

I'M WORRIED ABOUT MY CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT.

COMMON CONCERNS

EVERY CHILD IS DIFFERENT

When our child is born, we look at them and wonder what they will be like as they grow up. What will their personality be like? Will they be academic or sporty? Will they love reading? As we stare at their tiny faces, we often do not think about whether or not they will have neurodevelopmental conditions, learning difficulties, or other health-based challenges.

As they slowly grow, we may keep track of their development with books or government documents like; 'What to expect, when? A Guide to your child's learning and development in the early year's foundation stage'. To download this document, please go to the website: www.southendlearningnetwork.co.uk/Page/18219

Many children can reach relevant development stages quicker than others, while some may reach them a little later than the expected age. This isn't, generally, a cause for concern.

But, what if your child is very late in reaching them? What does that mean?

It can mean several different things. The best thing to do is contact your Health Visitor and arrange for them to visit you and assess how your child is doing developmentally. They have a wide range of knowledge and experience and will be able to see if your child is behind on any of their development areas.

Common concerns they will look at are things like;

- ▶ They have difficulty using new words
- ▶ Regression of development skills, i.e. walking, talking, etc.
- ▶ Speech delay
- ▶ Other people struggle to understand what your child is saying
- ▶ Your child doesn't turn their head towards you when you say their name.

Your child's speech, language and social skills are a helpful indicator of their developmental progress. Speech and communication development is not just about using more and more words. It is also about understanding how words are used; i.e., 'where is teddy?' is a question requiring a response.

IT IS ALSO ABOUT HOW CHILDREN INTERACT WITH THE PEOPLE AROUND THEM...



...such as asking for things, telling you what they want and forming relationships with other children and adults. By the time they are two years old most children will have begun to understand and use simple words that they often hear, such as 'Mummy', 'Daddy', 'ball' and 'teddy'. They will start to be interested in naming or understanding parts of the body, such as the eyes, head and toes. They will begin to realise that words are linked to activities – for instance, that 'yummy' and 'lunch' are linked to eating or that 'bedtime' and 'tired' are linked to sleeping.

They will have probably started to use pointing or shaking their head to mean 'no'. Between two and three years old, they will begin to take an interest in what other children are doing. They may want to join in and be aware of 'sharing' and playing alongside other children. If your child does not do these things, it does not necessarily mean that they have autism, but it may suggest that they need a little help and support in these areas. Understanding where they might need extra support will make it easier to provide it yourself or seek professional help.

To help you identify if your child is reaching their developmental milestones around the right time, your 'My Personal Child Health Record' book has several development lists and milestones listed within it. This is also known as 'your red book' that you were given shortly before or after your baby was born.

Your Health Visitor will also be able to give you information about the expected developmental milestones from birth to five years old.

The following tables are possible signs for each ND condition. If some of these apply to you and your child, it may be worthwhile speaking to your Health Visitor or GP about your concerns. Please note that these are in comparison to their expected development and skill levels for their age and peer group.

It is worth noting, though, that even if your child shows some of the possible signs of an ND condition, it does not mean that they automatically have that condition. There are many reasons why a child's development is behind or that they display some of the possible signs. Your Health Visitor and GP will be able to advise you.

Autism – Possible Signs	ADHD – Possible Signs
My child struggles with social interaction	My child has a very short attention span
My child hasn't met some developmental milestones for their age	My child gets distracted really easily
My child doesn't play with toys in the way they are designed to be played. They focus more on spinning the wheels of a car, lining toys or items up, heaping toys or items up in a pile, etc.	My child is constantly on the go; they move around all of the time
My child speech is unusual. They mimic what they have heard/they repeat words or phrases a lot	My child has difficulty following instructions
My child does not speak	My child constantly changes tasks or activities
My child has difficulty making or keeping friends	My child is constantly fidgeting
My child avoids eye contact	My child doesn't stop talking
My child gets upset or anxious around loud sounds / doesn't like being touched/avoids bright lights	My child is very impulsive
My child gets inconsolably upset when plans change, or they have to stop an activity they are doing	My child has little to no danger awareness
My child likes things done precisely the same way, every time	My child acts without thinking

Dyslexia – Possible Signs	Dyspraxia – Possible Signs
My child struggles with reading	My child is quite behind in their motor development milestones
My child struggles with writing	My child struggles with fine motor skills
My child is quite behind their peer's level of reading	My child has difficulty using pencils, cutlery, or other tools
My child is quite behind their peer's level of writing	My child falls over more often than most children
	My child finds the process of getting dressed challenging
	My child has difficulty walking in a straight line
	My child often bumps into people or things
	My child finds running, jumping, hopping, kicking balls, or riding a tricycle challenging

Dyscalculia – Possible Signs	Dysgraphia – Possible Signs
My child has difficulty counting backwards	My child writes poorly formed letters in different sizes or shapes
My child has a poor sense of numbers and estimations	My child excessively crosses out or erases their work
My child finds mathematics very challenging, and it causes them anxiety	My child's writing shows poor spacing between words
My child can't grasp mathematic equations	My child has been writing letters and numbers backwards for a lot longer than other children
	My child has an awkward and inconsistent pencil grip
	My child is a slow writer
	My child writes heavily, and their hand gets tired often

For information on what happens after you have contacted your GP or Health Visitor and what happens from referral to assessment of neurodevelopmental conditions. **Please go to the Preparing for a Medical Assessment section PAGE 60.**





