

**URBAN
SAINTS**

RESOURCE



Dyspraxia / Developmental Coordination Disorder

Effective support for young people
with additional needs



Dyspraxia / Developmental Coordination Disorder

The Dyspraxia Foundation defines Dyspraxia as ‘an impairment or immaturity of the organisation of movement’ and, in many individuals, there may be associated problems with language, perception and thought.

The term normally used is *Developmental Dyspraxia* or *Developmental Coordination Disorder* (DCD). The condition is thought to affect up to 10 percent of the population in varying degrees. It is probable that there is at least one Dyspraxic young person in every group.



def: dyspraxia

An impairment or immaturity of the organisation of movement

1 young person

(at least) with Dyspraxia
in every group

Key issues

- Early recognition of Dyspraxia will enable early intervention and practical steps to help the young person to achieve their potential. Young people whose Dyspraxia is identified at an early stage are less likely to have problems with acceptance by their peers and with lowered self-esteem.
- Poor fine motor skills, so likely to struggle with using pens/pencils, cups etc. May also struggle with sports, kicking a ball, running, jumping etc.
- Generally poorly organised and can be unable to remember instructions.
- Easily distracted and need to be helped to learn. Can be well behind their peers in most areas of learning, including speech, reading and writing, but will improve if given one to one help.
- When young people become teenagers their problems may change as social and organisational difficulties become more pressing.

Support strategies for your group

- **Allow a young person to visit the place where your group meets several times and give them a plan of its lay out.** They can then study this at home to allow them to become familiar with it. Also invite the parents/carers: they may be able to identify problem areas that you may not have been aware of.
- **Comparison can be disastrous.** Never allow a young person with Dyspraxia to be compared to another young person. Not by leaders/helpers or peers.
- **Praise every effort and every small accomplishment.** A Dyspraxic young person may have been used to failure repeatedly: every effort must be made to raise their self-esteem. When they feel better about themselves, they are more likely to relax and learn.
- **Do not put a young person in a situation where they will constantly fail or be compared to others.** Be sensitive about how you include a young person in games for example, but also don't exclude a young person from everything. It's about getting the balance right.
- **Remember that they have difficulty in taking on board information during teaching times.** Allow them extra time: if possible teach in small bursts, allowing opportunities to rest, if necessary. You will soon become aware when a young person requires a rest. However, this will alter from day to day and from young person to young person.
- **Ensure that a young person has understood what is being taught, repeat if needed.** Check that they are not falling behind because they cannot copy things down, for example. *(Due to difficulties with repositioning gaze from one object to another).*
- **Teach on a one to one level if possible, with few distractions.** If there is a one to one volunteer available, allow them to assist a young person so they are taught at the same pace alongside their peers. Try to avoid removing a young person from the teaching time as this stigmatises them, although in some circumstances this may prove unavoidable. Young people with Dyspraxia work so much better in a relaxed environment with one to one support.

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Thanks to **Dyspraxia Foundation** for much of the material used in writing this article.

Further Information: Dyspraxia Foundation: dyspraxiafoundation.co.uk

Research shows that young people with additional needs are more likely to be abused than their peers (NSPCC) This increased vulnerability is due to a number of factors including communication differences, increased dependence on caregivers, social isolation and a higher likelihood that warning signs would be missed or misinterpreted. As a youth leader it's therefore important to be especially alert to changes in behaviour and wellbeing and discuss any concerns with a safeguarding lead at the earliest opportunity.



**This resource is just one
of the many ways we're
here to walk with you!**

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and resources to equip you in
disciplining young people.

urbansaints.org

This resource has been adapted from our Invited to Belong Team Training Kit.



If you're interested in helping your team become more aware and welcoming of young people with additional needs, you can explore our Invited to Belong Team Training Kit at urbansaints.org/resources

The original content of this resource was created in partnership with **Youthscape** as part of the Invited to Belong resource.