



Transforming Lives

Press Information

For Wednesday 9th March 2011

ONE IN FIVE NEW PARENTS ARE UNAWARE OF THE NEED TO COMMUNICATE WITH THEIR YOUNG BABY

**National Literacy Trust launches 'Talk To Your Baby' Campaign
(www.talktoyourbaby.org.uk)**

New research released by the National Literacy Trust today, shows that a fifth of parents-to-be (19%) believe it is only beneficial to communicate with their baby from the age of three months and one in 20 (6%) believe that communicating with their baby is only necessary when they are six months or older, while one in eight parents (13%) believe the primary responsibility for developing their child's communication skills lies outside the home.

To mark the 'National Year of Communication' as part of the 'Hello' Campaign the National Literacy Trust is launching a 'Talk To Your Baby' Campaign to educate parents about the hugely positive role they can play in helping their baby develop vital communication skills in the first three years of their lives.

TLR as crucial to positive child development as TLC

Jonathan Douglas, Director of the National Literacy Trust, comments: 'The first three years are pivotal to the development of communication skills. By the age of three a staggering 80% of a child's brain will be formed. A child's brain will never grow faster than at this point in their lives so we're urging every parent in the UK to use this window of opportunity to talk, talk, talk!

'We all know how vital it is to give a young child plenty of TLC. Our message is that TLR (Talking, Listening and Responding) is every bit as crucial to their future wellbeing.'

The need for the National Literacy Trust 'Talk To Your Baby' campaign

The National Literacy Trust's new campaign is launched amidst growing concern about the increasing number of children entering primary education lacking basic communication skills. National Literacy Trust research demonstrates that to reverse this trend parents need to be helped to develop a greater understanding of how vital their role can be and how much their baby is able to understand and enjoy communicating:

- Around a quarter (23%) of parents believe less than a third (30% or less) of their child's brain has formed by the age of two and 44% of parents believe half or less of their child's brain has formed when in fact the figure is 70%
- Over a third (38%) of parents expecting their first baby are unaware that there is any benefit in talking to their baby while it is still in the womb

- One in 20 (6%) of expecting parents believe that language skills develop entirely naturally and that they have no role to play in their development
- While over three quarters (78%) of parents believe it's crucial for children's language and speech development to be supported, one in eight (13%) believe the primary responsibility for developing communication skills in their child lies outside the home (eg. With nurseries or healthcare professionals)

The new five a day rule

As part of the Talk To Your Baby campaign the National Literacy Trust is urging parents to consciously incorporate some TLR (talking, listening and responding) time with their baby at least five times a day.

Tina O'Brien, star of Waterloo Road and Strictly Come Dancing and mum to Scarlett, age two, comments: 'TLR is the new TLC! You and your child will get so much out of talking together and it doesn't have to be hard work. Scarlett and I chat all the time, when we're shopping, at bath time or even while we're doing the weekly food shop. We have such a giggle when we're talking together and it's great to know that I'm giving her language skills she'll have for life.'

Get Involved. Get Talking!

With 82% of parents saying that they'd welcome more information about the development of speech and language skills in babies, today (9th March) sees the launch of a brand new website www.talktoyourbaby.org.uk – designed to be a hub of information for parents and carers of babies and young children to access:

- free information about key developmental milestones of babies
- free activities to stimulate talk with young children including Maisy colouring sheets, Barefoot Books video content, podcasts and song and nursery rhyme lyrics
- hints for incorporating beneficial 'talking sessions' throughout a busy day
- tips for talking to your baby from celebrity mums and mums-to-be
- video and audio contact throughout for accessibility

Parents are also being urged by the National Literacy Trust to commit to talk to their baby more by going online to make a pledge, for the chance to win one of 150 free children's books (from Walker books and Barefoot Books).

The charity is also encouraging parents with babies and young children to hold a 'Talk To Your Baby' party and is providing party packs and inspiration on the www.talktoyourbaby.org.uk site, with the first 300 parents to commit to holding a party receiving a 'Driving My Tractor' book and CD package from Barefoot Books, worth £6.99.

A magical moment: Baby's first word

Around a third of parents (31%) expect to hear their baby's first word between the ages of 6-8 months while just over a third (38%) expect to wait until their baby is around 9 – 11 months. Over a quarter (28%) anticipate that a full year will go past before their baby will be able to say a recognisable word, when in fact the average age for the emergence of baby's first word is typically around 12 months.

The National Literacy Trust research reveals that the top 10 most popular first baby words (other than Mummy or Daddy) are:

1. Dog
2. Cat
3. More
4. Baby
5. Ball
6. Duck
7. Teddy
8. Milk
9. Gran
10. Again

Jonathan Douglas comments: 'Few moments in life are more magical than the first time you hear your baby talk. It's the start of a lifelong conversation. But we want parents to understand that talking with your baby doesn't have to involve words. Your baby cooing, babbling or even simply holding your gaze is a way of them communicating.'

'The Talk To Your Baby campaign aims to help parents understand that by responding positively to their baby's earliest attempts at communication and taking every opportunity to talk with their baby they will build their child's confidence and help them develop language skills that will be with them for life.'

Ends

For further information or to arrange an interview please contact:

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Notes to Editors

About the research

- 6000 people, including 3000 parents took part in the Hello launch survey to understand people's perception of general communication development
- The survey was conducted by One Poll between 19th and 20th January 2011
- One Poll are a well respected organisation who undertake a wide range of market research projects on behalf of various companies from various sectors within the UK and around the world www.onepoll.com

About the National Literacy Trust

The National Literacy Trust is an independent charity that transforms lives through literacy. We believe that society will only be fair when everyone has the literacy skills they need to communicate, to fulfil their potential and to contribute more to society. We campaign to improve public understanding of the vital importance of literacy, as well as delivering projects and working in partnership to reach those most in need of support.

To help us transform lives through literacy, you can make a donation or support our work. To find out how visit <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/support>

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About Hello - The National Year of Communication

Hello is the national year of communication – a campaign to increase understanding of how important it is for children and young people to develop good communication skills.

The campaign is run by The Communication Trust, a coalition of 40 leading voluntary sector organisations; in partnership with Jean Gross, the Government's Communication Champion. Together we aim to make 2011 the year when children's communication skills become a priority in schools and homes across the country.

The campaign is supported by BT and Pearson Assessment and is backed by the Department for Education and Department for Health.

Please visit www.hello.org.uk for further information or to sign up for regular updates.

The National Year was originally proposed by John Bercow MP – now Speaker of the House of Commons - in his July 2008 Review of Services for Children and Young People (0-19) with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN).

About The Communication Trust

The Communication Trust raises awareness of speech, language and communication issues amongst everyone that works with children and young people. It was founded by Afasic, BT, CDC (Council for Disabled Children) and children's communication charity I CAN.

The Communication Trust manages a coalition of 40 voluntary organisations and an advisory group that includes the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, Association of Educational Psychologists and the General Teaching Council.

The Trust's work is supported by the Department for Education and other funders. More information can be found at www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk.

About Jean Gross, England's Communication Champion for children

Jean Gross is England's Communication Champion for children, appointed by government in response to the 2008 Bercow Review of support for children with speech, language and communication needs.

The Communication Champion is responsible for working across government, delivery partners and other stakeholders to co-ordinate and build on initiatives to improve services for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs.

The *Hello* campaign is being run by The Communication Trust in partnership with the Communication Champion.

For more information go to www.thecommunicationcouncil.org.