

Press release – 18.04.2012

## COMMUNICATION COALITION BIDS FOND FAREWELL TO DIRECTOR

Anita Kerwin-Nye, Director of The Communication Trust, a coalition of nearly 50 voluntary and community based organisations specialising in speech, language and communication, has announced that she is to step down after five years in post.

Kerwin-Nye originally founded The Communication Trust in 2007 alongside BT, I CAN, Council for Disabled Children and Afasic to support the development and training of the children's workforce and to influence policy. Five years on, and the Trust has:

- Grown from 8 to 48 consortium members and been cited by The Cabinet Office as an exemplar model of collaboration and coalition.
- Extended the reach of the Trust by training over 3,000 people in the early years, schools and youth justice workforce on how to support children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).
- Impacted heavily on policy including successful influencing of speech, language and communication in the early years agenda.
- Developed, in partnership with City and Guilds, a new mandatory Level 3 Award in supporting children and young people's speech, language and communication.
- Delivered the *Hello* campaign (national year of communication) in partnership with Jean Gross CBE, formerly Communication Champion for children. 200 Local Co-ordinators supported *Hello*, 320,000 free resources were disseminated to families and the children's workforce and it is estimated that 72% of UK adults were reached by *Hello* media coverage (Metrika analysis).

In her previous role as Director of Communications for I CAN, Anita developed the *Make Chatter Matter* campaign. This seminal campaign helped lobby for the *Bercow Review into Services for Children and Young People (0-19) with Speech, Language and Communication Needs* calling for a Communication Champion and awareness raising campaign to make communication everyone's business.

Anita Kerwin-Nye says: "I am remarkably proud of The Communication Trust and how far we have come in five years. As a collective of voluntary organisations, we have striven to improve services and awareness for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).

"When I first joined the speech and language sector, there was very little general awareness that communication skills were a vital commodity for individuals, families and society as a whole. It was hidden that 1 million children have some form of SLCN that can affect them early, severely and for life. The children's workforce felt under confident in this area and parents were battling a system where their child's needs were falling between the stools of health and education.

“To put SLCN on the map, we have had to emerge the vital importance of all children and young people’s communication development. Early identification of children’s needs is only possible when there is recognition amongst the workforce and parents about what typical communication development looks like. We still have a long way to go but things have improved and the voluntary sector has acted as one of the biggest catalysts for change.

Kerwin-Nye continues: “By developing a coalition of 48 voluntary organisations, The Communication Trust speaks as one voice on speech and language issues whilst supporting individual members’ work streams. There is so much credibility and expertise held within the Trust and the focus over the next six months will be on showcasing what works to support children’s communication and SLCN and disseminating it to the widest possible audience.

“As we put the finishing touches to The Communication Trust’s *Impact Report* outlining the difference we have made in five years, it feels the right time to move on. A strong strategy has been put in place for the next five years and I know I am leaving it in the very capable hands of the Trust’s staff team.

Norbert Lieckfeldt, Chief Executive of The British Stammering Association, says: “It is unusual to have a coalition of this kind. In a time when organisational mergers and cost efficiency drives are coming into force, The Communication Trust is a model of how it can be done. Anita’s leadership and her ability to bring organisations together to work towards a common goal, whilst supporting their individual strategies, have been remarkable. She will be sorely missed but her legacy is leaving the Trust and its members in a strong position and with a clear direction for future work.”

Kerwin-Nye will be succeeded from May 1<sup>st</sup> in the interim by Cara Evans, Operations Director, who will work closely with Adrian Hosford, Chair of The Communication Trust, on implementing the Trust’s next five year plan. The Trust will be building on the legacy of the *Hello* campaign by launching a campaign in the near future to place communication at the heart of schools’ policy and practice.

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## **Notes to editors**

### *About The Communication Trust*

- The Communication Trust is a campaigning voice for children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). It raises awareness, influences policy, promotes best practice among the children’s workforce and commissions work from its members.
- The Communication Trust is a coalition of nearly 50 leading voluntary sector and community based organisations. It has an extensive advisory and partner network that includes the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT), Achievement for All, Council for Disabled Children, Early Support Programme and specialists across early years, schools and youth justice.
- Recently, the Trust ran the *Hello* campaign (national year of communication) in partnership with Jean Gross in her role as the Government’s Communication Champion for children.

- The Communication Trust in 2012 is building on the legacy of Hello by showcasing best practice from the voluntary sector around what works to support all children's communication, particularly those with SLCN, and disseminating it to the widest possible audience.
- This work will include launching later in the year a campaign to place communication at the heart of schools' policy and practice. For more information, visit [www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk](http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk)