

Press release – 20.06.2012

COMMUNICATION COALITION WELCOMES LANGUAGE EMPHASIS IN NUTBROWN'S LANDMARK REVIEW

Leading voluntary coalition with expertise in speech, language and communication calls for settings, organisations, awarding bodies and local authorities to offer robust qualifications for practitioners and recommends the Speech, Language and Communication Level 3 award as a suitable solution

The Communication Trust, a leading voluntary sector coalition, has today (June 20th 2012) welcomed Professor Cathy Nutbrown's recommendations on the vital importance of young children's speech and language development and the need to ensure that all early years practitioners are skilled and knowledgeable in this area through access to robust and quality qualifications.

Lisa Morgan, Professional Director for the Trust, said: "Every child deserves the best start in life and nurturing speech, language and communication skills supports all areas of a child's development and ultimately their life chances. Professor Nutbrown's recommendations clearly highlight the role early years practitioners play in supporting and nurturing language development.

"Evidence shows that better qualified staff lead to better outcomes for children. The Trust, since its inception five years ago, has recognised the need for formal and national qualifications to be introduced for early years staff as Nutbrown espouses. Research has demonstrated that staff often feel under-skilled and lacking in confidence in supporting children's typical language development and recognising early when they are struggling.

"We developed in partnership with City & Guilds the *Supporting Children and Young People's Speech, Language and Communication Level 3 Award* (City & Guilds reference number: 4337 and CACHE 600/4257/6). It is a continuing professional development accredited qualification, ensuring a direct link from learning to practice. To support the Award, the Trust has produced expertly written materials for tutors and learners which are freely available online."

The Award fits firmly with Professor Nutbrown's outline of the direct correlation between language development, attainment and life outcomes. The Award is also firmly linked to the coalition government's priority of early intervention and prevention, narrowing the gap in educational achievement between disadvantaged children and their peers.

It builds on the *Every Child a Talker*, the *Inclusion Development Programme* and the *Child Health Promotion* programmes and addresses training needs identified in the report by C4EO *Grasping the Nettle*. The C4EO 2010 report cites evidence that '*early years staff feel inadequately equipped to help*

children (with language delay) and that over 60% of teachers lack confidence in their ability to meet children's language needs'.

To meet the needs of early years staff, the *Supporting Children and Young People's Speech, Language and Communication* award is made up of three units and ensures learners are able to:

- Understand the importance of speech, language and communication
- Understand and support children's speech, language and communication development
- Recognise children who may have speech, language and communication needs.

The benefit of this award is that practitioners can also use prior learning to gain a nationally recognised qualification, ensuring quality, and supporting retention in the sector¹.

Morgan concludes: "The Trust's core focus is on the development of the entire children's workforce. We look forward to working with the Government on the recommendations as proposed by Professor Nutbrown to ensure that early language does indeed form a core part of any early years qualification, so enabling a better qualified workforce to work to provide better outcomes for children."

The Trust's award materials can be downloaded here

<http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/early-years/training-and-qualifications.aspx>

To speak to the Trust about the Award, please contact Eve Wagg, Programme Manager on 020 7843 2517 or email ewagg@thecommunicationtrust.org.uk

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For more information contact Press and PR Officer Lynne Milford on 0207 843 2564 or email lmilford@thecommunicationtrust.org.uk

Notes to editors

About The Communication Trust

- The Communication Trust is a campaigning voice for children with speech, language and communication needs. It raises awareness, influences policy, promotes best practice among the children's workforce and commissions work from its members.
- It is a coalition of nearly 50 leading voluntary sector organisations and an advisory group, which includes the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, Association of Educational Psychologists and the General Teaching Council.
- The Trust and Pearson Assessment collaborated to produce *Universally Speaking* – a series of booklets for anyone who works with children and young people. The early years booklet highlights where children aged 0 – 5 should be with their communication and what to do if you have concerns. It is available here www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/resources
- For more information about the Trust visit www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk

ⁱ Cathy Nutbrown's Interim Report on Early Years qualifications - 'Communication skills' were cited as the most important skill that early years practitioners needed by the largest % of respondents to her initial consultation (39%). The Interim Report set out her 3 main concerns about the existing qualifications (based on all the stakeholder consultation) which are about content and tuition, quality, recruitment and retention