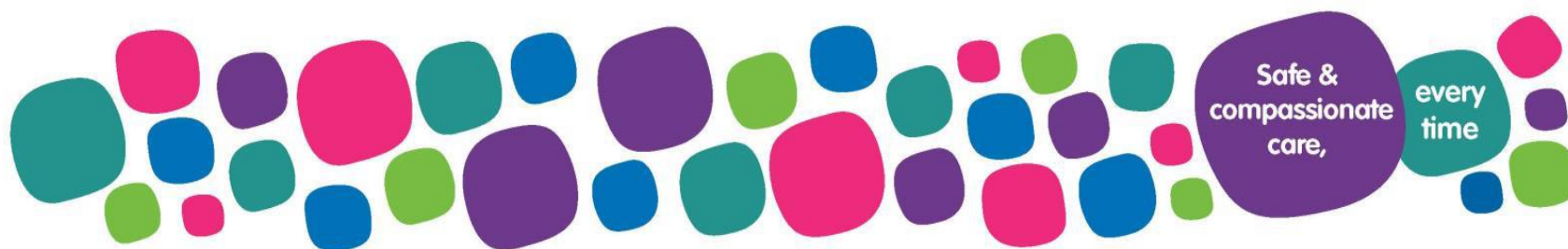


# What is Developmental Language Disorder?

Buckinghamshire Children and Young People's Speech and  
Language Therapy Team



## DLD in Context:

To set the scene it is first necessary to focus on all children with Language and Communication Needs (LCN).

Should there be accompanying speech difficulties the term Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) would be used.

# Signs and Symptoms of LCN

A child or young person with **L**anguage and **C**ommunication **N**eeds may present as follows.

They may:

- Struggle to understand instructions and information.
- Talk less than their peers and find it difficult to express themselves verbally.
- Use language that sounds immature for their age.
- Use limited vocabulary or have difficulty finding words.
- Have difficulties putting a sentence together and using grammar correctly.
- Not retain what has been said

# Signs and Symptoms of LCN

They may:

- Show limited attention in class.
- Have difficulty learning to read and de-code words.
- Struggle with understanding and managing emotions.
- Have limited ability to tell stories or relay such things as what they did during the day.

Many difficulties resolve over time with first quality teaching and classroom support.

However.....

# Language Disorder

For those who have persistent language difficulties (beyond the age of 5 years) with understanding and /or production of language that create significant obstacles to communication or learning in everyday life the term “Language “Disorder” is used.

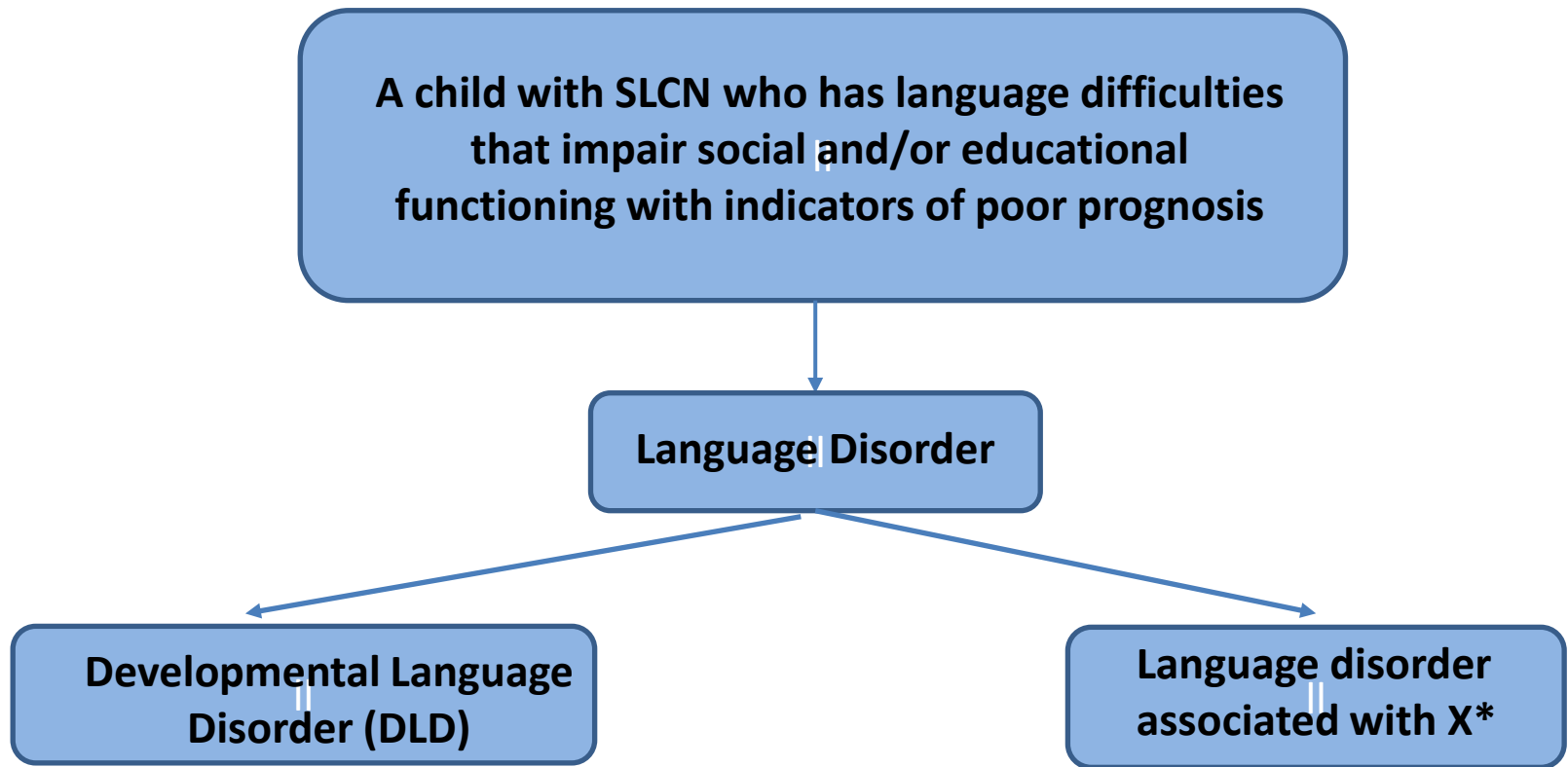
*Language Disorder may be associated with another condition (such as autism, a genetic condition e.g. Down’s Syndrome, sensori neural hearing loss or an intellectual disability).*

# Developmental Language Disorder

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) is the agreed term for when the Language Disorder is NOT associated with a known condition.

