

Clicking on the Profile button brings up a bar chart showing the relative importance of each of the fifteen specific difficulties or conditions for that child, and this can be printed using the on-screen button.

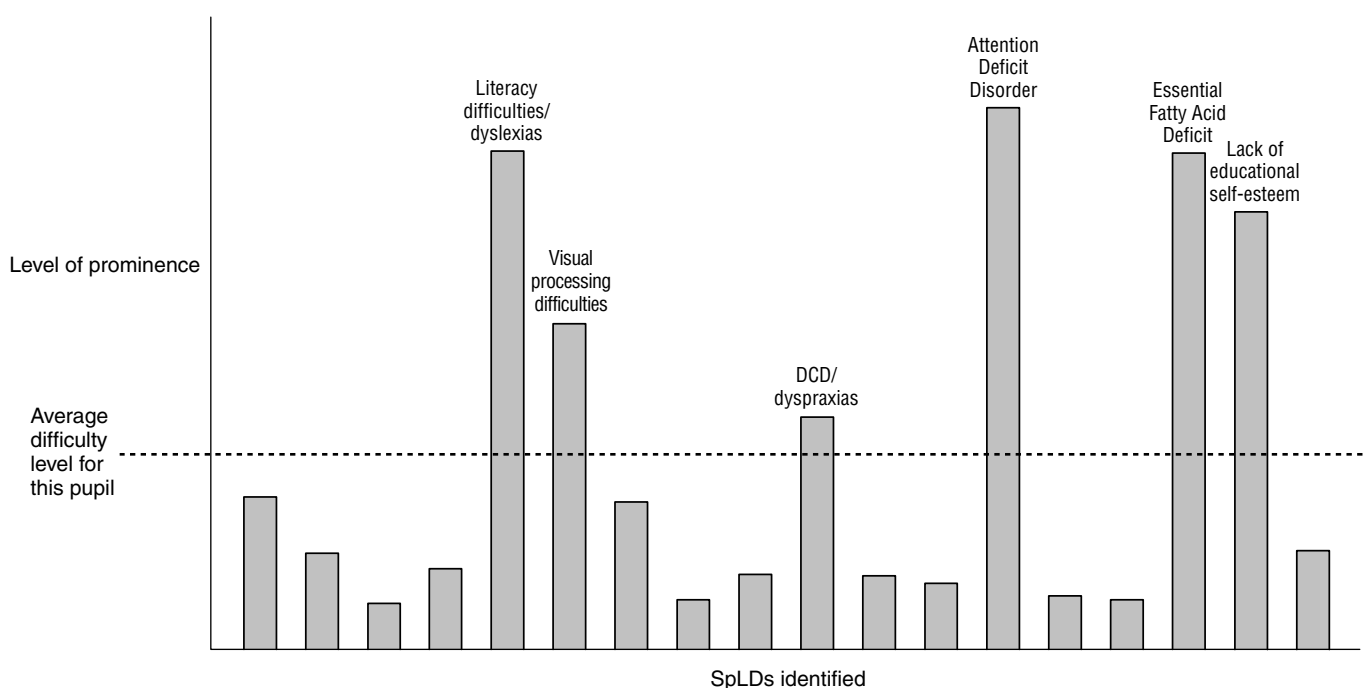
Which SpLDs should be seen as significant?

Checklists for specific learning difficulties include characteristics that will be seen in many children who have no difficulties with their learning. For example, a learner can be inattentive, or have been an unusually demanding infant, or have unusual posture when reading, without any of these being in themselves an indicator of a specific learning difficulty.

By definition, an SpLD is seen to be present only when a *significant cluster* of characteristics is present. All of us show *some* signs – many fewer of us show enough signs to suggest a specific difficulty. By definition, then, answering 140 questions about SpLD characteristics will produce *some* indicators for *any* learner. It is only when some notional critical threshold is passed that the cluster of characteristics become potentially significant.

It is expected, then, that there will be a number of low-level positive responses showing on the profile for any pupil. For this reason, the *mean* difficulty level for each pupil is shown as a line across the bar chart. In the example given for Jenny B. (p. 11), five SpLDs (together with educational self-esteem) were clearly above this line, the others below it. Note that this ‘mean’ line is the mean of the scores *for that individual child*: it does not represent a norm of any kind, or an arbitrary cut-off

Name: Jenny B



point. It simply provides you with further information upon which to base your interpretation of the child's difficulties.

In deciding which SpLDs are significant, it would not be helpful to suggest precise guidelines and cut-off points. But it seems a helpful rule of thumb to assume that those which are clearly above the average *for that pupil* are those which should take priority. Exactly which they should be remains a matter for individual judgement in each case.

Important caution

Your own professional judgement, and knowledge of the child's circumstances, are important in interpreting the Profile.

For some SpLDs, it is likely that a high score stems directly from some intrinsic difficulty: for example, the characteristics on the Essential Fatty Acid Deficit checklist are likely, if the checklist is valid, to mean that there is an intrinsic deficiency in these acids, and a high score can be taken at its face value.

For other SpLDs, this may sometimes be less certain. ADHD is an obvious example: a child may show many of the characteristics on the underlying checklists, but be doing so for reasons that are social, emotional or environmental.

Your own experience and knowledge of the child, and your professional judgement, will always be important in interpreting a child's Profile.

Patterns of SpLDs and conditions that might be expected

The purpose of SNAP is to penetrate beyond the existing 'shorthand' labels and the combinations of difficulties they imply – every individual's specific learning difficulty is likely to be made up of a unique combination of strands.

Certainly, however, some combinations might be expected more often than others; and some combinations may be diagnostically very revealing.

For example, it is to be expected that Literacy difficulties/dyslexias will be accompanied by one or more of Working memory difficulties, Processing speed difficulties, Visual processing difficulties, or Phonological difficulties. Such an array would constitute a 'classic' dyslexic profile, and would often be accompanied by high scores on Dyscalculia and Dysgraphia. Obviously, too, a loss of educational self-esteem may be expected.

Conversely, Literacy difficulties/dyslexias accompanied only by Attention Deficit or Hyperactivity might suggest that the literacy difficulty is not a comorbid difficulty as such (i.e. a coinciding intrinsic difficulty). It seems more probable that the attentional and hyperactivity difficulties have stood in the way of the child's acquisition of literacy, rather than literacy being delayed for intrinsic reasons. Because ADHD and dyslexia can often co-exist, such a pattern might also raise

further questions, already alluded to above: is it more probable that this child's high score for attentional and hyperactive factors is due to social, emotional or environmental factors, rather than the intrinsic neurological or physiological factors implied by a formal diagnosis of ADD or ADHD?

At this stage, typical combinations and their diagnostic implications remain speculative. As further experience is gained, our understanding will develop, and it is hoped that users will share their ideas and experience on the **SNAP** website so that subsequent versions can build upon this.

Information for the school and the family

For more detailed information about each of the prominent conditions, a personalised information sheet can be accessed by clicking on the relevant bar of the **SNAP** Profile. For each condition or SpLD, information and advice on 'School Support' and 'Home Support' can be printed to share with teaching colleagues and/or the family. Note that these are Word documents which you can add to and adapt as you wish. A third part lists 'Resources for Learning Support' which you may find helpful.

It would not be helpful to be too specific or prescriptive about how to respond to the difficulties reported – the same resources and approaches will not be available (or necessarily favoured) by different users, and users will need to interpret each resulting Profile in the context of their own experiences, circumstances and resources. There are, however, some strategies, therapies and sources of information that may well be of general value, and it is these that are accessed by clicking on the different bars on the Profile. Some sample information sheets are shown below – but note that more advice and information about strategies, reading and resources for each difficulty may be accessed through the **SNAP** website.

Because SpLDs seldom exist in isolation, it is likely that there will be more than one prominent difficulty. It will depend upon your professional judgement which and how many to act upon – but where more than one **SNAP** information sheet is used, there will be some overlap, specially in the 'Advice for the classroom' sections. Suggestions such as:

- Let him/her know you are aware of his/her difficulty, that you are sympathetic – but that you have high expectations,

and

- Be specially generous with praise and cautious with criticism,

are obviously applicable to most difficulties, especially where there is evidence that the pupil's self-esteem is not robust. Whether to issue several **SNAP** information sheets that may overlap to some extent, or whether to use the printouts as a resource for compiling an individualised advice resource, will again depend upon your professional judgement, and the time available.

