



# Language Intervention in the Early Years

## Information for Parents / Carers

### Children's language development

Language development in the early years is essential to make sure children have the skills they will need as they get older. Finding effective ways to support young children with language difficulties is, therefore, a priority for schools. However, few interventions which provide this support have been evaluated.

We are working with [name of school] to offer you and your child the opportunity to take part in a research study which will compare the effectiveness of language interventions for pre-school children with language difficulties. We are working with 24 schools across the region and expect to work with 288 children.

If you want your child to participate in the study please return the attached consent form.

### Why did your child's teacher choose them for the study?

Your child has been chosen because their teacher thinks they may benefit from some additional support for their language development.

### What is the study about?

We are trying to find out if one of these interventions works better than the others:

- Building Early Sentences Therapy (BEST) ) is based on research and was developed by Newcastle University.
- The Derbyshire Language Scheme (DLS) has been used widely for many years but has had limited formal evaluation. The study will use an adapted version of this scheme.
- 'Continued Classroom support' (CCS) where children will continue to access the support schools already provide. If we find out that one of the interventions is better than this option, schools in this group will be offered that intervention at a later time.

At this point we do not know if one of the interventions is better than the others or if they are all equally good. To help us find out we have randomly allocated schools to one of these groups. Your child's school has been allocated to the [name of arm] group.



## Why should you participate in the study?

- If your child's school is allocated to the BEST or DLS group your child will receive 8 weeks of support from a speech and language therapist. This will support their language development.
- If your child's school is in the 'Continued Classroom Support' group your child will continue to receive the support usually provided by their school. The school will benefit from one of the other interventions at the end of the study.
- Your child will be assessed by a speech and language therapist. With your consent, the assessment will be discussed with your child's teacher. If you want to discuss the assessment with the speech and language therapist you will be able to request a meeting.
- Your child's school will receive training in a range of methods to support language development, this will support the school's focus on providing the best possible support to all children.

## What will happen if you agree to take part?

### Step 1: Allocating schools to an intervention

Your child's school has already been randomly allocated to one of the groups: BEST, DLS or 'Continued Classroom Support'. Allocation was blind meaning the school was not told which group it was in before they decided to join the study.

Your child's school has been allocated to the [name of arm] group.

### Step 2: Identifying children

Your child's teacher has identified children they think will benefit from taking part in the study.

### Step 3: Finding out about the study and giving consent

A meeting will be held at [name of school], on [date], at [time]. This will be an opportunity to find out more about the research study. Please let your child's teacher, [name of teacher], know if you will be attending.

If you are unable to attend the meeting or still have questions you can contact the researcher allocated to your child's school: [name of researcher/contact details]

If you decide to participate in the study please complete and return the consent form to your child's teacher by [date].

### Step 4: Assessing children

Once consent has been obtained the researcher will assess your child using play based assessments. You and your child's teacher will be asked to complete a short questionnaire about your child's communication.

The assessments will allow us to identify the children who are most likely to benefit from taking part in the study. Some children may not be eligible.

We will send you a letter to let you know if your child is eligible and if your child will be continuing with the study.

### **Step 5: Delivering the intervention**

If your child's school is assigned to receive BEST or DLS all of the participating children will receive the intervention at the same time. The intervention will be delivered by a speech and language therapist and a teaching assistant from your child's school.

Researchers will talk to the class teacher about an appropriate time for the children to be taken out of normal class activities. The intervention will be delivered in a quiet area in school twice a week for eight weeks; each of the sixteen sessions will last about 30 minutes.

Your child will also be given easy homework tasks to bring home, these are pictures for you and your child to talk about.

If your child's school is allocated to the 'Continued Classroom Support' group your child will not receive intervention from the researcher. Your child will continue to access the usual support your child's school offers.

### **Step 6: Follow up assessments**

After the 8 weeks when interventions are delivered to children in BEST or DLS schools, the researchers will assess children from schools in all three groups again. A third assessment will be conducted about 2-3 months later.

### **Recording the sessions**

In order to ensure the interventions are delivered the same way every time, we will video record at least one session in each school, other sessions may be audio recorded. Audio and video recordings will be stored on an encrypted server managed by Newcastle University. These recordings will only be accessed by the research team and will be deleted at the end of the study.

### **What to expect from the study**

If you agree to take part you will need to:

- Sign a consent form saying you are willing to take part in the study.
- Complete a short survey about your child.
- Look at the homework tasks with your child.

The research team have lots of experience working with children. If you give consent for your child to take part in the study but they are not happy during the assessments or intervention they will not be expected to continue and we will contact you to let you know.

You can change your mind and withdraw consent at any time without giving a reason. Any school can withdraw consent at any time without giving a reason. If this happens we will inform the parents that their children can no longer take part. If a parent or school withdraws from the study children will not be negatively affected and will continue to receive the usual support provided by their school. All data that has been collected will be destroyed.

## How we will share our findings

We will present the findings from the study at conferences and have them published in peer reviewed journals. No schools or children will be named in these publications.

If you want to receive a summary of the findings please tick the box on the consent form.

## What happens if my child moves school?

If your child moves school we will contact their new school to try and arrange for them to continue with the study. We may need to contact you to get the details of their new school.

## More information

If you need any more information or have any questions please visit the study website at:

<https://research.ncl.ac.uk/lively> or contact the research team.

The research assistant working with your school is: [name of researcher/contact details]

The study coordinator is: Dr Christine Jack, Telephone: 0191 208 3503,  
[christine.jack@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:christine.jack@newcastle.ac.uk)

## Your Rights

**Ethical Approval:** This study has been approved by the Newcastle University Research Ethics Committee.

**Confidentiality:** Throughout the study strict confidentiality will be maintained. When we write up the study, or present our findings at conferences, no children, teachers, teaching assistants or schools will be identified.

**Safeguarding:** All researchers have undergone a DBS check and will follow your child's school's safeguarding guidelines for volunteers working in school.

**Managing data:** We are asking for your consent to process the assessment data so that we can conduct the research described in this information sheet. All data will be kept securely within Newcastle University. Only the research team will have access to it. Only the consent forms will have children's names on and these will be stored separately from other data and destroyed at the end of the study. We may use your name and contact details [e.g. telephone number, email address] to contact you about the research study.

Newcastle University will act as the data controller for this study. You can find out more about how Newcastle University uses your information at <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/data.protection> and/or by contacting Newcastle University's Data Protection Officer (Maureen Wilkinson, [rec-man@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:rec-man@ncl.ac.uk)).

If you wish to raise a complaint on how we have handled your personal data, you can contact our Data Protection Officer who will investigate the matter. If you are not satisfied with our response or believe we are processing your personal data in a way that is not lawful, you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

**Open data:** At the end of the study the data collected will be de-identified and made available as "open data" through a research data repository [<https://research.ncl.ac.uk/rdm/sharing/>]. This means the de-identified study data will be publicly available and may be used by other researchers for purposes not related to this study. It will not be possible to identify the children or schools from the "open data".

<https://research.ncl.ac.uk/lively>