With no associated condition as a “red flag” marker it can be overlooked and is therefore often referred to as a “hidden disability”.

# Explanatory Diagram of Language Disorder

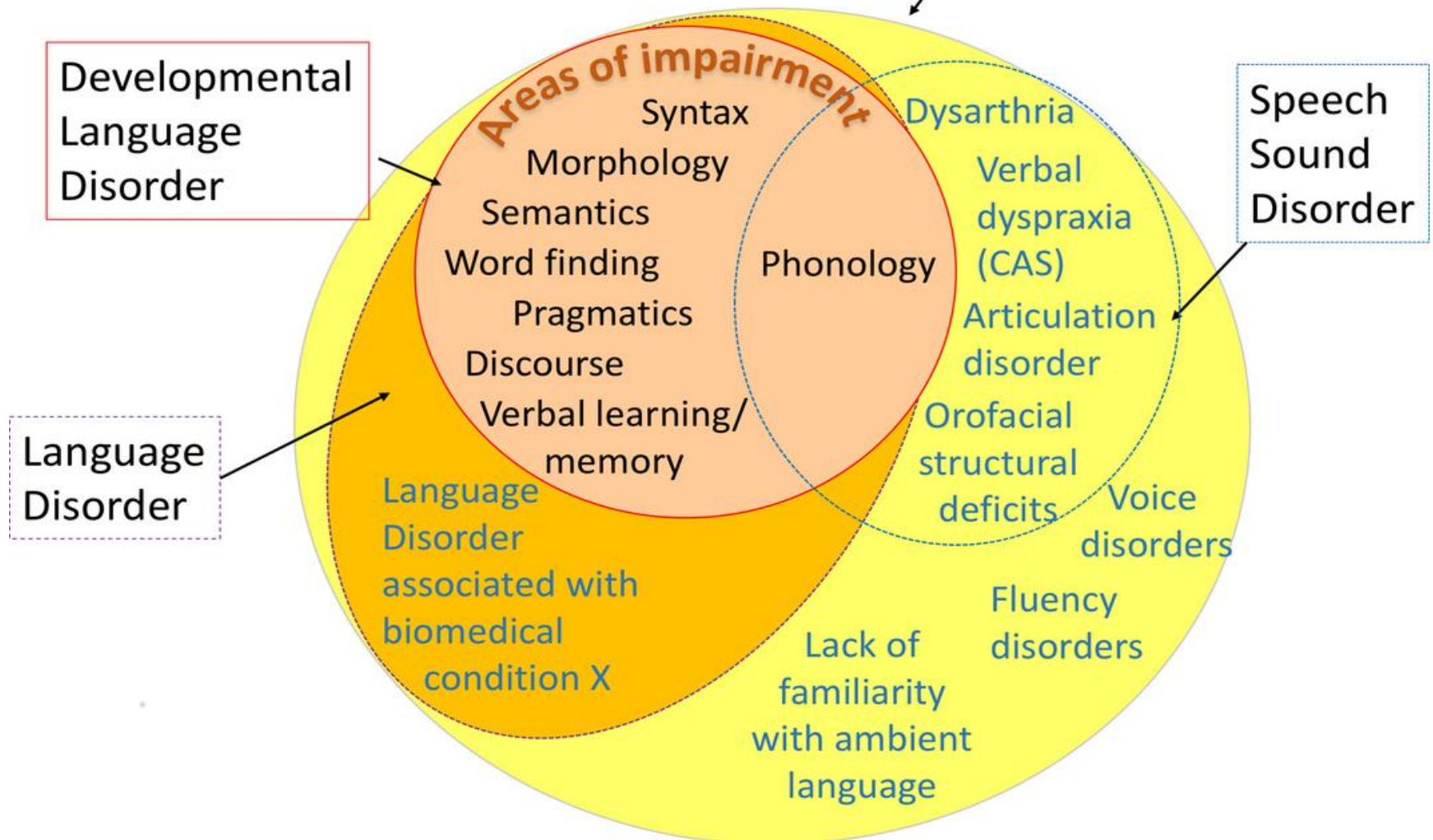


**Associated with biomedical condition X\***

\*Includes genetic syndromes, a sensorineural hearing loss, Autistic Spectrum Disorder or intellectual disability

# DLD within Language Disorder/within SLCN

Speech, Language and Communication Needs





# Statistics

Language Disorder of any kind affects nearly 1 in 10 children



9.92%

# Statistics

- **3%** of Children and Young People have Language and Communication Needs in Association with another need.
- **7%** of Children and Young People have Developmental Language Disorder.
- **2** Children in every classroom will have Developmental Language Disorder.

# Profiles

- Children and young people with DLD are all individual and will have different profiles.
- Each child has areas of strengths.
- These strengths can be used to support their own individual language needs.
- A range of areas or so called “domains” can be affected.

# DLD diagnosis should be accompanied with specification of the **impact** on domains of:

1 Phonology



4 Semantics



2 Grammar (syntax and morphology)



5 Word finding



3 Verbal learning and memory



6 Pragmatics/ language use



Many symptoms persist into adolescence and beyond

# Areas or Domains:

- 1. Phonology:** This is the sound system of language.
- 2. Grammar:** This is the system of rules in language that allow changes to express such features as plurals or tense, and the system of rules that govern how words can be combined to form sentences.
- 3. Verbal Learning and Memory:** This refers to the ability to remember, think through and retain verbal information.

# Areas or Domains

**4. Semantics:** This refers to the meaning of words and how word can be connected together through their meanings.

**5. Word Finding:** This refers to the ability to retrieve a word that is known, when it is needed, such as during conversation.

