordination disorder \(dyspraxia\) in children](#)