Early Years and Minority Language Learning
Background

• Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential.
• Children develop quickly in the early years and a child’s experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances.
• A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right.
• Good parenting and high quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.
Four guiding principles should shape practice in early years settings. These are:
• every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured;
• children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships;
• children learn and develop well in enabling environments,
• children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.
Communication

• Communication and language development involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations.
How do they learn?

• playing and exploring - children investigate and experience things, and ‘have a go’;
• active learning - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, they enjoy achievements;
• creating and thinking critically - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.
Competences of caretakers and pre-school practitioners
One of the recommendations from ‘Education and Training 2020 (EU) is about improving the quality and efficiency of education and training.

With regard to language teaching:
‘It is important that students acquire language awareness and the ability to deal with different languages in their future workplace. Only qualified caretakers and teachers should be working with (young) children. ’
The training of practitioners

• Are there set criteria in teaching about minority languages?

• What are the minimum entry requirements of the study to become a care-taker or pre-school practitioner and what are the differences in Europe?

• What competences should recently graduated care-takers and pre-school practitioners have concerning language transmission in a multilingual context?
Methods

There is still discussion about methods. Should languages be acquired sequentially (one language at the time) or simultaneously? For simultaneous language acquisition there are, in turn, several options. One person, one language for instance, or one situation, one language.
11 Facts about babies and young children

All are born too early
Parental responses wire the brain
Silly faces are important
Brain growth is evolution on steroids
Lantern Vs Flashlight awareness
Babbling indicates learning
How responsive
DVDs and Tapes are worthless
Brain overload
Babies being deaf
More than mum and dad
Young children learning more than one language:

• Are not confused by it
• Have increased perceptual sensitivity; sound and visual
• Learning the rules of 2 languages develops a skills base in adaptation and transfer
• Do not improve through intensive language tuition
Applying what we know

- Mooinjer Veggey (background to provision)
Mooinjer Veggey: every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured;

- Children have independence and choices at many times of the day and that includes language choices.
- Activities (including language activities) are challenging, requiring children to develop resilience.
- Routines are flexible and take account of the children’s interests
Mooinjer Veggey: children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships

Adults constantly demonstrate interest in what children do
Praise, in both languages, is used appropriately
Parents are welcomed into the setting and can contribute to learning
Parents are provided with information about learning.
Mooinjer Veggey: children learn and develop well in enabling environments,

- Provide a range of spaces and places to snuggle in, to explore, to be imaginative and to be physical. Sometimes an adult is present to play with and alongside children, using both English and Manx Gaelic as appropriate and in situations where the child feels secure and comfortable. Children have regular access to the outdoors where the same interactions occur.
Mooinjer Veggey: children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.

- Learning activities, including language focus are planned for small groups and individuals
- Regular observations are recorded to compile an overview of individual progress
- Appropriate equipment is provided to stimulate interest and make practical learning situations
- Activities take account of individual learning needs.