

Press Release – For Immediate Release (03.09.2012)

LEADING COMMUNICATION COALITION WELCOMES CHILDREN AND FAMILIES BILL

The Communication Trust, a coalition of nearly 50 voluntary organisations with expertise in speech, language and communication, has today (3rd September 2012) welcomed the *Children and Families Bill*, highlighting that the proposed changes with the right implementation could positively impact on the 1 million children in the UK with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), and their families.

The Trust has welcomed the emphasis on joint commissioning of services, the introduction of Education, Health and Care Plans, giving parents more choice through personalised budgets, as well as through a local offer to parents of children with SEN, including those with SLCN. However, it has highlighted the challenges and difficulties in implementing these.

Anne Fox, Director of The Communication Trust, says: "The Children and Families Bill and the good intentions enshrined within it are welcomed, the devil as always will be in the detail. The Trust is working with its consortium members and partners across the private and public sector to ensure these proposed changes make a positive difference to families.

"We know that children and young people with SLCN are at risk of being under-identified and not having their needs met because of a postcode lottery of services. It is imperative that they do not lose out, particularly because their difficulties can be 'hidden' or because they slip through the gap between services with no-one taking responsibility. This is why joint commissioning is so vital for these children but legislating for the NHS, local authorities and schools to work together to commission services won't be a silver bullet."

Linda Lascelles, Chief Executive of Afasic, says: "We welcome the government's commitment to improving the SEN system. The proposals alone in this bill will not address the problem of waiting times or assist the children's workforce to access specialist support such as education psychologists, speech and language therapists or SEN advisory teachers."

In the UK today, one in ten children have some form of SLCN that can affect them early, severely and for life. SLCN is the most common type of primary need for pupils with SEN statements in maintained primary schools.

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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 coalition of nearly 50 leading voluntary sector and community-based organisations with expertise in speech, language and communication.
- It supports the children's workforce and commissioners to meet the speech, language and communication needs of all children and young people, by raising awareness, influencing policy, promoting best practice among the children's workforce and commissioning work from its members.
- It has an extensive advisory and partner network, which 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.
- The Trust seeks to ensure that children and young people with SLCN are identified and supported as soon as possible, by making sure more people understand speech, language and communication development and SLCN.
- In 2011, 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