**6. Pragmatics:** This simply is language “use” – how language is used in context, how it is interpreted in context, including interpreting implied meaning.

# What can go wrong and what is the impact?

## Phonology: What can go wrong?

- Difficulty producing speech sounds
- Difficulty perceiving the distinctions between sounds.

## Impact:

- Speech production difficulties
- Possibility of being misunderstood by others
- Lagging behind in phonics
- Inaccurate repetition and storage of new words.
- Impact on literacy
- Impact on self-esteem

# What can go wrong and what is the impact?

## Grammar: What can go wrong?

- Slow and ungrammatical development of sentence structure.
- Difficulty acquiring markers that express plurals, possessives, tense, etc.
- Sentence production lacking in complexity.
- Difficulty understanding grammatical structures.



# What can go wrong and what is the impact?

## Impact: continued

- Difficulty expressing basic meaning and later complex ideas.
- Frustration making themselves understood
- Causing the listener to be confused, e.g. failing to express when an event happened or is to happen.
- Difficulty understanding the complexity of a speaker's language and failing to understand.
- Impact on achieving educational goals – reading for meaning, writing, carrying out grammatical tasks.
- Impact on self-esteem.

# What can go wrong and what is the impact?

## Verbal Learning and Memory: What can go wrong?

- Difficulty taking in, holding and retaining spoken information.

### Impact:

- Uncertainty/Anxiety
- Inability to learn and join in with class songs, chants etc.
- Following others
- Feelings of isolation, difference and lack of self worth.



- Hopelessness
- Switching off/Inattention
- Risk of being misinterpreted/thought badly of/thought of as lazy.
- Impact on educational achievement

# What can go wrong and what is the impact?

## Semantics: What can go wrong?

- Limited understanding of the meanings expressed by words.
- Difficulty learning concepts/new vocabulary.
- Difficulty seeing how words are associated/go together/belong in the same category.

## Impact:

- Word confusions

# What can go wrong and what is the impact?

- Restricted vocabulary development.
- Impact on verbal comprehension.
- Impact on reading comprehension.
- Impact on awareness and learning of homophones.
- Impact on understanding humour.
- Impact on drawing inferences.

# What can go wrong and what is the impact?

## Word Finding: What can go wrong?

### A child will:

- Show difficulty retrieving known words
- Pause a lot and use filler words, e.g. “uh” or “um”.
- Talk around the target word using long and vague descriptions
- Say a word that has a similar meaning but sounds different, e.g. spoon instead of fork.
- Say a word that sounds similar but has a different meaning, e.g. elegant for elephant.

# What can go wrong and what is the impact?

## Impact:

- Struggle to express thoughts fluently
- Feel confusion
- Feel frustration
- Isolation (no one else has this problem).
- Avoidance and keeping silent in certain situations.
- Low self-esteem.

# What can go wrong and what is the impact?

## Pragmatics: What can go wrong?

- Difficulties applying social rules in social situations e.g. such as turn taking and asking questions appropriately.
- Difficulties with meaning in the context of conversation.
- Literal interpretation of phrases and sentences.
- Difficulty with the speed of processing in conversational exchange
- Lack of sophisticated language e.g. as used for verbal banter.



# What can go wrong and what is the impact?

## Impact:

- Miscuing
- Misinterpretation
- Irritating others
- Being viewed as less intelligent or less “cool”
- Exclusion from a social group
- Bullying
- Depression

# Impact

- Some children with DLD retreat inside themselves.



# Impact

- Many children with DLD try to hide their difficulties becoming passive observers, furtively following the lead of others because they do not understand. They show their despondency in their faces.



# Impact

Some children with DLD show their vulnerability by externalising their feelings of insecurity, and lack of self worth by acting out and demonstrating anti-social behaviour.



# Impact

Some children with DLD have difficulty using language to express their thoughts and feelings and to regulate their behaviour and their interactions with other people.



# Statistics

- 81% of children with emotional and behavioural disorders have significant language deficits.
- 40%-54% of children with behaviour problems have language disorder.
- Two-thirds of seven to 14 year olds with severe behaviour problems have communication needs.

# Impact

## On Social Interaction:

- As early as pre-school, children choose friends with good language skills and avoid children who have problems communicating. Their social skills can develop and they can talk easily about their ideas.
- A child with DLD may be vulnerable to being left out, having fewer opportunities to develop their social skills, and possibly be open to teasing and even bullying.

# The potential impact of Developmental Language Disorder

- DLD affects every individual differently and there are a wide variety of ways in which language problems may present and evolve over time.
- The impact of DLD can be diminished if people with DLD have their needs **identified** and **appropriately supported**.



# The potential impact of Developmental Language Disorder

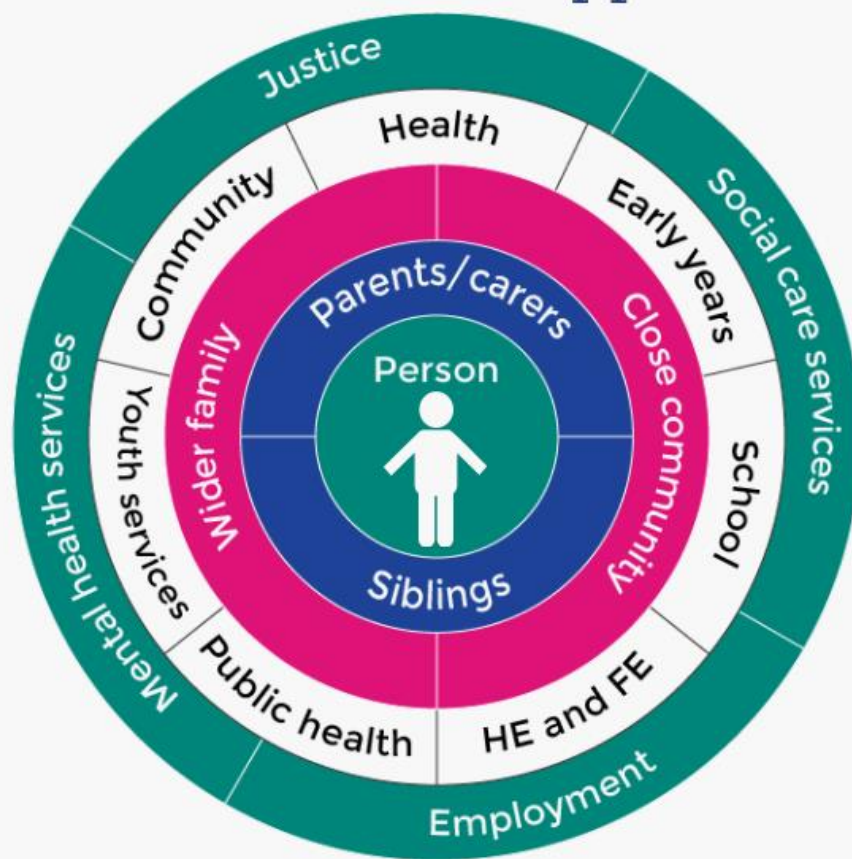
Without that support, children and young people may face challenges with:

