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Developmental Language Disorder in Ireland

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Until recently the term specific speech and language impairment was used to describe this cohort of children in Ireland. In May 2017, the Irish Association of Speech and Language Therapists (IASLT) launched a new position paper and guidance document: 'Supporting Children with Developmental Language Disorder in Ireland' (Curry, et al., 2017). IASLT now recommends that the term Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) is used, in line with recommendations from the CATALISE consensus group (Bishop et al., 2017). Children suspected to have a language disorder are referred to speech and language therapists who work primarily in public health clinics. Assessment involves a range of standardised and informal tests with some use of dynamic assessment. Children may also be referred to other members of the multidisciplinary team. Interventions can be direct or indirect, with direct interventions usually given in 6 – 8 week blocks (1 or 2 per annum) and delivered by speech and language therapists in health clinics. Indirect interventions involve therapists facilitating others such as parents and teachers to work with these children. Parental reports on this approach, range from satisfaction with their role in the intervention to confusion about what is expected of them. Strict eligibility criteria entitle school-aged children with DLD to specialist education provision, however these criteria are not in keeping with IASLT recommendations. This issue needs to be addressed at policy level. The IASLT (2017) position statement incorporates a detailed action plan, to support implementation of key recommendations for change across identification, assessment, intervention and service delivery.