



SUMMARY

SLT Assessment and Intervention: Best practice for children and young people in bilingual settings

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) recognises that bilingualism in children and adults is an advantage.

Speech and language therapists (SLTs) aim to support children with speech, language and communication difficulties (SLCD) to reach their full potential.

SLTs assess children in both (all) the languages they hear and speak in order to profile their strengths and needs.

If a child has successfully acquired one language, typically the home or ambient language, they have demonstrated that they have all the skills to acquire any language. SLTs therefore do not provide treatment for additional language learning, as, with sufficient exposure, the child will successfully acquire an additional language.

Children with SLCD will experience difficulties in learning both their home and additional language.

For children with recognised SLCD, the SLT will recommend treatment indicated by research and specialist opinion. This is typically delivered in the language which the child hears most frequently and which can be successfully supported by the child's main carer(s), and ideally the child's family and community. SLTs recognise that children benefit from frequent rich language input. Home language is therefore the best language model for the child. This does not mean that the child cannot also access education in an additional language.

Successful acquisition of the home language supports the acquisition of an additional language. The aim is therefore to reach the same end-point of a bilingual child who is confident in their home language and any additional languages they are expected to use in their daily lives.

In Gaelic medium education settings (GME) the SLT may recommend that therapy be delivered in a language other than Gaelic (see Table on the reverse of this sheet). This decision will be based on the child's needs and environment and is designed to support the long-term goal of bilingualism and successful acquisition of Gaelic.

Research has shown that children with SLCD who are supported to develop their home language(s) go on to acquire additional languages more successfully than those who are supported solely in the additional language.

¹ This document was commissioned by RCSLT and has been approved by accredited RCSLT expert advisers.

Home language	Language of school	Recommended language of therapy sequence
Bilingual and potentially bilingual children		
Main carer Gaelic speaker English spoken by parent/family member(s)	Gaelic	Gaelic (then English where appropriate)
Gaelic	English	Gaelic (then English where appropriate)
English	Gaelic	English (then Gaelic where appropriate)
Main carer English speaker Gaelic spoken by other parent/family member(s)	Gaelic	English (consider Gaelic targets simultaneously with other parent/family member)
Main carer Gaelic speaker English spoken by parent/family member(s)	English	Gaelic (consider English targets simultaneously with other parent/family member)
Main carer community heritage language, e.g. Punjabi English spoken by parent/family member(s)	Gaelic or English	Heritage language (consider targets in the language of education simultaneously with other parent/family member)
Monolingual children in a bilingual context		
Gaelic monolingual speaking family	Gaelic	Gaelic
English monolingual speaking family	English	English
Community heritage language monolingual family (e.g. Punjabi)	Gaelic or English	Heritage language (consider targets in the language of education simultaneously with other parent/family member)
This table is a guide and language choice of therapy. It should be considered with the family in informed, shared decision-making		

For a full discussion of the issues raised by this summary please refer to the chapter available at:

http://www.rcslt.org/speech_and_language_therapy/rcslt_position_papers