- their mental health and wellbeing
- personal development
- relationships
- education
- employment
- and quality of life.

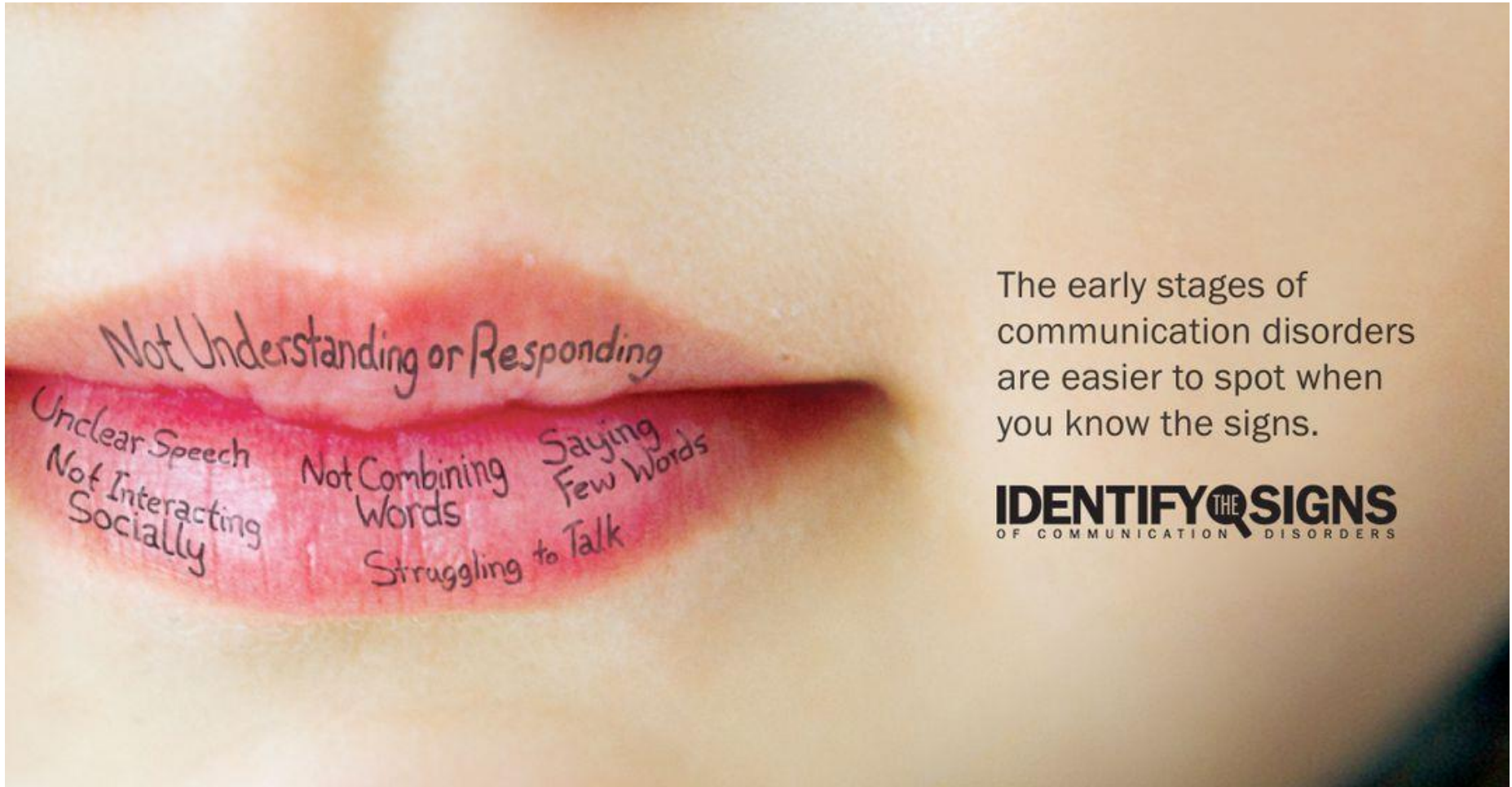


# Image showing the range and services that may be involved in supporting those with DLD

## Person-centred approach



# Identification



The early stages of communication disorders are easier to spot when you know the signs.

**IDENTIFY THE SIGNS**  
OF COMMUNICATION DISORDERS

# Identification

- The signs are there:
  - Social
  - Emotional
  - Linguistic
  - Educational
- We must spot them!

# Social/Emotional/Linguistic/ Educational - Intervention

We can work as a team to provide support, working holistically to develop the child's potential:

Some of the things that can be done?

