

Press release – For Immediate Release (18.07.2012)

## **LEADING COMMUNICATION COALITION RESPONDS TO OFCOM STUDY THAT SHOWS 'TEXTING IS OVERTAKING TALKING IN UK'**

The Communication Trust, a coalition of nearly 50 voluntary organisations with expertise in supporting children and young people's speech, language and communication, has reiterated the vital importance of good spoken communication skills and interaction, in light of Ofcom's findings released today that many more people are sending text messages instead of having face-to-face conversations.

Communication skills are fundamental in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and are directly linked to learning and life chances. Previous Communication Trust research commissioned last year as part of the *Hello* campaign (national year of communication) highlighted that an 'urban myth' exists that children will automatically pick up communication skills when in fact they have to be learned and nurtured.

Wendy Lee, Professional Director for the Trust, said: "We cannot underestimate the importance and value of face-to-face communication. Whilst technology plays a vital role in our lives, it is essential that children and young people develop good social interaction skills, express their thoughts and can make themselves understood.

"Children learn to communicate through face-to-face communication and interaction with adults and it provides excellent opportunities to develop a wider vocabulary. They cannot pick this up through using technology when so much of this information is bite-sized and they miss out on the richness of language."

Lee continues: "Learning to speak and listen are some of the most complex skills we ever learn and in some socially deprived parts of the country upwards of 50% of children are starting school with language delay. Without good communication support, these children often don't catch up with their peers.

"Adults play a crucial role in ensuring children and young people develop these skills by engaging them in conversations. It is important they nurture good speaking skills and hold conversations so they model this approach, so it is concerning that the Ofcom study suggests we are relying more and more on texting and other forms of technology to communicate.

"There are many positives about the way technology has developed. It has increased the number of people we can communicate with, which widens our experiences and can be enriching linguistically. 1 million children in the UK have some form of speech, language and communication need and for those who use communication aids and alternative methods of communication, technology is their lifeline.

“If we consider teenagers, technology is very much part of their culture. We also have to ensure they are confident in face-to-face communication skills so they can succeed in the world of work. Employers have highlighted that they are crying out for young people with good communication skills and that too many are starting work without them.”

The Communication Trust has developed a number of resources to help adults and members of the children’s workforce to increase their awareness and confidence in supporting children’s language development, being aware of the typical ‘ages and stages’ and knowing when a child is struggling and in need of support. These are available from [www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/resources](http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/resources)

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For more information contact Press and PR Officer Lynne Milford on 0207 843 2564 or email [lmilford@thecommunicationtrust.org.uk](mailto:lmilford@thecommunicationtrust.org.uk)

## Notes to editors

### About The Communication Trust

- The Communication Trust is a coalition of nearly 50 voluntary and community organisations with expertise in speech, language and communication. The Trust raises awareness of speech, language and communication needs in children and young people. It also influences policy, promotes best practice among the children’s workforce and commissions work from its members.
- The Trust is supported by a group of advisors including the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, Association of Educational Psychologists and the General Teaching Council.
- Last year, the Trust ran the Hello campaign (national year of communication) – in conjunction with Jean Gross, the Government’s Communication Champion for Children to make children’s communication a priority in homes and schools across the UK.
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