

# Advice for parents and carers about speaking other languages

Speech and Language Therapy Department

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## **Will it be difficult for my child to learn more than one language?**

It is estimated that more than half of the world's population are brought up to speak two or more languages as part of their natural way of life.

Therefore a child who is brought up in a multi-lingual background is not being required to do anything especially unusual or difficult.

## **Is it important for my child to learn English before starting nursery or school?**

No, if your English is fluent then it may be useful to speak English around your child - do not worry if you are unable to.

Learning any language helps small children to make sense of the world about them and to discover the excitement of communicating.

Once children know how to use one language they can usually learn another one very quickly.

## **I have heard about 'one person - one language', should I follow this?**

Recent research has shown that it is almost impossible to ask bilingual parents to only speak one language at all times.

It may also seem unnatural to your child if you are using one language to speak with them and a different language to speak to each other and your family members.

## **Can other family members use another language to talk to my child?**

Yes, other family members may use another language to talk with your child at the same time as they are learning English.

Children will learn very quickly which language a person is speaking and will adapt appropriately.

## **How should I decide what language to use when talking with my child?**

Please talk with your child in whatever language feels most natural to you, as this will give your child the most fluent example of how to talk.

It will also be easier for you to adjust the way you talk to help your child understand what you are saying.

If you are comfortable in more than one language then it is fine to use other languages as well.

## **Should I be worried if my child is mixing up the languages they are learning?**

It is natural for anyone who uses more than one language to combine the languages; this is useful to get a message across more clearly when one language has a word that another does not.

Children will mix languages up as they learn but will soon work out the different vocabulary and rules of the language.

## **Should I encourage my child to keep using our home language even after they have started school?**

Yes, sometimes children who speak different languages at home and school may start to lose their home language. By continuing to talk to your child in your home language you will be helping to keep it alive for the next generation of your family.

You may also be making it easier to communicate well with your child during the years ahead.

## **Will my child learn English from watching television?**

No, young children may sit in front of the television for hours but they will be watching the pictures, not listening to the words.

Research shows that this is not the way to help children to learn to talk.

## **My child has started learning English and has stopped talking, should I be worried?**

No, when children are first introduced to a new second language, such as English in school, they often go through a silent period of up to six months. This gives children time to listen and understand the new language.

Your child may talk in learnt phrases at first; this is okay, as they need time to practise the second language before they can use it.

## **Contact information**

If you require more information or advice on your child's speech or communication please contact your local Speech and Language therapy Department:

### **Ashton, Leigh & Wigan**

Platt Bridge Health Centre, Rivington Avenue, Platt Bridge, Wigan

Telephone: 01942 483613/4

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## Comments, Compliments or Complaints

The Patient Relations/Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Department provides confidential on the spot advice, information and support to patients, relatives, friends and carers.

## Contact Us

Tel: 01942 822376 (Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm)

The Patient Relations/PALS Manager  
Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust  
Royal Albert Edward Infirmary  
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## Ask 3 Questions

Become more involved in decisions about your healthcare. You may be asked to make choices about your treatment. To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions:

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?



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## How We Use Your Personal Information

For details on how we collect, use and store the information we hold about you, please take a look at our “how we use your personal information” leaflet which can be found on the Trust website: [www.wwl.nhs.uk/patient\\_information/Leaflets/default.aspx](http://www.wwl.nhs.uk/patient_information/Leaflets/default.aspx)

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This leaflet is also available in audio, large print, braille and other languages upon request. For more information please ask in department/ward.

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