

Press release – strictly embargoed until 00.01 19 December 2012

“Education select committee report must be heeded to avoid leaving children and young people with communication needs out in the cold”, says leading charity coalition

The Communication Trust, a coalition of nearly 50 voluntary organisations with expertise in speech, language and communication, today welcomed the Education Select Committee report on the proposed changes to special educational needs provision and urged the Government to implement the committee’s recommendations in legislation as an urgent priority.

In welcoming the Committee’s report Anne Fox, Director of The Communication Trust, said; “The Communication Trust welcomed the opportunity afforded when the Department presented the draft clauses of the legislation to the committee for scrutiny. Changes of this magnitude deserve careful consideration. We were concerned that some of the changes proposed might damage the levels of services children and young people with SLCN currently receive. We are delighted that the Committee heard those concerns having listened to the views of children and young people as well as their families and those who work with and represent them. Their recommendations should now be implemented and a draft bill introduced without further delay so that services for children and young people across the country can be better suited to their needs”.

Fox continued: “We particularly welcome the focus on those children who will no longer be entitled to School Action and School Action+ and the recommendation that the “local offer” contain minimum standards and be supported by a National Framework to assist in the provision of equitable services for children and young people with similar needs across every Local Authority area”.

The Communication Trust welcomed the recognition by the Committee:

- Of the need to make clear that the current protections on requesting, securing and carrying out assessments which are included in the Education Act 1996 are set out on the face of the Bill to avoid confusion.
- Of the need for health bodies to be bound into assessment and delivery.
- For greater protection to be introduced into legislation to ensure children and young people get the help prescribed in the Education Health and Care Plan. Speech and language therapy services are mentioned as a clear example of the problems that could be caused by not issuing a duty on health to provide.
- That EHCPs should be extended to NEETs and young people with apprenticeships
- That the SEN Code of Practice should remain statutory, be subject to consultation and be laid before Parliament

-Ends-

For more information, please contact Anne Fox on 0207 843 2537 (office hours) or 07910177966
afox@thecommunicationtrust.org.uk

Notes to editors

The Committee had been asked by the Department for Education to examine the draft SEN clauses of the Children and Families Bill as part of the pre legislative scrutiny process prior to a Bill being presented to Parliament in the New Year. The Government's proposals focused on streamlining and improving the assessment process, introducing much more joint working and joint commissioning and offering children and young people greater choice of provision. The Communication Trust was closely involved in working with the Committee on their report and believes that the changes they recommend will significantly strengthen the legislation.

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