

Press release – Embargoed for Thursday 6th September 2012

LOOK WHO'S TALKING - NEW FILMS SHOW SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT FROM CHILD'S VIEW

A series of four short films, highlighting how young children aged 0-5 learn to speak, listen and interact with their parents or carers, have been launched today (6th September 2012) by The Communication Trust, a coalition of nearly 50 voluntary organisations with expertise in children's speech and language.

Available from www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk, the four films cover the 0-6 months, 6-12 months, 1-2 and 2-3 years age ranges with actress Kathy Burke providing the 'voice' of the child.

The films were commissioned by Jean Gross, formerly the Government's Communication Champion for children, to form one of the legacies of the *Hello* campaign (national year of communication) run in partnership with the Trust.

The films show the child's perspective – in the style of the film *Look Who's Talking* – and bring to life the child's thoughts as their parent or carer interacts with them. The humorous voiceover by Kathy highlights what children respond to and what they struggle with, for example enjoying it when parents get down to their level but have difficulty following lots of instructions.

Jean Gross says: "Children don't come with an instruction manual. Our work last year showed that parents want and need more information on how their child learns to speak, listen and make themselves understood. These films show in a fun and practical way what children need from the adults around them to get the best start in life.

"We were very keen not to talk down to parents or tell them what to do – that in my experience is a real turn-off. I believe that if you can give parents insights into the child's world, for example by showing what it feels like to have a dummy in your mouth when you are in the supermarket trolley, so you can't talk to mum or dad, this gets the message across without lecturing.

"A message we often gave parents during last year's National Year of Communication was that 'for your child, you are the best toy in the box'. That's the message of these films too. 21st century life brings with it all sorts of challenges, and people are very busy but we hope that by highlighting from the child's perspective certain truths, such as that young children struggle to tune in when there is lots of background noise from TV or radio, parents will feel informed and confident that they are able to nurture their child's good communication by using ordinary everyday activities."

Anne Fox, Director of The Communication Trust, said: "The Trust hopes these films become a key tool for early years practitioners to use as they bring to life so well a child's journey to make themselves understood. These films are a welcome addition to our portfolio of information and resources and we are calling on others to embed these films into their work so we can share them with the largest possible audience.

"Health visitors, nursery workers, Sure Start Children's Centre staff and GPs all play a key role in supporting parents, particularly first time parents, to nurture their child's speech and language skills. Language and communication development remains little understood by many parents and professionals.

"If parents are empowered with information and knowledge, they are best placed to support these vital skills, spot when their child is struggling and know where to go for help and support. This knowledge also enables professionals to support parents, particularly when specialist support is needed to meet a child's needs."

Kathy Burke said: "I really enjoyed working on this project and I think helping children to learn to communicate is very important."

The Communication Trust in partnership with Jean Gross and corporate partners, BT and Pearson Assessment, has developed a portfolio of information and resources for the workforce and parents. This includes *Small Talk*, a booklet designed specifically for parents and *Universally Speaking*, a series of booklets aimed at professionals, which highlight typical communication development and how to spot if a child is struggling throughout children's development from 0-18.

Each film ends with a series of take-home messages for parents. For example in the 1-2 years film, the messages highlight the following for parents:

1-2 years

- Reading books to your child in a quiet place in your home is a lovely way to connect with your child and it helps them to learn new words and focus on what you're saying
- Remember to keep distractions to a minimum – too much background noise can be difficult for children's listening and concentration
- Try not to ask too many questions – your child will need time to process what you're saying and think about how to answer
- When your child understands a word, add an extra word to the sentence to help them develop their vocabulary and longer sentences

The films are available to view and download from the Trust website

www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk

Alongside the films are a series of fact boxes with top tips, an information sheet for the children's workforce and signposting to other resources and websites.

-Ends -

For more information or to arrange a interview with Jean Gross or Trust Director Anne Fox, please contact Lynne Milford, Press & PR Officer, on 0207 843 2564 / 07948 391555 or email lmilford@thecommunicationtrust.org.uk

Notes to editors

About the *Through the Eyes of a Child* films

- The *Through the eyes of a child* films are a series of four short films, covering the 0 - 6 months, 6 - 12 months, 1 - 2 years and 2 - 3 age ranges
- The films are designed to support parents and the early years children's workforce to encourage and nurture children's speech, language and communication
- The films were developed by Dialogics on behalf of The Communication Trust and were commissioned by Jean Gross in her former role as the Government's Communication Champion for children
- The films show the view of the child, voiced by actress and comedienne Kathy Burke explaining what the child is thinking when they interact with their parent or carer
- Each of the films was tested through a focus group of parents organised by Dialogics

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
- The Trust does this 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.
- For more information, visit www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk