

After completing a SNAP assessment by entering the questionnaire responses into the computer, clicking on the *View Profile* button brings up a Core Profile showing the relative importance of each of the main strands for that pupil. Clicking on the + sign on particular bars of the core profile will yield more detailed analyses for those main strands, as an ‘expanded’ profile. Memory difficulties, Literacy difficulties, Visual and visual processing difficulties, Spoken language difficulties, Attentional and hyperactivity difficulties, and DCD/dyspraxia are all strands that yield expanded profiles in this way.

Which SpLDs should be seen as significant?

Checklists for specific learning difficulties include characteristics that will be seen in many pupils 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.

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 133 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 to be 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 on the on-screen Profile as a vertical red line. In the example given for Jenny B, five strands were clearly ‘above’ this line, the others below it. Note that this ‘mean’ line is the mean of the scores *for that individual pupil*: it does not represent a norm of any kind, or an arbitrary cut-off point. It simply provides you with further information upon which to base your interpretation of the pupil’s difficulties.

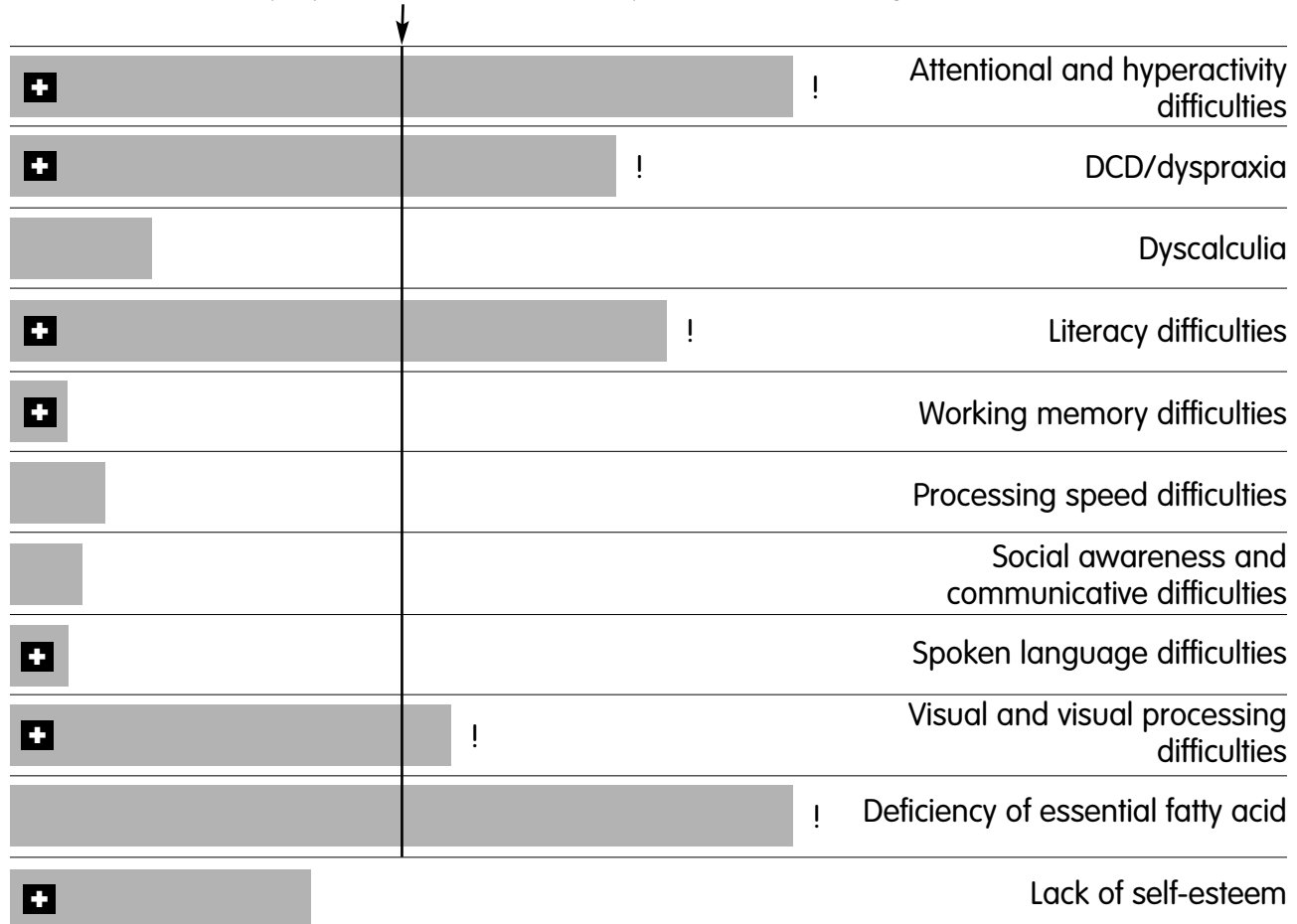
The exclamation mark shown in the Core Profile against these more prominent strands may sometimes appear against apparently less significant strands. This should alert you to expand that main strand, or to view the Full Profile: it signifies that a low *overall* score for that main strand may nevertheless be masking a high score for one of its sub-strands.

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.

