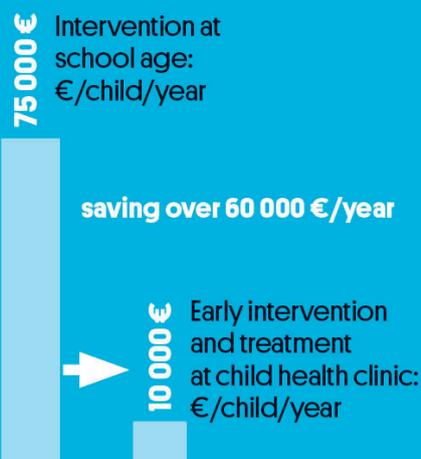


## CASE SPECIFIC LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT

# Early support prevents further difficulties



## CASE: SPECIFIC LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT

Creating savings by offering early support to prevent further difficulties.

Specific language impairment (term “developmental language impairment” in use from January 2019) considerably affects the child’s functional ability and makes participation and social interaction more difficult. Around 7% of the age group are diagnosed with it. In Finland, around 70,000 children under the age of 18 are diagnosed with specific language impairment.

Sufficient support offered at an early stage to improve the child’s functional ability is the most important factor in improving the child’s prognosis. In addition to this, the child also needs timely and sufficient rehabilitation. The child’s language-related difficulties and lack of functional ability should also be taken into account at school.

Without early diagnosis, the child’s difficulties might build up and become more complicated. This could lead to mental health issues later on in life. If the difficulties are identified and analysed when the child has already reached school age, both the child and the whole family will need more medical rehabilitation and support.

In these cases, the opportunity for early intervention and rehabilitation has been lost. If the child only receives therapy and support after reaching school age, there is a possibility that the child and the family will need more specialised health care services.

Remedying the situation costs around 75,000 euros or more, since several specialised health care services and examinations are often necessary in these cases.



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The One Life health project strives towards a healthier Finland. The Finnish Brain Association, the Finnish Diabetes Association, the Filha Finnish Lung Health Association, the Organisation for Respiratory Health, the Finnish Association for Mental Health, the Finnish Heart Association, and the Cancer Society of Finland have teamed up to promote people’s health and welfare throughout their lives. Duodecim participates in the project as an expert organisation.

If the specific language impairment or the risk to develop one are identified at an early stage, rehabilitation and support can be started at child health clinics and during early childhood education. As soon as the child's need for support is identified, the family can receive counselling from a speech therapist.

The family is also offered the services of a special needs teacher in early childhood education and directed to low-threshold services (Finnish Brain Association's events for families).

If necessary, the child is entitled to speech and language therapy and family counselling before reaching school age. This preventive option would cost around 10,000 euros.

### **Savings:**

If the child's need for support is identified early on at a child health clinic and the parents receive guidance from a speech therapist, and if the child's language development is supported in early childhood education and the diagnosis is given at an early stage, the child's prognosis will be better. The costs will also be lower as specialised health care services are not needed as much or at all.

The savings could amount to over 60,000 euros per child each year.

### **Costs:**

Maternity and child health clinics focus on the early detection of problems in language development. All parents whose child is at risk of developing a specific language impairment are entitled to receive counselling from a speech therapist (taking into account genetic predispositions if dyslexia runs in the family, for example). Early childhood education ensures the availability of special needs teachers across the country. The annual costs would be around 10,000 euros.

### **Sources:**

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