

DYSPRAXIA / DEVELOPMENTAL COORDINATION DISORDER (DCD)



‘When you are perching on a high stool with no back or arms, you may be so busy trying to keep your balance that you can’t listen to the teacher.’

Victoria Biggs. Caged in Chaos.

What it is

Dyspraxia, otherwise known as Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) is a common disorder affecting fine and/or gross motor skills coordination, in both children and adults. The Dyspraxia Foundation adds to this, recognising the many non-motor difficulties that may also be experienced by people with the condition and which can have a significant impact on daily life activities. These include memory, perception and processing as well as additional problems with planning, organising and carrying out movements in the right order in everyday situations. Dyspraxia can also affect articulation and speech (Dyspraxia Foundation, 2015).

It is a lifelong condition.

What it means

Dyspraxia/DCD can affect almost every part of an individual’s life and makes living and learning more challenging. Many of the skills other people take for granted or seem to just ‘do’ have to be taught, learned and practised; they do not come naturally. This can be difficult to understand and dyspraxic learners are often frustrated if the issues that they are experiencing are not recognised and responded to appropriately. Dyspraxic individuals find it difficult to copy movements demonstrated by someone else, and they may appear inefficient or awkward in the way they carry out activities/tasks. They have an inconsistent learning performance and weak perceptuo-motor skills.

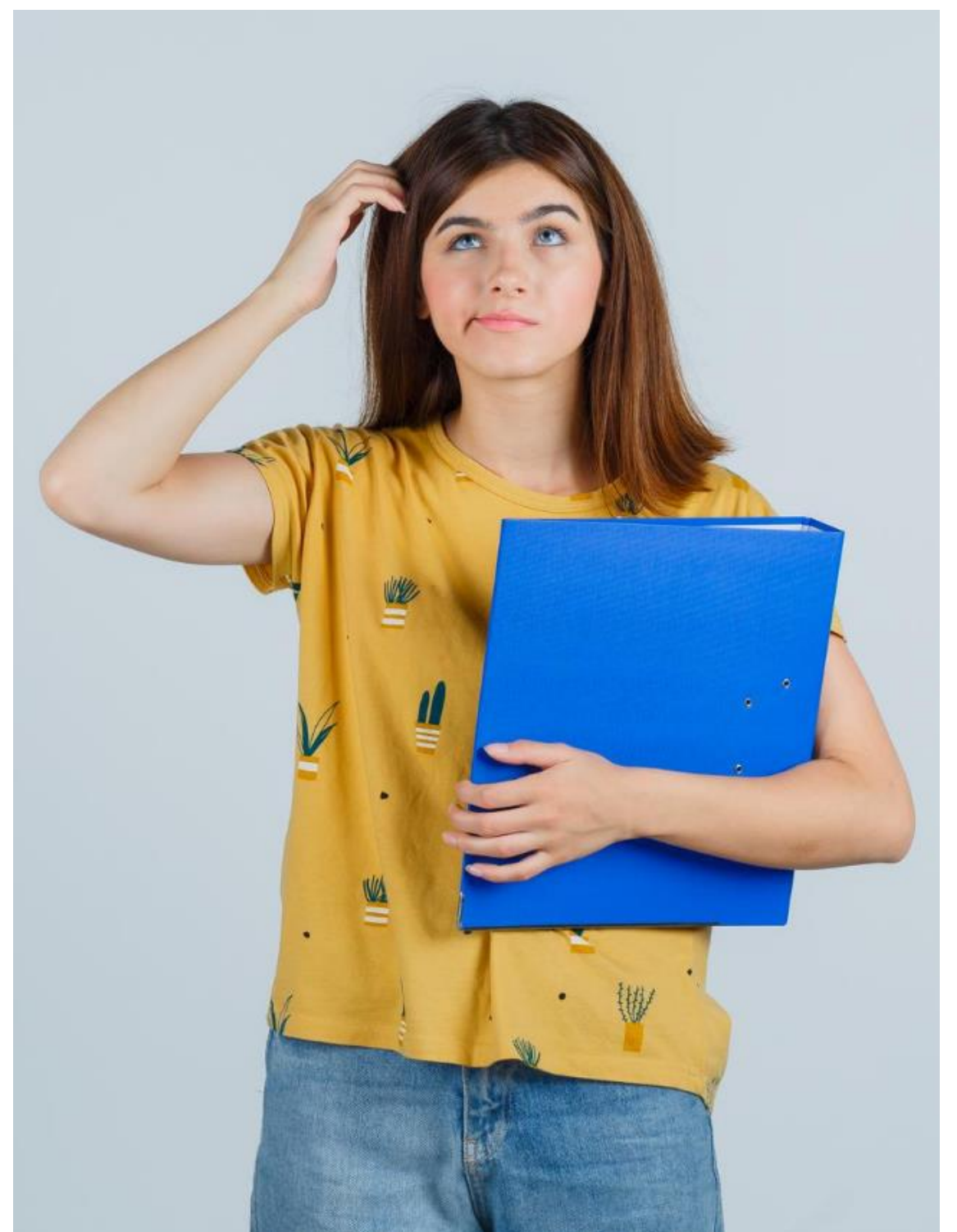
They benefit from support and encouragement in class and other environments, which will allow them to feel more comfortable and more likely to engage, whilst keeping their self-esteem afloat. Dyspraxia/DCD affects each individual differently, ranging from mild to severe. Many learners fall somewhere between the two extremes and are dependent on appropriate support in all environments to reach their potential.

Teachers should respond to the predominant need that the learner is exhibiting at any time (these may change with subject area and a learner's age). Responding to need is always more preferable to responding to diagnosis.

Learners will present with a cluster of differences as seen in the Combined SpLD Checklist.

Most commonly these will include:

- Delays in reaching milestones – some never crawl;
- Challenges with handwriting;
- Poor posture/hypermobility;
- Poor ball skills (throwing and kicking);
- Challenges using equipment/utensils, e.g., scissors, rulers, cutlery;
- Challenges dressing and undressing;
- Challenges with, or awkward, running, jumping, skipping;
- Poor stamina;
- Difficulty remembering instructions;
- Challenges with personal organisation;
- Problems learning to ride a bike;
- Require more time to process and act upon information.



The structure of secondary and further education may prove too difficult for the learner and their struggles may become more evident as a result. If needs are not met, they may become disaffected and exhibit challenging behaviour.