

# My Languages Matter: the multilingual outlook for children in care

Through clinical work and interpreting assignments Mothertongue became aware of the situation for multilingual families when children are removed into care.

Frequently parents felt misunderstood and did not understand what was happening to them. Very young children, who do not speak English, are often placed with English-speaking foster families. If they stay in the placement for a long time they will lose their mother tongue. Their birth parents are then unable to communicate with them.

Mothertongue took their concerns about this situation to The Victoria Climbié Foundation UK and together they decided to take action by holding a roundtable debate and by publishing a White Paper on these issues.

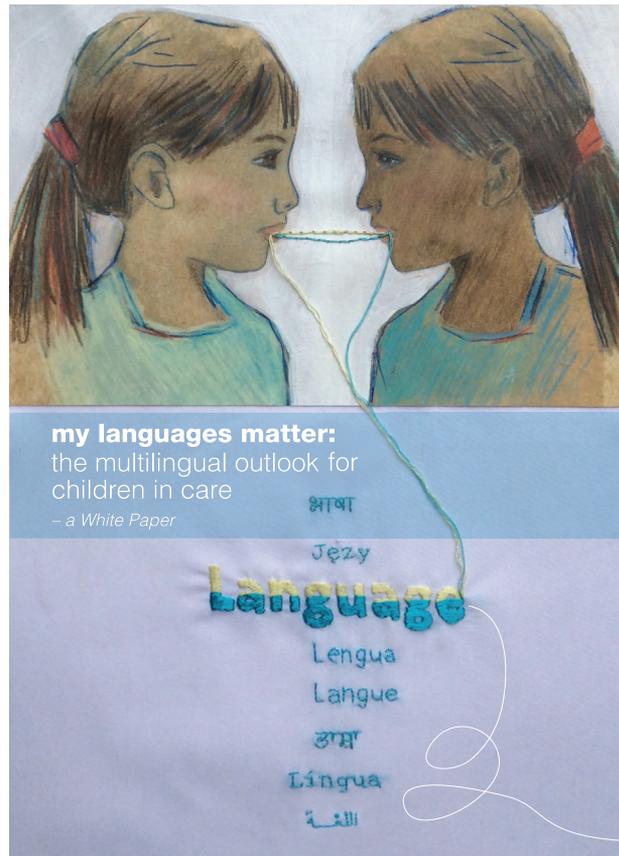
On 14th October 2014, Craig Whittaker MP hosted the roundtable debate at Parliament; 'Multilingualism and misunderstandings for children in care' led by The Victoria Climbié Foundation UK and Mothertongue. It was attended by 26 people from health and social care backgrounds as well as academics, interpreters, clinicians, practitioners and campaigners.

The subsequent White Paper: My languages matter: the multilingual outlook for children in care, published in February 2015, attempts to set out and discuss the issues raised - referring to current research and case studies - to stimulate debate and to offer some recommendations for practice. If you wish to access the full White Paper, please go to our website: [www.mothertongue.org.uk](http://www.mothertongue.org.uk)

## Recommendations

The Victoria Climbié Foundation UK in partnership with Mothertongue offers the following recommendations for change:

1. Improve the multilingual outlook in Safeguarding; ensuring that any change to be implemented is informed by recommendations from the Welsh Language toolkit; specifically for the social care workforce.
2. Develop a curriculum for social work training to improve awareness and increase skills for working with multilingual families; to improve the training of frontline staff to work with interpreters and to
3. Develop a set of standards for working effectively with interpreters in a Safeguarding context; to implement and build on recommendations made within various health settings, and to adapt for a Safeguarding context, to address issues of communication across language and culture; to incorporate a set of standards for working with interpreters into core training for social workers.
4. Develop a framework for commissioning interpreting services for a Safeguarding context
5. Implement a policy of recruitment of multilingual and language-interested foster-carers.



understand the importance of languages in the psychological development of multilingual children and their attachment patterns and the impact of language loss to be routinely incorporated into their standard training.