

Beyond diagnosis: meeting the needs of children with language and communication difficulties
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Children with language impairments (LI) often have co-occurring developmental needs. These co-occurring needs are often argued to raise challenges for accurate diagnosis such as the identification of Specific Language Impairment and the distinction between ASD and LI and, as a consequence securing appropriate interventions and support. In this paper I argue that a move towards profiling children's language learning needs rather than a reliance on discrepancy criteria or diagnostic categories is an important conceptual development in developing practice and theory. Drawing on data from the Better Communication Research Programme © (BCRP) the profiles of the needs of a group of children with identified language impairments are examined. To examine cognitive referencing and discrepancy profiles the impact of non-verbal ability on the participants' language profiles and change in language scores is examined. Then co-morbidity with diagnostic criteria for ASD is considered and it will be argued that when examining language learning difficulties it is essential to consider difficulties with different aspects of the language system irrespective of the 'diagnosis'. Finally I will examine the ways in which aspects of the language system differentially impact on participants' literacy, behaviour and educational support. Challenges for research and practice are outlined.