



SEND the Right Message
Registered Charity 1193572

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Children's Disability Living Allowance (DLA) Sentence Bank

1. Communication and Interaction

- Difficulties in expressing themselves, understanding others, and using language and non-verbal cues.
- My child has delayed speech and often becomes frustrated when not understood.
- They use gestures or AAC apps to communicate basic needs.
- They can speak, but struggle with two-way conversations and understanding tone or facial expressions.
- Misunderstandings often lead to meltdowns or shutdowns.
- They appear to be listening but often miss important information, even in 1:1 settings.
- They frequently daydream and become lost in thought, missing cues and instructions.
- They take language very literally and struggle to understand jokes, sarcasm, or figures of speech.
- They find it hard to start or maintain conversations and often speak about one interest for a long time.
- They rely on scripts or visual aids to communicate their needs.
- My child uses echolalia as part of their communication. This includes both immediate and delayed echolalia.
- They need extra time to process verbal information and respond to questions.
- They struggle to process spoken language and often respond inappropriately due to misunderstanding.
- They need extra time to process what has been said and often require repetition or visual support.
- They cannot follow multi-step instructions without adult assistance.
- They frequently answer incorrectly or off-topic due to processing delays.
- They rely on routine language or scripts when stressed or confused.
- They miss nonverbal cues like facial expressions and body language and need support to interpret social interactions.
- They have strong verbal skills but need help applying those in real-world, nonverbal situations.

2. Cognition and Learning

- Difficulties in acquiring and retaining new knowledge and developing skills compared to peers.
- Compared to children their age, they need significantly more help to learn basic skills.
- My child struggles to follow instructions unless they are broken down into very small steps and repeated.
- They require constant reminders and support to stay focused on a task, even one they enjoy.
- They struggle to begin tasks without adult support and prompting.
- They often forget what they were doing moments ago and need repeated reminders.
- They lose or misplace items such as school books, clothing, or lunch boxes on a regular basis.
- They require visual prompts, checklists, and adult supervision to stay on track with daily routines.
- They cannot complete tasks without frequent redirection and support to manage distractions.
- Even when motivated, they cannot sustain attention for more than a few minutes without support.
- My child struggles with both high energy and rigid thinking, which makes transitions extremely difficult.
- They can become stuck on a thought or task and need adult help to shift attention or move on.
- My child struggles to read age-appropriate books and requires adult support for reading tasks.
- They find spelling extremely difficult and become frustrated when asked to write independently.
- They need verbal instructions repeated and simplified to support understanding.
- Working memory difficulties mean they forget instructions partway through a task.
- They take significantly longer to complete reading and writing tasks than their peers.
- They struggle to understand numbers and need visual aids and practical examples to learn basic maths.
- Simple tasks like telling the time or using money cause confusion and distress.
- They cannot recall number facts and require constant adult support for even basic sums.
- They avoid maths-based activities due to anxiety and low confidence.
- They need repeated, simplified explanations to grasp numerical concepts.
- My child avoids writing tasks due to hand pain and difficulty with letter formation.
- They need a scribe, typing device, or voice-to-text support to complete written work.
- Their handwriting is difficult to read and requires adult support to interpret.
- They become frustrated when asked to write and often refuse without support.
- They require additional time for all writing tasks, even short ones.
- They struggle with spatial awareness and visual organisation, making tasks like puzzles or maps difficult.
- They become overwhelmed when visual information is complex or poorly structured.

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■ 3. Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)

