

Press release – 27.07.2012

LEADING COMMUNICATION COALITION WELCOMES CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S HEALTH OUTCOMES FORUM REPORT

The Communication Trust, a coalition of nearly 50 voluntary organisations with expertise in speech, language and communication, has today (27th July 2012) welcomed recommendations from the *Children and Young People's Health Outcomes Forum* to improve health-related care for children and young people and address long-standing system issues.

The Forum launched by the Secretary of State for Health, Andrew Lansley, included the Government's former Communication Champion, Jean Gross CBE. Last year, The Communication Trust managed and delivered the National Year of Communication (*Hello* campaign) in partnership with Jean Gross.

Cara Evans, Interim Director at The Communication Trust, said: "The Communication Trust is particularly pleased the *Health Outcomes Forum report* makes strong recommendations around more effective integration of health with education, social care and other local authority led services.

"Over 1 million children and young people in the UK today have some form of long term and persistent speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). For too long these children have fallen through the cracks of health and education, being passed from one agency to another, with families stuck in the middle of local disputes.

"Improving joint commissioning of services for children and young people with SLCN is vital and we need to take their views, and those of their families, firmly into account. The Trust wants to ensure that children with SLCN and users of alternative and augmentative communication aids (AAC) are supported to express their opinions on matters that directly affect their life chances.

"The Trust wholly endorses the recommendation that all those working with children and young people should possess the right knowledge and skills to support children and young people's communication development and to be able to identify when they are struggling."

Julie Wagge, Director of Speech and Language Therapy Services at Symbol UK, one of the Trust's consortium members, said: "Getting it right for children and young people with SLCN relies heavily on effective joint commissioning. An inherent difficulty has always been that the specialist resource - speech and language therapists - sits within the NHS but the ultimate legal responsibility to provide therapy sits with the local authority as the education provider.

"The care pathway for children with SLCN includes nursery-based provision and schools. Effective clinical outcomes rely heavily on the collaboration between practitioners, teachers, speech and language therapists (SLTs) and parents. Early and timely intervention is critical or we face great economic and societal costs down the line."

At the end of the National Year of Communication, Jean Gross CBE published her final report as the Government's Communication Champion for children. It highlighted that joint commissioning is still not taking place in seven out of ten local areas.

The report can be downloaded from

www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/media/9683/nwm_final_jean_gross_two_years_on_report.pdf

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About The Communication Trust

- The Communication Trust is a coalition of nearly 50 leading voluntary sector and community based organisations. It raises awareness, influences policy, promotes best practice among the children's workforce and commissions work from its members
- 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
- Last year, 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
- For more information, visit www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk