

What is Down Syndrome?

This poster will explore the additional learning needs aspect of Down Syndrome. It will discuss what causes Down Syndrome, What barriers there may be and how to support children with Down Syndrome.

What is Down Syndrome?

Down Syndrome is a condition which people are born with. It occurs when a change occurs in the sperm or egg which the person was conceived with. This results in the fetus gaining an extra chromosome. (NHS, 2023). There is no knowledge of why this happens. However, it is suggested that this could be due to the age of the mother at the time of conception. (Down Syndrome Education, No date). This is argued against by Global Down Syndrome Foundation (No date) which shares that statistically 80% of babies born with Down Syndrome have mothers aged under 35.

There are some physical indicators that may occur in a person with Down Syndrome. These are:

- Low muscle tone
- A small physical build
- Cognitive delays
- Slanted eyes
- A deep singular crease in the palm of their hands (National Down Syndrome Society, No date).

There are other health conditions which may be found in people with Down syndrome, these can include; hearing and sight issues, heart defects and breathing problems such as asthma. (Nemours Kids health 2022).

However, not all people with Down Syndrome will have these traits and additional health issues (Down Syndrome Association, No date).

Diagnosing Down Syndrome

NHS (2021) explains that the diagnosing process of diagnosing Down Syndrome typically starts before birth. When mothers are around 10 –14 weeks pregnant they are offered a combined test to work out the probability of their child having Down Syndrome. The Down's Syndrome Association (2024) further explains that if the chance is high, they will be offered further testing. However, all of these tests are optional to parents.

Barriers for Children with Down Syndrome

Aside from the physical barriers discussed previously in **What is Down Syndrome?** The Global Down Syndrome Foundation (No date) explains that some people may show prejudice and discrimination against people with down syndrome, sometimes subconsciously due to lack of education and awareness on the topic.

In conclusion, when supported correctly children with Down Syndrome can develop holistically to their fullest of their capability, resulting in a success within their academic careers and in their personal lives.

Supporting Children with Down Syndrome

There are a variety of ways professionals and families can support a child with down syndrome. One suggested method is by ensuring to give ample praise when the child learns something new as this will encourage future learning and interactions(NHS, 2023).

Additionally, the Welsh Government (No date) explains that the current ALN system implemented in care and education settings has been in practice since 2021. It further explains that a positive method of support would be for the professionals within settings to work together with other multi-agency professionals and the families of the children to make and implement an ILP and an ALP for the children in the areas which need support.

There are organisations such as Down Syndrome UK that target educating the settings and families of the children with Down Syndrome by educating them on how best to help support the children with Down Syndrome. (Down Syndrome UK, No date).

Down Syndrome Ireland (2018) suggest practical support that can be implemented into educational settings to enable the children to make the most of their time in the environment such as visual timetables. which support the UNCRC rights of the child.

Image : Freepik, No date.

