

Press release – 05.10.2012

COMMUNICATION COALITION CHOSEN TO SUPPORT LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN PROVIDING QUALITY EARLY YEARS' EDUCATION

The Communication Trust, a coalition of nearly 50 voluntary organisations with expertise in speech, language and communication, has been chosen as a 'recommended supplier' for local authorities looking at boosting the skills of the children's workforce in their early years' settings to deliver the 2-year-old offer.

The Trust was selected by management consultancy Mott MacDonald, commissioned to help local authorities make best use of the funding they receive from Government, to facilitate delivery of a new Level 3 Award in *Supporting Children and Young People's Speech, Language and Communication* which the Trust developed with the support of City & Guilds.

Ten Local Authorities have started piloting the government's legal requirement to ensure that specified two-year-olds will be entitled to 15 hours of free early education a week. This will then be extended to 20% of the most disadvantaged two year olds from September 2013, and 40% from September 2014.

As language and communication are now one of the three prime areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), the profile and importance of supporting children's communication within the early years is higher than ever. In addition, to gain good or outstanding judgements for Ofsted, and so to be able to deliver the 2-year-old entitlement, settings will need to demonstrate effective progress for children in this area. Evidence shows that outcomes for children are better where staff are more qualified, so for children to make appropriate progress in language and communication and to narrow the gap in this prime area, a skilled, knowledgeable and qualified workforce is essential.

The Award is a national continuing professional development accredited qualification, which ensures a direct link from learning to practice, and it is the first time a qualification focusing solely on speech, language and communication is on the Qualification and Credits Framework (QCF). This award, made up of two mandatory and one optional unit, enables the workforce to develop the knowledge and skills needed to effectively support all children's speech, language and communication development, as well as identify and support those who are struggling. Part of the award is assessed in relation to real work settings, ensuring that learning is taken and fully applied within real practice, contributing to improving quality within settings as well as by individuals.

The Award also links to previous government programmes, offering a strong training route for those involved in programmes such as Every Child A Talker and the Early Language Development Programme.

Anne Fox, Director of The Communication Trust, said; “We have a strong belief and mission to support the workforce and this has led to our long-term commitment in developing and supporting the delivery of the Level 3 Award in speech, language and communication. There is a demand from the Government for more high-quality settings to meet the requirements of the 2-year offer. In addition, the recent review written by Professor Cathy Nutbrown gave a strong recommendation for a trained workforce, at least at Level 3, to support children’s communication development – we’re here to provide the solution.

“It is so important that children develop good speech, language and communication skills as early as possible and that’s why we need to have quality early years’ provision. Recent policy announcements show experts recognise a better qualified workforce means better outcomes for the children they work with, and that is why the Trust is supporting the delivery of this Award. We believe this qualification offers the opportunity for a workforce qualified in one of the most important areas of a child’s development, leading to potential improvements in the quality of early education available and to better outcomes for children. This is particularly pertinent in those areas where so many children are starting school with such significant disadvantage.”

For more information about the Level 3 Award, contact programme manager Eve Wagg on ewagg@thecommunicationtrust.org.uk

-Ends-

For more information, or to receive a case study about the qualification being used in Nottinghamshire, please contact Lynne Milford, Press & PR Officer, on 0207 843 2564 or 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
- The Trust 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.
- We support the children’s workforce and commissioners to meet the speech, language and communication needs of all children and young people
- We do this by raising awareness, influencing policy, promoting best practice among the children’s workforce and commissioning work from our members.

- 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