- Actively support the development of social interaction and social skills in the child with DLD
- Help them learn the names of other children.
- Set up interaction activities that require less verbal skill.
- Use signs and symbols

# Social/Emotional/Linguistic/ Educational - Intervention

- Teach the basic social/linguistic skills they need
- Help others simply understand the challenges the child with DLD has communicating
- Handle incidents very carefully. Children with DLD often unfairly self-incriminate:
  - because of the questioning style of the adult
  - because of possible comprehension or interpretation difficulties and
  - because of their poor expressive language skills

# Social/Emotional/Linguistic/ Educational - Intervention

- Monitor the child with DLD closely for adverse signs (as described) – discuss/plan
- Guard against them becoming isolated.
- Ensure the school environment is inclusive.
- Ensure they are not expected to perform beyond their capability.
- Remove barriers to communication
- Ensure the classroom is communication friendly

# Social/Emotional/Linguistic/ Educational - Intervention

- Make lesson materials accessible and communication friendly
- Use visuals visuals visuals!
- Use modification of communication style
- Teach strategies such as active listening
- Support expression of emotions
- Find their strengths
- Develop self-awareness



# Social/Emotional/Linguistic/ Educational - Intervention

- Find ways for the child with DLD to represent themselves, their views and their interests. (self-advocacy)



- And develop self-belief.

# Social/Emotional/Linguistic/ Educational - Intervention

And finally:

- Teach linguistic skills

# Intervention

- Small steps can have a big impact:
- Collaborative working is best
- Short term targets – Long term gain!

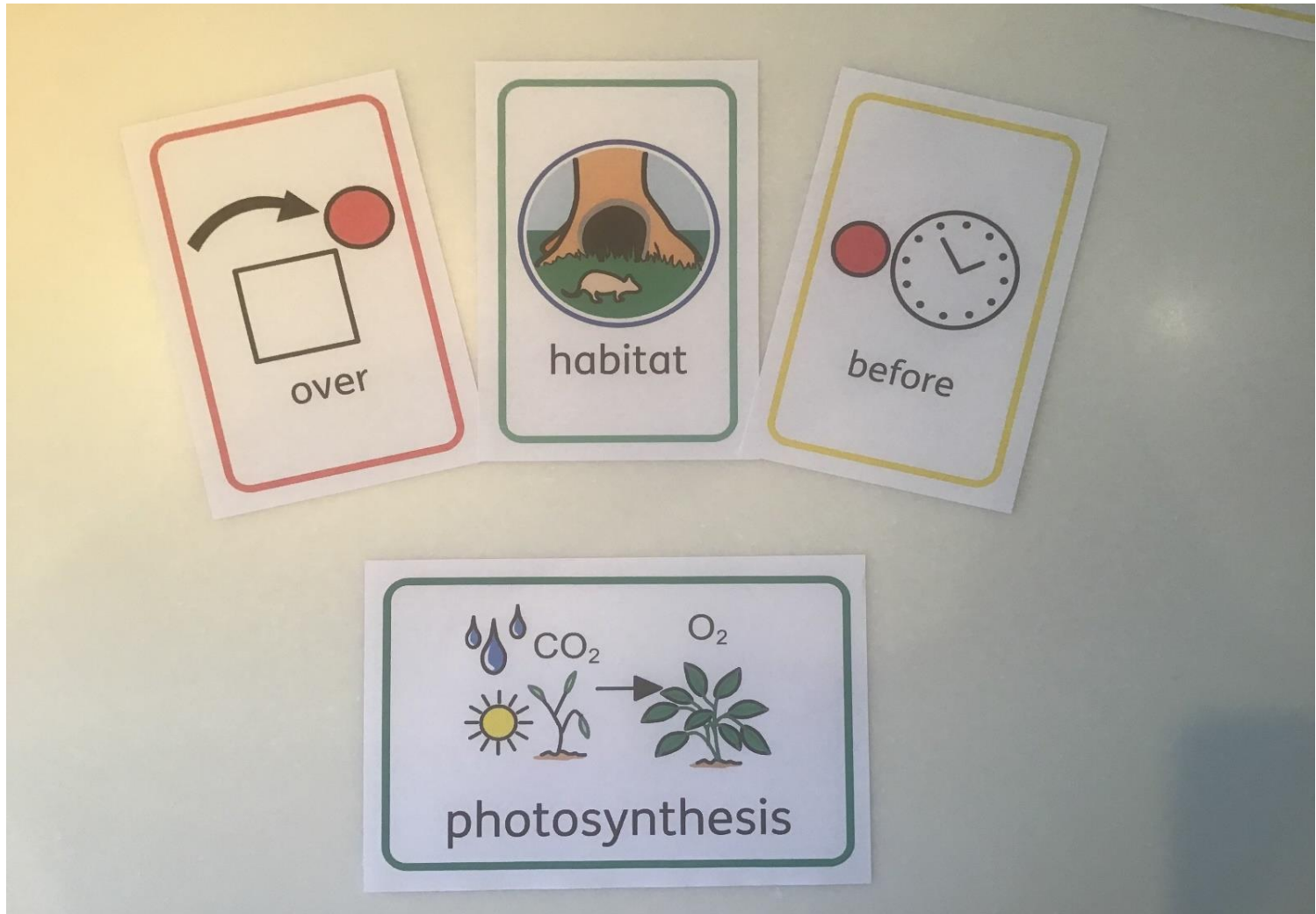
# Primary Support Strategy:

