

Speech and Language Delay/Disorder

Introduction

“Disability is something to be diagnosed, treated and cured through rehabilitation or normalisation.” (Toro et al., 2020, p. 1)

We need to stop thinking that having a disability should be a problem and stopping children taking part. We need to change our mindset and the way we teach to ensure that everyone is included and each child is able to access the full curriculum.

What is a speech delay/disorder?

Pietrangelo (2019) describes “speech as the physical act of producing sounds and saying words and that a toddler with a speech delay may have trouble forming the correct sounds to make words.”

Over time a child will naturally acquire language from an early age, with each child developing at their own pace. Learning a language will take some time and each child will meet each milestone at a different point.

Along with Karen Gill many paediatricians believe that children by the age of two should have a word bank of around 50 words and by the age of three their vocabulary broadens to around 1000 words and are able to speak in three-to-four-word sentences (Pietrangelo, 2019). However, a major delay in meeting milestones may indicate a speech and language disorder.

A child’s parent or teacher will more often be the first to notice a speech or language delay, however this must be diagnosed by a speech professional.

“The importance of timely identification and of providing appropriate provision as soon as possible for a child or young person with ALN cannot be overemphasised. The earlier action is taken, the more effective the action is likely to be” (Welsh Government, 2018, p.28).

Even though older children and adults can be successfully supported with a speech and language delay, “identifying a speech and language delay or disorder early on is one of the keys to successful outcomes in speech and language therapy” (Rabbi, 2019).

“Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) is a diagnosis given to children and young people who have lifelong spoken language difficulties. It is common and research carried out by I CAN (no date), found that it is affecting approximately 7.6% of all children primary school, which equates to 2 or 3 in every average class of 30 in the UK.”

What can cause a speech delay?

A speech delay can tell something about a child’s physical and intellectual development. Some examples of the causes of a speech delay include:

- ☐ Having a problem with the mouth
- ☐ Hearing loss
- ☐ Lack of stimulation
- ☐ ASD or a neurological problem
- ☐ Apraxia

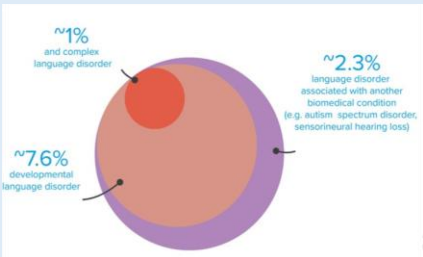


Image 1

Within the UK there are around 1.4 million children that have long term speech, language and communication needs, this roughly equates to 10% of children.

Impacts of having a speech and language delay

"The psychosocial consequences of early receptive language problems are pervasive and continue into adult life" (Schoon, 2010).

Without social interactions a child could find it hard to form relationships with other children and school staff. This social interaction allows children to play and exchange thoughts and feelings.

"Developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky theorised that we all develop our inner-voice when we play as children" (Spectrum Health, 2018).

A child who gets frustrated easily or has limited communication abilities is more likely to stay away from other children, making it harder for them to learn new words, or how to interact with others. Children who develop language skills are able to make friends and build confidence.

A child with a speech and language disorder may find it difficult to follow instructions especially if these instructions were presented verbally with no visual aid.

Barriers

"Childhood apraxia of speech is an uncommon speech disorder in which a child has difficulty making accurate movements when speaking. The brain struggles to develop plans for speech movement" (Mayo Clinic, 2019).

- Similarly to speech and language delay the symptoms of childhood apraxia of speech includes:
- ☐ Delayed onset of first words
 - ☐ A limited number of spoken words
 - ☐ The ability to form only a few consonant or vowel sounds

Even though Childhood apraxia of speech is not the same as a speech or language delay it is still a barrier that can restrict a child from being able to access the full curriculum without strategies being put in place.

Strategy to Support Speech and Language Delay

The Picture Exchange Communication System is designed to be used by a variety of people such as education professionals and parents.

Even though implementing this strategy does not require a professional qualification, Bondy and Frost (2010) believe that for anyone wanting to implement the picture exchange system, they should access and complete a two-day training course.

This form of communication can be successful in a variety of settings if we ensure the pictures are easy to understand and that they are also labelled (Bondy and Frost, 2010).

"Because PECS is a hierarchical system, students will progress through each phase at their own rate as they master each successive goal" (Andersen, 2010)

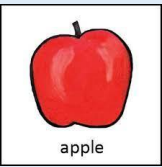


Image 2

Overview

To conclude "speech, language and communication are crucial to young children’s overall development. Being able to speak clearly and process speech sounds, to understand others, to express ideas and interact with others are fundamental building blocks for a child’s development." (Walker, 2019)

Even though no intervention will benefit all children and we will receive a variation of responses (Snowling, 2013, p. 11) if we as practitioners ensure that the intervention and strategies are systematic, structured well and incorporated into everyday teaching and learning, then we are giving children the opportunity to develop and progress in a way that suits them individually.

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