Interpreting the SNAP profile: an example

Jenny B's Core Profile

Baseline for Jenny – prominent stands are likely to be those to the right of this line



Interpreting Jenny's Core Profile

Her teacher already knows that Jenny is a poor reader and speller. She senses that she has some real strengths, from her knowledge of her in the classroom, and in other aspects of her work.

- The 'core' profile confirms that Jenny's literacy difficulties are significant.
- It suggests too that Jenny's attention appears to be a significant problem, and that there appears to be a clearly defined fatty acid deficit. It is plausible that the fatty acid deficit contributes to the attention deficit.
- Two other difficulties appear relatively prominent: there is some evidence of dyspraxic difficulties, and visual processing appears to be an area of weakness.

These may be unconnected – but the visual difficulties may be caused by poor ocular control, and be dyspraxic in nature. Fatty acids may play some role here as well.


Having first identified the main problem areas in the 'core' profile, you can then click on the + sign shown beside most of the bars, to obtain an 'expanded' profile

Interpreting and using the results

showing the sub-strands underpinning each area of difficulty and giving you a more detailed picture.





Clicking to expand the Literacy Difficulties bar, for example, suggests that Jenny's reading is less of a problem than her spelling, and that presentation and page layout is perhaps her greatest literacy problem:

Jenny's expanded Literacy profile

	Reading difficulties
	Spelling difficulties
	Dysgraphia
	Hyperlexia/specific comprehension deficit
	Phonological difficulties




Clicking on the bar for Visual and Visual Processing Difficulties yields an expanded profile that suggests a significant problem with visual discomfort (Meares-Irlen Syndrome), and with muscular control of the kinds of eye movements that are essential for fluent literacy:

Jenny's expanded Visual profile

	Visual tracking and ocular control difficulties
	Meares-Irlen syndrome
	Visual perceptual/nonverbal difficulties
	Visual working memory





The expanded attentional/hyperactivity profile suggests that simply sustaining attention, rather than the kinds of restless or impulsive behaviours that often characterise ADHD, is Jenny's real difficulty:

Jenny's expanded Attentional profile

	ADD
	Hyperactivity
	Impulsivity



And clicking to expand the DCD/dyspraxia bar suggests that Jenny is the typical ‘clumsy child’, while again signalling the poor page layout indicated by the Dysgraphia strand on her expanded Literacy profile:

Jenny’s expanded DCD profile

	Movement, balance, coordination and planning difficulties
	Sensory integration and sensory sensitivity difficulties
	Involuntary speech/motor difficulties
	Dysgraphia

Although at first sight Jenny appears to have no problem with self-esteem, expanding this strand indicates a significant lack of educational self-esteem, although there is no evidence of damage to her *social* self-esteem at this stage.

Jenny’s expanded Self-esteem profile

	Lack of educational self-esteem
	Lack of social self-esteem

This quite detailed level of information may be used to guide and direct support and remediation to considerably greater effect. In Jenny’s case, it suggests she may benefit from:

- as much extra help as can be given with basic reading and spelling, especially the latter; but probably not focusing upon phonological skills – these appear to be intact, whereas visual processing is less developed, and whole-word/sight-word skills are likely to be more of a barrier.
- some classroom strategies to help her focus and manage her attention.
- consideration, over the longer term, of use of a word processor with spellchecker to circumvent any residual spelling and page layout/handwriting difficulties
- a course of essential fatty acid dietary supplements, to help address the attentional and the dyspraxic difficulties.
- some exploration of movement training/brain gym exercises, or onward referral (perhaps via the medical services) for occupational therapy assessment.
- exploration to see whether tinted overlays help with reading and spelling, and consideration of some visual exercises, or onward referral (perhaps via the medical services) for orthoptic assessment and eye exercises.

As stated earlier, it is not essential to answer *all* questions in the SNAP questionnaires – but the more that can be answered, the more accurate and reliable the assessment is

likely to be. As a general guide to the confidence that can be placed in a given SNAP assessment, therefore, the ‘**confidence indicator**’ at the top of each on-screen profile gives the overall percentage of questions in the *Pupil Assessment* and *Information from the Family* questionnaires that have been answered – i.e. excluding *Don’t know* responses and any questions which may have been skipped altogether. While this clearly does not constitute a formal psychometric measure of confidence, it does provide a useful commonsense indicator as to whether further information should be sought before major decisions are taken.

Important caution

Your own professional judgement, and knowledge of the pupil’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 Deficiency 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 pupil 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 pupil, and your professional judgement, will always be important in interpreting a pupil’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 will be accompanied by one or more of Working memory difficulties, Processing speed difficulties, some 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.

Conversely, Literacy difficulties accompanied only by Attention Deficit or Hyperactivity might suggest that the literacy difficulty is not a co-morbid 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 pupil’s acquisition of literacy, rather than literacy being delayed for intrinsic reasons. Because ADHD and dyslexia are often genuinely co-morbid, such a pattern might

also raise further questions, already alluded to above: is it more probable that this pupil'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 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 Core Profile, or on any of the expanded profile bars. For each condition or SpLD, the information sheet is in three parts – 'School Support', 'Home Support', and 'Resources for Learning Support' – and can be printed to share with teaching colleagues and/or the parents or carers.

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 on pages 34–5.

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. Whether to issue several SNAP information sheets that may overlap to some extent, or whether to use the printouts as a resource for compiling a single, individualised advice resource, will again depend upon your professional judgement, and (more realistically!) the time available.