USE  
VISUALS

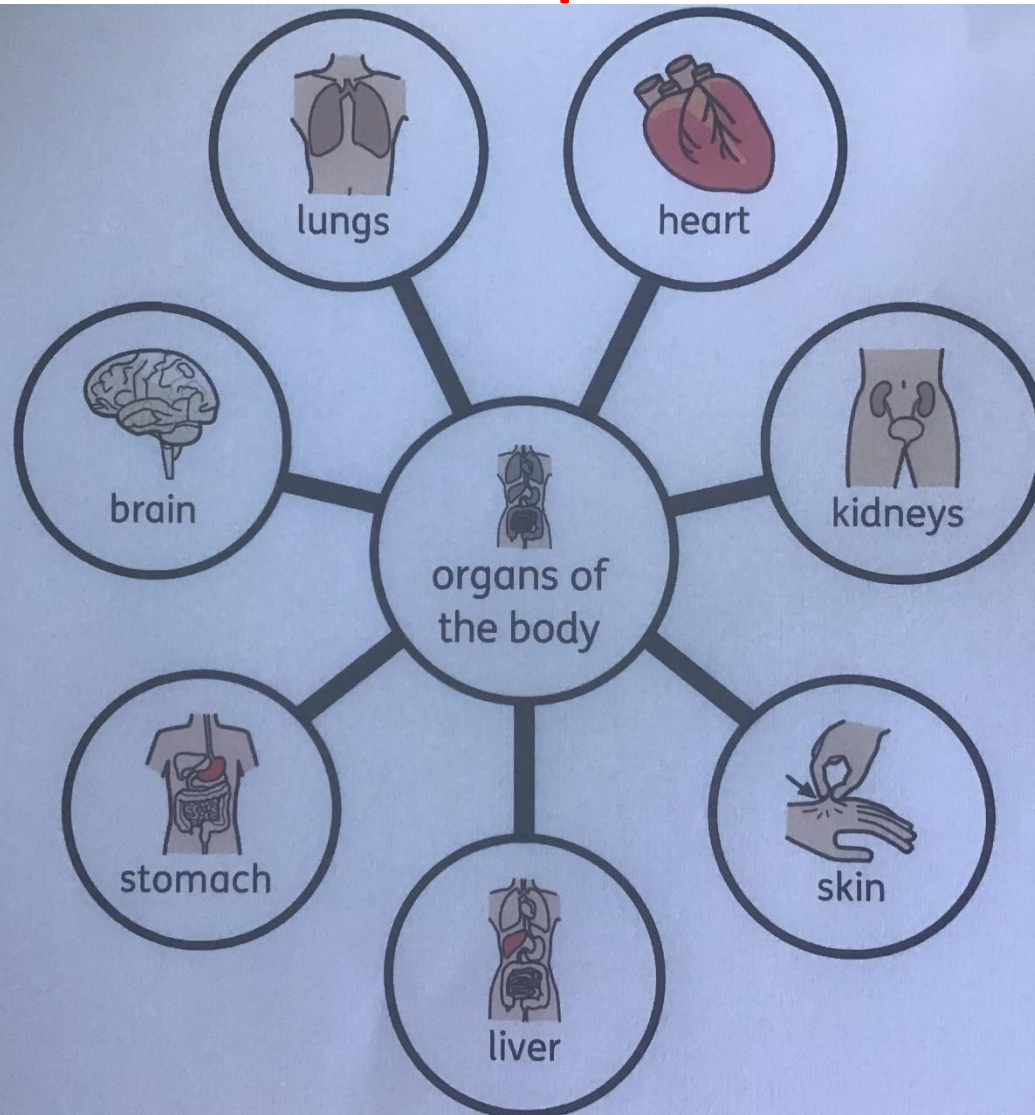
Examples follow....

# Pictures to support word learning

Such as conceptual symbols:



# Simple mind maps to connect concepts



# Visuals to trigger word retrieval.

Start

box bin bottle

cricket football netball

gun cannon spear

penny pound 10 pence

£1 £10 £50

miss a go

French English German

huron owl web

doctor teacher musician

+1  
extra go

France Spain Sweden

hip thigh rib

egg ring sword

miss a go

elbow knee ankle

+1  
extra go

table chair cupboard

plastic silk paper

diamond emerald ruby

table piano table

miss a go

hammer chisel saw

West South South

shirt hat shoes

+1  
extra go

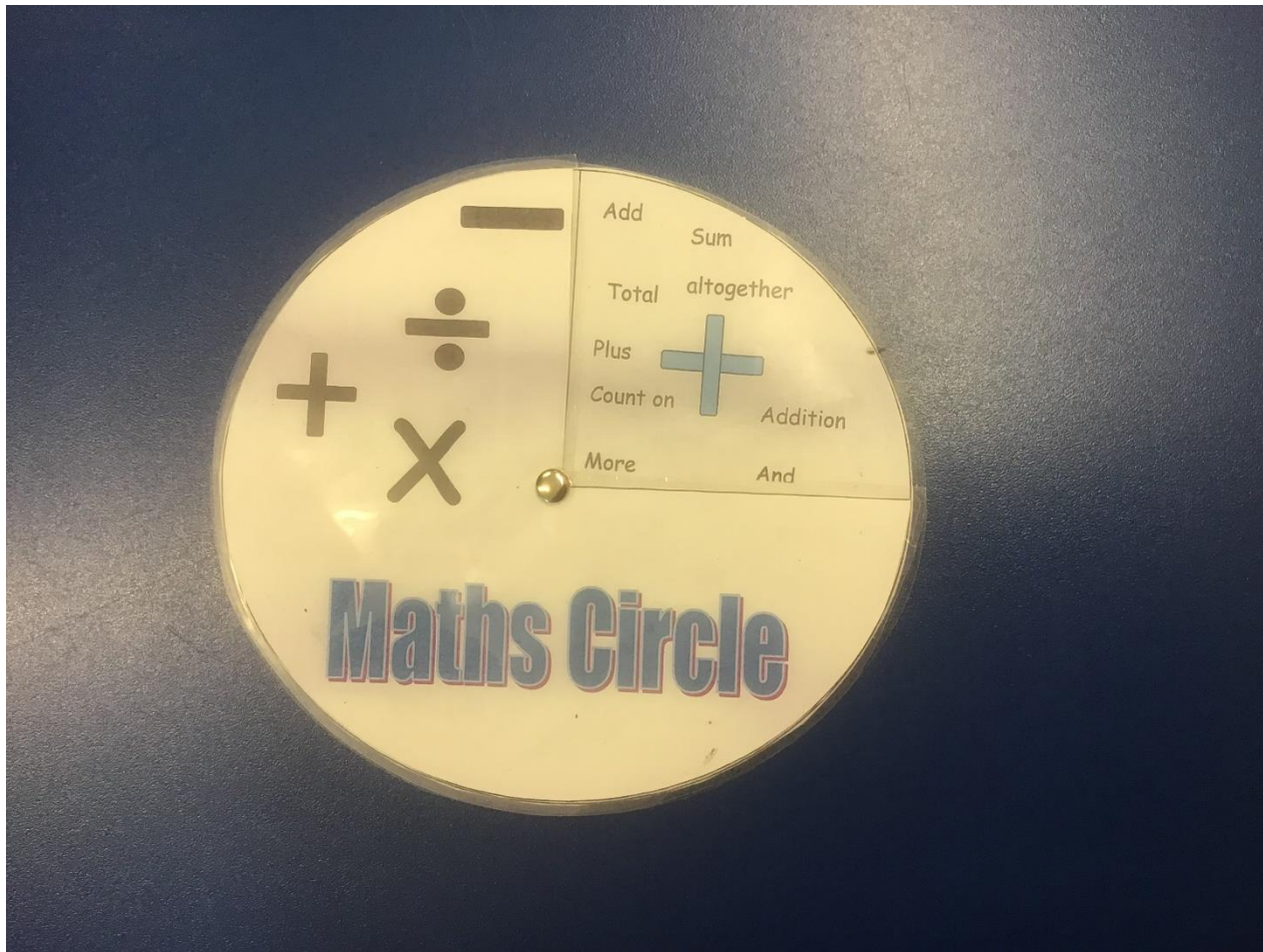
(  
Fork Plate Knife  
Spoon Ball Book  
)

