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NATIONAL YEAR OF COMMUNICATION SIGNIFICANTLY BOOSTS PUBLIC AWARENESS OF KEY LIFE SKILL FROM WORRYINGLY LOW LEVELS

The Communication Trust celebrates the success of Hello campaign and launches major drive targeting child workforce to improve services and awareness of speech, language and communication needs

The Communication Trust, a coalition of nearly 50 voluntary organisations with expertise in speech, language and communication, has pledged to use its new five-year strategy to keep speech, language and communication high on the political and public services agenda, acting on findings showing the need for a sustained and targeted focus on the child workforce.

Publishing its evaluation of 2011's *Hello* campaign, the national year of communication, revealing a major boost in public awareness of the importance of speech, language and communication the organisation also launched its new five-year strategy which focuses on empowering the children's workforce to achieve two major goals: to ensure all children are supported in developing good speech, language and communication skills and that those who struggle are identified early and supported to communicate to the best of their ability.

Anne Fox, Director of The Communication Trust, said: "So many people – particularly parents and teachers – are now more aware of speech, language and communication needs, thanks to the *Hello* campaign and this means it was a success. Also our three strategic projects provided innovative ways for the workforce to support children with speech, language and communication needs, but there is still more work to do.

"We face crucial challenges in making sure every child is understood because the children's workforce still lack confidence in recognising and supporting SLCN and so many children's needs are misinterpreted, misunderstood or missed altogether. Our next five years will take the work we've already done further and wider, so that the children and young people's workforce will have the opportunity to develop the confidence, skills and knowledge they need to enable all children to communicate to the very best of their ability.

"Among other initiatives we will be continuing to model our community wide approach to language delay, Talk of The Town and promoting the Level 3 Award in *Supporting Children and Young People's Speech, Language and Communication* to encourage more people who work with children to boost

their skills in recognising good communication and identifying those children who struggle, and also looking at ways we can support schools as they implement the changes required by the new National Curriculum and meet the Ofsted inspection guidelines. This is going to be a very exciting time for us and for the people we work with.”

Today’s event featured an overview of the independent evaluation demonstrating the success of *Hello* in raising awareness of speech, language and communication and children and young people with SLCN by:

- Raising the importance among parents of their children developing good speaking skills in primary school from ranking 6th in importance in independent surveys in 2010 to 1st in 2012
- Reporting the proportion of parents with serious concerns about their child’s speech, language and communication nearly doubled after Hello from 8% to 15% in independent surveys
- Disseminating 50,000 copies of *Small Talk* and 70,000 copies of *Universally Speaking*, key resources in assessing children’s communication development, thanks to partnerships with BT and Pearson Assessment respectively
- Influencing policy which led to communication being included in the new Ofsted inspection guidelines and the National Curriculum Review Panel recommending the inclusion of communication across the whole curriculum
- Raising awareness of good communication in schools, through events like *No Pens Day Wednesday*
- *Talk of the Town*, an integrated and sustainable community-wide model for improving the speech, language and communication of 3-19 year olds with language delay, piloted in Wythenshawe, Greater Manchester.
- The *A Chance to Talk* programme, piloted in Rochdale, Whitby, Gravesham and Kirkby, which improves the speech, language and communication skills of young children age 4-7 through multilevel approaches.
- *Communication Ambassadors*, a network of 408 volunteers in 29 areas who promote the importance of children’s communication skills to hard to reach parents across England.

Copies of the *Hello* evaluation and five-year strategy can be downloaded from the Trust’s website www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk from December 12th.

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For more information or to arrange an interview with Trust Director Anne Fox, 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 organisations, which raises awareness, influences policy, promotes best practice among the children's workforce and commissions work from its members.
- The Trust ran *Hello* the national year of communication – in conjunction with Jean Gross, the Government's Communication Champion for Children to make children's communication a priority in homes and schools across the UK.
- For more information about the Trust visit www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk