

Put Communication at the heart of everything!

By Wendy Lee, Professional Director, The Communication Trust

I've read with interest and fascination the wide range of ideas that have been posted from lots of clever and innovative organisations and individuals. There has clearly been some amazing work done though as always when considering *education, social justice and a hatred of disadvantage*, there remains much to do. We too at [The Communication Trust](#) and across our sector, have benefited from funding from your speech and language grant scheme for programmes to support children's communication skills.

Many of the initiatives funded across PHF rely to a greater or lesser degree on young people being able to communicate, whether that be for learning, inclusion, for social interaction, independence, to express their emotions, support their resilience, develop their self esteem....the list goes on...

Interestingly, although communication is everywhere and truly valued by most adults and young people, it is nowhere too. It's so obvious, we often take it for granted.

For the majority of suggestions I read, I could see immediately where communication would play an intrinsic and valuable part of success, both in terms of embedding excellence in communication into programmes of work and highlighting communication as an explicit outcome; I'm making an educated guess that we would all want all young people to feel confident in their communication skills, enabling them to feel included, valued and prepared for life.

With all of this in mind; I've come up with the rather random number of **4 PHF should**.....thoughts; Fairly obviously as a communication obsessive, I believe ...

1. PHF shouldMake communication explicit and put it at the heart of everything!****

Good language skills are at the foundation of learning and social interaction. They are essential skills for young people to make their way in the world, regardless of the direction of travel or journey they take. And yet, there are surprisingly [large numbers of young people who struggle to communicate](#) to the best of their ability.

However, we do know a lot of what works for young people; some of this is empirical evidence, some "gut" feelings of excellent practitioners that see what works in their daily practice ... and pretty much everything in between, which leads neatly onto...

2. PHF should....share expertise for the development and sharing of well measured outcomes****

I'd really like to see a continuation of what PHF does in this respect; encourage and support people they fund to really think about outcomes; to ensure robust identification and measurement of outcomes; to support the journey through this process, to value the "softer" outcomes, which though challenging to measure are really important and to share their expertise with individuals and organisations. I also love that you allow pilots to be pilots and really value the learning there is in the process, which I believe leads to much richer outcomes for young people.

3. PHF should...encourage collaborations****

This happens already; we have made some excellent links through events run by PHF, for example our [Talk of the Town](#) project in Wythenshawe came from a PHF network event. This project is now being funded for an RCT by EEF. Coming out of that was our [Communication Leaders](#) project, funded by PHF. All from a chance meeting at a PHF event and an executive head teacher who was determined to make communication a priority in his federation!

I think more of this would be excellent and more structured, systematic approaches to collaboration; whether that be in terms of people working together, communicating outcomes or taking next strategic steps across to expand elements of work across a wider community or network.

And finally, we struggle a bit in smaller 3rd sector organisations with communicating our outcomes and our work, in a truly impactful way;

4. **PHF should...spread the word...** build into grant applications ways in which we can all ensure the positive outcomes we achieve are not isolated or limited by our networks, but can be communicated more widely, more systematically for greater impact with more young people.