Categories

back to start

cupper tin shirt

# Visual prompts: e.g. for maths operations

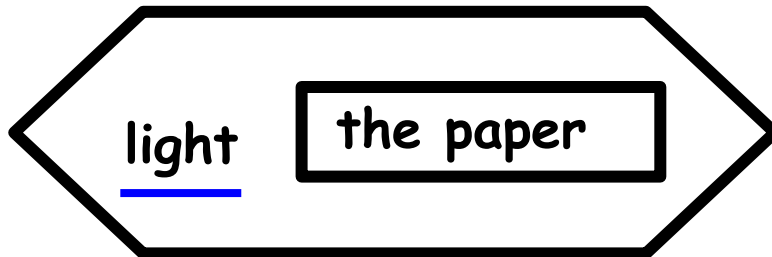
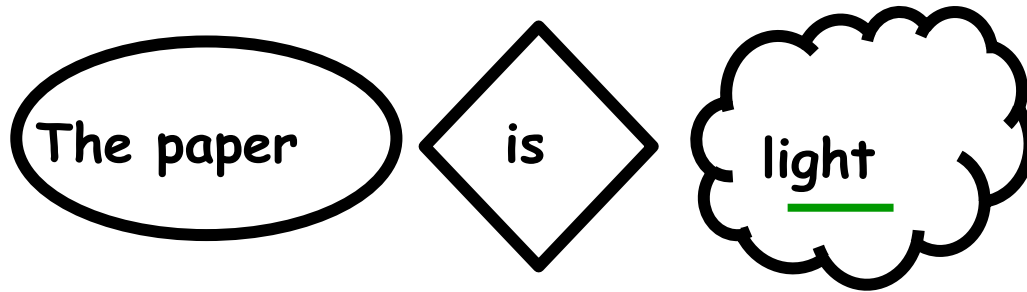




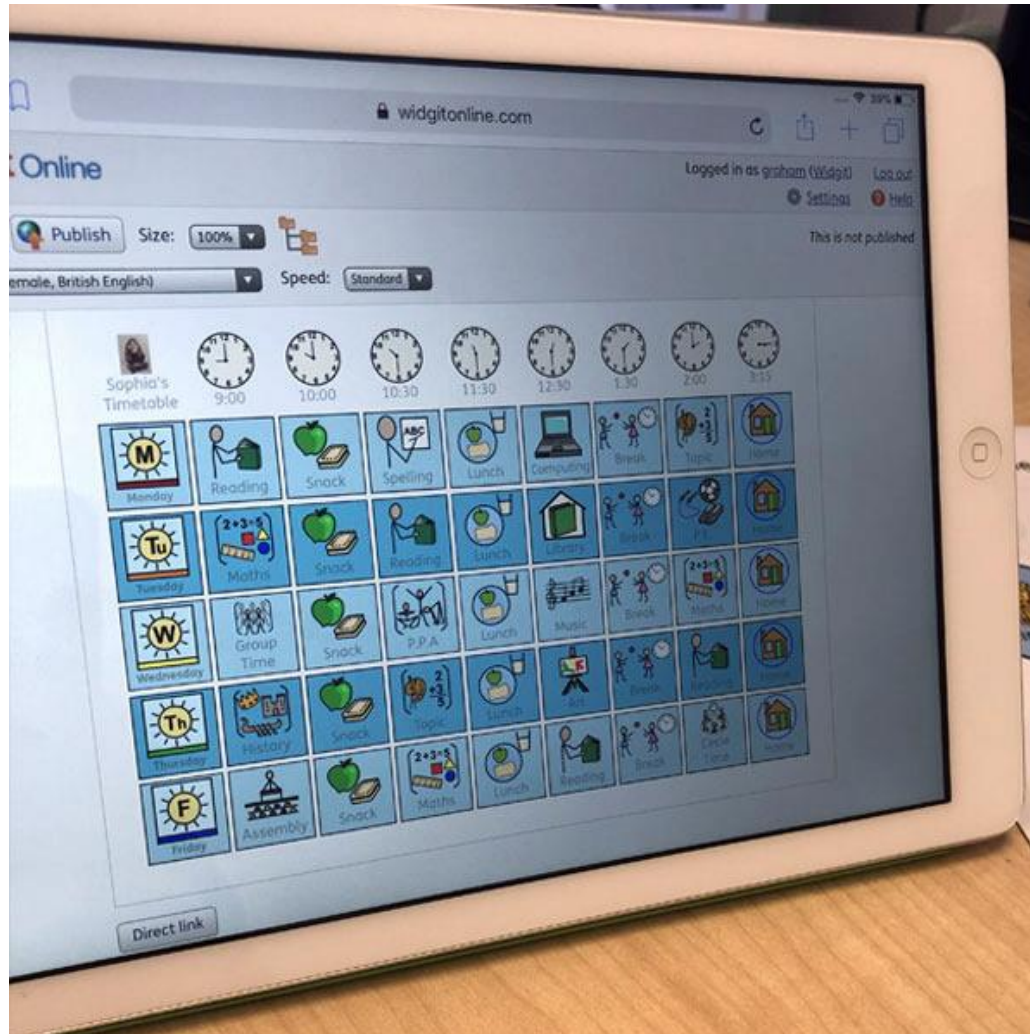
# Visual Prompts: e.g. to use senses in narratives



