

DYSPRAXIA

This fact sheet has been written by parent carers for parent carers.



What is dyspraxia?

Dyspraxia, or developmental co-ordination disorder (DCD) as it is sometimes called, is a condition that affects movement and physical co-ordination so a child seems clumsy when they perform some daily activities. Some children with dyspraxia may have other conditions, such as autism, ADHD, and/or dyslexia.

Characteristics of dyspraxia

Dyspraxia mainly causes difficulties with co-ordination and physical movement; the planning, organisation and carrying out of movements in the right order. It can be diagnosed by professionals such as a paediatrician, occupational therapist (OT), physiotherapist or an educational psychologist.

When your child is very young, you may notice that he or she takes slightly longer than peers to reach developmental milestones such rolling over, sitting up, crawling and walking.

As your child grows, you may also notice that he or she has difficulties in the following areas.

Movement and co-ordination difficulties

- Your child has difficulties with motor skills such as hopping, skipping, jumping and running.
- He or she may have poor hand-eye co-ordination, which means they may find activities such as catching a ball or riding a bike tricky.
- He or she may have difficulties with fine motor skills such as holding a pencil, handwriting, cutting with scissors and using cutlery.
- They may also find getting dressed, doing up zips and buttons and tying shoelaces difficult.

Although not all children with dyspraxia have issues in other areas, it can also cause difficulties with:

- concentration and memory.
- organising and sequencing a set of instructions. This means your child may find it tricky to follow instructions, copy down information and organise their schoolwork.
- clarity of speech, due to problems with co-ordinating movements to make speech sounds – this is known as verbal dyspraxia.
- picking up new skills – your child may take longer to master it and may need more practice.
- frustration and low self-esteem.

Types of treatment

Although there is not a 'cure' for dyspraxia, with help and treatment it has been found that many children find their condition easier to manage as they grow older. The types of help available for dyspraxia depend on how the condition affects your child. Some children will need help from a number of healthcare professionals. This may include:



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- **Occupational Therapy (OT)** – they can help with daily living activities such as dressing, and with skills such as handwriting, either by suggesting adaptations such as pencil grips or a writing slope to help children maintain a good posture. As a child gets older, if handwriting remains an issue, it may be that the OT suggests that a laptop is used in school and that your child has extra time in exams.
- **Physiotherapy** – this can be useful if a child needs support with their posture and gross motor skills. The physiotherapist will do an assessment and devise a therapy plan to improve their skills.
- **Speech and Language Therapy (SALT)** – can be useful in helping children with producing speech sounds and in the movement of their tongue and lips to help with the clarity of their speech if this is an issue.

Ask about

- **Information, Advice and Support (IAS)** – Amaze supports families of children and young people with SEN and disabilities in Brighton and Hove. We have a helpline, publications and a website. We also run workshops and courses and can offer one-to-one support with EHC planning and making DLA and PIP claims. Call Amaze on: **01273 772289** or visit: **www.amazebrighton.org.uk**.
- **Compass Card** – a free leisure discount card administered by Amaze for 0 to 25 year olds registered on The Compass who live or go to school in Brighton and Hove or West Sussex, or who are looked after by social services in these areas. Call Amaze on: **01273 772289** (Brighton and Hove).
- **Independent Support** – Amaze's Independent Supporters provide extra advice and support to young people and parent carers who are going through the process of getting an EHC Plan in Brighton and Hove and Sussex. For Brighton and Hove Independent Support, call: **01273 772289**. For Sussex Independent Support, call: **0300 123 7782**.
- **Integrated Child Development and Disability Centre (Seaside View)** – where many children will be diagnosed and where services work together to support and treat your child. Referrals will usually be via a health or education professional but you can contact Seaside View direct on **01273 265780**.
- **Making a claim for DLA** – if your child's care or mobility needs are significantly greater than the needs of their peers you may be able to claim Disability Living Allowance for them. Find out more at: **www.gov.uk**. Amaze can give you advice and practical support with making a claim. Call the helpline on: **01273 772289** or email: **helpline@amazebrighton.org.uk**.
- **Parent support groups** – there are lots of parent led groups for children with disabilities in Brighton and Hove. Some are for all children with SEND and some for children with specific disabilities. See a full list of local groups at: **www.amazebrighton.org.uk/services-and-support/parent-support-groups**.

Further reading and useful links

- **Through the Maze** – Amaze's handbook for parent carers of children and young people with SEN and disabilities (0-14) includes lots of information on education, money matters, social care, health, leisure and more. It's free to parent carers who live or have children who go to school in Brighton and Hove. Call the Amaze helpline to request a copy on: **01273 772289**.
- **Dyspraxia Foundation** – for information and resources go to: **www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk**, tel: **01462 455016**, or email: **dyspraxia@dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk**.
- **Understood** – a website for learning and attention issues has a whole section on dyspraxia. For more, go to their website at: **www.understood.org**, click on 'learning and attention issues' and choose 'types of issues from the drop-down menu. Go to 'see more' and click on 'dyspraxia'.

