

Children in formal child care have better language skills

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Fewer children who attend regular formal centre- and family-based child care at 1.5 years and 3 years of age were late talkers compared with children who are looked after at home by a parent, child-carer or in an outdoor nursery. This is shown in a new study by the Norwegian Institute of Public Health of nearly 20,000 children.

The study found no relation between the type of child care at the age of 1 year and subsequent language competence, which may indicate that the positive effect of centre-based child care first occurs between the ages of 1 to 1.5 years.

Furthermore, there were fewer children who were late talkers among those who attended full-time centre-based child care compared with part-time attendance at 3 years of age.

The findings support most of the previous research showing that children who have been in formal child care have better [language skills](#) than children who have had more informal care.

The study, "Does universally accessible child care protect children from late talking? Results from a Norwegian population-based prospective study," is published by Ratib Lekhal and co-authors in the journal *Early Child Development and Care*.

The publication is based on information about 19,919 children collected by the Norwegian Mother and Child Cohort Study (MoBa) and the

Medical Birth Registry of Norway at the Norwegian Institute of Public Health. This is a correlation study, meaning that one can comment on the relationship between centre-based child care and language development, but not directly about the cause. However, a number of other possible factors such as income, [parental education](#), [mother tongue](#) and parental age are accounted for. The child's health at birth and social communication before the child started in formal child care was accounted for.

The incidence of delayed language development

Studies show that about 12 per cent of three year old children have either delayed language or show other deviations from normal language development. The prevalence varies according to the definition of language problems.

For about half of the children, difficulties in learning language are transient. For other children, the difficulties persist throughout school years and could have implications for how the child is able to adapt socially and function in school, work and society.

For many of the children, language difficulties disappear in the transition between pre-school and school, but appear in the form of reading and writing difficulties during the early school years.

Language and Learning Study

The publication is part of the Norwegian Institute of Public Health's Language and Learning study. This project will provide new knowledge about children's language development, the development trajectory in children with language difficulties and how they cope in school. The study will also reveal whether the organisation of learning activities in

formal child care affects children's academic and social development through their school years. Knowledge from studies of different development trajectories will eventually be used to better target treatment measures for children with language difficulties.

The project uses information from MoBa and hopes to conduct a clinical study of children with language difficulties at the age of 5.

Provided by Norwegian Institute of Public Health

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