Interpreting and using the results

Some sample Information Sheets are shown on pages 32–3. These sheets are pulled down and printed off by clicking on the relevant bar of the Profile. More information about each SpLD or condition is available on the **SNAP** website.

The advice should be regarded as a pic'n'mix resource bank of ideas, to be combined with the ideas, resources and approaches already in use in each school, according to the combination of difficulties experienced by each child. All the advice will not be suited to every pupil with that difficulty – select according to your knowledge of the pupil; and if there are ideas from other sections that suit a particular pupil, use them too. (The information sheets are provided as Word documents, which can be edited as required.)

Where particular resources are referred to, they should be seen as examples only – there will be many other parallel resources of equal value, with new resources being generated and published continuously. As **SNAP** is a continuously evolving resource, it would be helpful and appreciated if **SNAP** users were to contribute their own ideas about effective responses and resources. The **SNAP** website (www.SNAPassessment.com) includes a Users' Forum for this purpose.

It would be appreciated, too, if users felt free to use this discussion facility to make further and potentially more fundamental comments, about the structure of the instrument, its presentation, its scope, and how best it might be developed. All such contributions will be acknowledged in revised versions of **SNAP**, and use of the **SNAP** website in these ways offers a collegiate opportunity to explore and develop diagnostic assessment of SpLDs in a uniquely responsive, direct and ecologically valid manner.

Learning styles

The information sheets generated by **SNAP** Version 2 suggest how individual learning styles can interact with different SpLD areas, and point up the practical implications in the classroom.

It is fairly well accepted that every individual has a particular preference for learning in a certain manner. Many learners are nevertheless quite flexible and adaptable and can usually accommodate to different types of learning environments and teaching styles. Children with a specific difficulty, however, may find it more difficult to adapt. For that reason, it is important to give some consideration to learning styles when developing resources and planning teaching and curricular objectives.

It is helpful to consider five dimensions which can provide some practical guidance on the different facets of learning that might impact on an individual's style:

■ **Classroom environment**

This relates to the pupil's learning environment, which could be the classroom and/or the home. Factors within the learning environment can make a difference to the outcome of learning, and it is important that the pupil feels comfortable within

the environment. Factors that can influence the learning environment include light, design and sound.

■ **Cognitive style**

This refers to the processes involved in learning and, for example, in how pupils remember information, plan and solve problems. These processes usually involve a combination of visual, auditory, kinesthetic (experience) and tactile (touch) learning. Some pupils may have a marked preference for one of those modalities, but often pupils will have more than one preferred learning modality.

■ **Metacognitive style**

This relates to self-awareness and how knowledgeable pupils are of the processes necessary for effective learning, and how previous learning can be used to help with new learning. It therefore refers to how to tackle a task, as well as the responses to the actual task. This is important because some pupils with specific learning difficulties are unsure of how to set about tackling some kinds of tasks and need a structure and guidance to help get them started.

■ **Emotional style**

This refers to how independent the pupil is in his or her learning. Some pupils may need considerable support because they have a low self-esteem and emotionally are not confident enough to tackle some tasks – even tasks they can actually do. For some pupils, certain types of tasks can be emotionally more demanding than others. For example, children with dyslexia may find spelling emotionally draining, while drawing or discussion can give them emotional strength.

■ **Social style**

This refers to pupils' preferences for working with others, such as in group work, as opposed to working on their own. Some pupils need to interact with others in order to be motivated to learn and to understand the task. Others prefer to work independently and do not need to rely on discussion and interaction with others. One of the key considerations is the composition of groups, and it is important that class groupings, or sub-groupings, are conducive to the learner's style. For that reason it is important to have some indication of the individual learner's preferences.

Where one or more of these dimensions has particular relevance to a specific learning difficulty or factor identified by **SNAP**, the information sheets generated by **SNAP** Version 2 point up the practical implications in the classroom.