# Shapes to support understanding of grammatical structure, sentence building and meaning.



# Visual timetables where there are poor time concepts or there is insecurity.

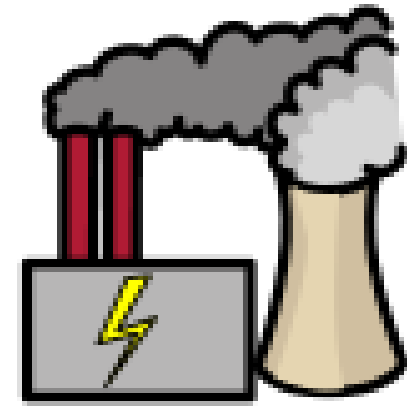
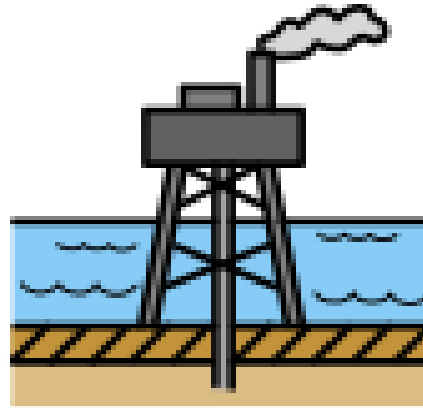


# Visuals to give voice

Communication fan, key fob or book of key concepts to support expression of ideas.



# Symbol support to access meaning from the written word.



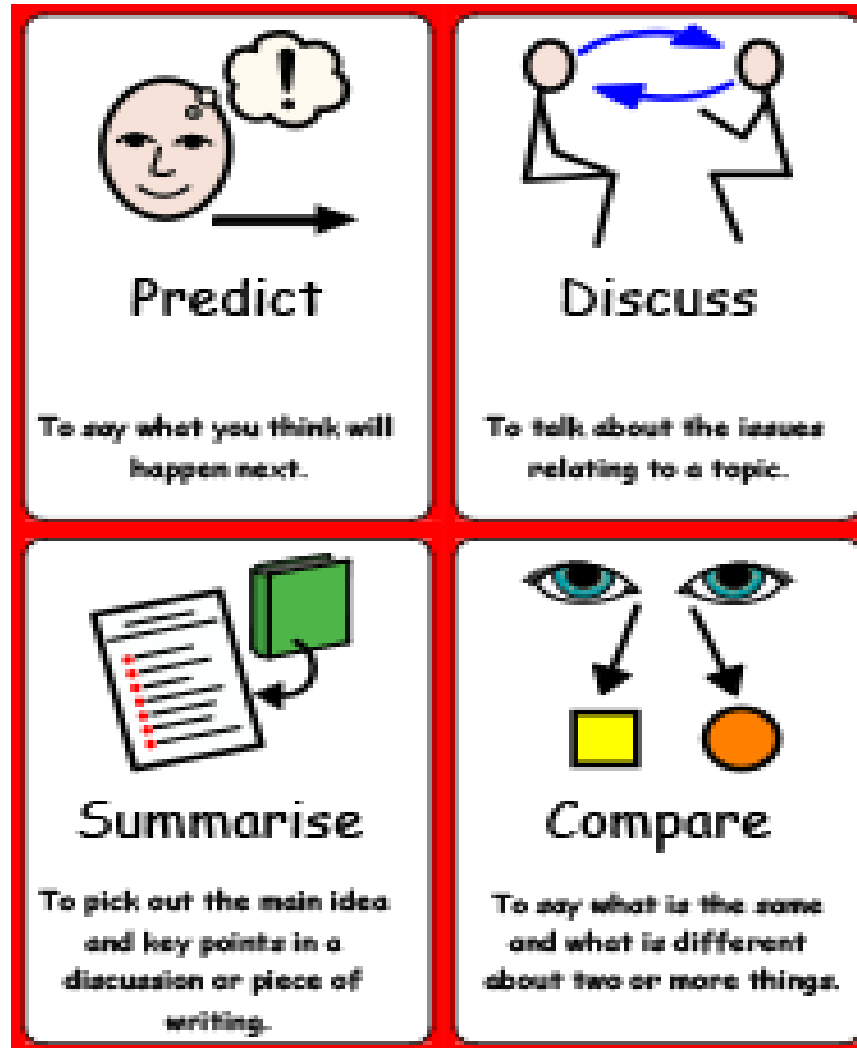
 is pumped from  underground.

It is used for  cooking and  heating.

It is also burned in  power stations.

This is to  produce  electricity.

# Support to understand the concepts involved in verbal reasoning.



# Visuals in summary:

Right across the curriculum and across the key stages visuals can support the child or student with DLD to remain included and able to learn, and maintain their feelings of self-worth.

# To access further information about DLD

## Useful sites:

➤ [NAPLIC.org.uk](http://NAPLIC.org.uk)

(An established national organisation of Teachers, Speech and Language Therapists and other professionals concerned with **S**peech **L**anguage and **C**ommunication **N**eeds, and the key site for **DLD**).

➤ [RADLD.org](http://RADLD.org)

(**R**aising **A**wareness of **D**evelopmental **L**anguage **D**isorder)



Thank you for reading this presentation.

For further support from the Speech and Language Therapy Service go to:



Bucks Speech & Language Therapy

# Acknowledgements

- “Symbols in Education” by Widgit
- Susan Ebbels/Moor House School/Shape Coding.
- Bishop et.al Consensus on the Criteria Used for Children’s Language Difficulties.
- Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists Briefing Paper and Infographics.

