

# Children with English as a second language



**Information Leaflet**

## Background

Children may have difficulties learning English as a second language for a number of reasons including: -

- The area of origin in their own country and whether English was regularly heard or spoken.
- The length of residence in an English speaking country.
- The status and attitudes of both languages in the home, community and school.
- The confidence, motivation, learning capacity and anxiety of the speaker to learn English.
- The presence of difficulties in their first language will impact on their ability to learn the skills for their second language.
- Research shows bilingualism is an advantage as it enables people to communicate with people in their community, maintain family connections and learn other languages.
- If children know their first language well it will help them to learn English.



## How will I know if my child has a difficulty in our home language?

- Your child rarely initiates verbal communication.
- Your child does not participate in conversations.
- Your child may use a lot of gestures to convey meaning.
- Your child makes limited / no verbal contributions in conversations.

Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) will only be provided to children who have a communication difficulty in their home language.

## Role of the SLT

- To assess your child to investigate communication abilities in your home language (an interpreter may be used to help with this).
- To obtain information about background, family history, culture and status of the languages spoken.
- To decide whether SLT intervention is required and / or referral is needed to other agencies.
- To identify your child's needs so that their language learning needs can be supported.
- To provide SLT intervention and family support in the home language.



## How can I support my child's development of language?

- Continue to speak the language you feel most comfortable with.
- Give your child time to listen and respond.
- Keep language simple; use short phrases and lots of repetition.
- Use facial expression, gestures and body language to help your child understand.
- Encourage attempts from your child to communicate in any language. Show them you are interested and offer lots of praise.
- Increase the amount of time your child spends with their peers, it is easier for children to learn language from peers.

## Activities and games to help with your child's language development.



- Word association games. Ask your child to think of 5 types of fruit, or clothes or weather. This will increase their vocabulary.
- Sing nursery rhymes and do the actions with your child. This will help develop their rhyme skills.
- Sorting Games. Choose everyday objects e.g. teddy, hat, cup. Put them on a table and ask your child to find the one you wear, the one you play with. This will develop their listening skills.

**If you have any queries about the information in this leaflet or would like further advice, please contact your local RISE NI team:**