- Difficulties with emotional regulation, anxiety, mental health, behaviour, or social relationships.
- New environments or changes to routine cause significant distress and confusion.
- My child experiences extreme anxiety and needs reassurance and calming strategies throughout the day.
- They have frequent meltdowns triggered by small changes, sensory overload, or frustration.
- They are unable to self-regulate and require adult support to calm down.
- Their mental health difficulties severely limit daily functioning.
- They frequently misinterpret social cues and require adult support to navigate peer interactions.
- They are prone to sudden emotional outbursts due to frustration, sensory overload, or unmet expectations.
- They require support to regulate emotions, manage anxiety, and stay focused, often all at once.
- They tire quickly from social or school demands and require a quiet, supervised recovery space.
- Unexpected changes to plans or routines cause extreme distress and anxiety.
- They have a strong need for sameness and will become upset if daily routines are altered.
- Social situations are exhausting, and they often need extended time to recover after interaction.
- They have repetitive thoughts or behaviours that cause distress and interfere with daily activities.
- They require reassurance and rituals to feel safe, which takes significant time and adult support.
- They experience anxiety if routines are interrupted or things are not done 'just right'.
- They often check or repeat actions to prevent something bad from happening.
- Transitions and new experiences trigger compulsive behaviours and need careful planning.
- They are self-conscious about their tics and need emotional support in social settings.
- They may need adult help to explain tics to others and prevent bullying or misunderstanding.
- They avoid everyday demands due to high anxiety and need adult support to reduce pressure.
- They require indirect approaches and negotiated routines to manage tasks.
- Demands trigger fight, flight, or shutdown responses, even when the task is preferred.
- They mask their difficulties outside the home and may explode or shut down afterwards.
- They require consistent, low-arousal communication and predictable environments.
- They may have co-occurring anxiety or OCD, which impacts their ability to function without reassurance.

4. Sensory and/or Physical

- Physical disabilities, sensory processing difficulties, or health-related needs affecting daily life.
- They are not safe to be left unsupervised due to limited awareness of danger.
- They do not recognise danger and will run into roads or approach strangers.
- They need close 1:1 supervision at all times, including in the home.
- They engage in risky behaviour (e.g. climbing furniture, putting non-food items in mouth) without understanding the consequences.
- If left unsupervised, they can hurt themselves or others unintentionally.
- They are not toilet trained and require nappies, wipes, and full assistance with toileting.
- They need help with all aspects of hygiene, including reminders and physical assistance with washing and brushing teeth.
- They have sensory issues with clothing and will only wear a limited selection of familiar, soft items.
- Dressing takes a long time and requires verbal and physical prompting.
- They are an extremely selective eater due to sensory sensitivities.
- They require food to be prepared in a specific way and will not eat if it doesn't meet these expectations.
- Mealtimes are challenging and require constant supervision and encouragement.
- They do not recognise hunger or thirst and need to be prompted to eat and drink.
- They struggle to fall asleep and often wake multiple times during the night.
- Sleep routines take several hours and require parental presence throughout.
- They wander at night if left unsupervised, which poses a safety risk.
- Sleep deprivation affects the whole family.
- Medication must be administered by an adult as they cannot manage this themselves.
- They attend regular therapy appointments which involve significant travel and emotional preparation.
- Missed medication or therapy has a serious impact on their wellbeing.
- They can walk short distances but become exhausted or overwhelmed quickly.
- They need physical support or a buggy to remain safe outside.
- They become distressed or freeze in busy environments.
- Walking is only possible with full adult supervision and preparation.
- They find it overwhelming to filter out background noise, becoming distracted and distressed easily.
- Their sensory sensitivities combined with hyperactivity mean they need planned sensory breaks throughout the day.
- They experience sensory sensitivities and may cover ears, refuse certain textures, or avoid bright lights.
- They are easily overwhelmed in busy or noisy environments and may shut down or have a meltdown.

- They use stimming behaviours (e.g. hand-flapping, rocking, vocalising) to self-regulate emotions and sensory input.
- My child struggles with basic motor tasks like using cutlery, buttoning clothes, and tying shoelaces.
- They tire quickly due to the effort required for physical coordination.
- They frequently trip, bump into things, or drop objects due to poor coordination.
- Their handwriting is illegible without significant effort and adult support.
- They have frequent motor or vocal tics that are involuntary and can be disruptive.
- Tics increase under stress or fatigue and require adult understanding and support.
- They need breaks and quiet time throughout the day to manage tic-related exhaustion.
- They have sudden, repetitive movements or sounds that are difficult to suppress.
- Tics worsen with fatigue, anxiety, or sensory overload.
- They seek out sensory input (e.g. spinning, pressure, or chewing) and require sensory tools throughout the day.
- Transitions and unfamiliar settings trigger overwhelm and require structured support.