



## Building Early Sentences Therapy

An evidence-based, low-dosage language intervention for children with language difficulties and Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)

### Therapy

**Eligibility** – Children aged 3-6 years who demonstrate symbolic play, triadic attention and imitation in play. Difficulty producing spoken utterances containing multiple clause elements

**Format:** Toy-based group therapy (groups of 2-6 children) delivered for 15 minutes twice weekly over 8, 12 or 16 sessions (maximum duration 8 weeks)

Each session focuses on a set of paired verbs

**Input phase** – children listen to spoken sentences while observing toys acting out the same actions

**Output phase** – children are given opportunities to provide spoken sentences describing the toys' actions

### Theory & RCT

Based on Constructivist language learning theory

Randomised controlled trial (RCT):

102 children

Children aged 3;05-4;05

20 Early Years Settings

Monolingual English speakers with comprehension and/or production scores  $\leq$  16th centile

Received BEST (McKean, Pert & Stow, 2013) or the Adapted Derbyshire Language Scheme (Knowles & Masidlover, 1982)

Case studies with languages other than English frequently spoken in the UK (Mirpuri and Polish)

### Outcomes

Both interventions were associated with significant improvement from baseline (T1) to outcome (T2) and follow-up (T3)

Children receiving BEST made significantly greater progress between post-intervention and follow-up (T2-T3).

A low-dosage intervention can produce language gains with moderate to large effects (McKean et al., 2025)

BEST with sign support was significantly more efficacious than treatment as usual and BEST without sign support (Trebacz et al., 2023)

Download the therapy resources



Languages other than English (LOTE) versions are available in Pakistani heritage languages (Mirpuri, Punjabi and Urdu), Bangladeshi heritage language (Sylheti) and Polish

Publications



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