



Press Release  
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## **COMMUNICATION CHAMPION RESPONDS TO LARGEST UK SURVEY OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS ON COMMUNICATION**

Jean Gross, England's Communication Champion for children, has today welcomed findings from the UK's largest survey of young people's views on communication, undertaken by independent charities the National Literacy Trust and The Communication Trust.

The new research, which surveyed 6,865 young people aged between 8 and 16, found that more boys than girls value and realise the importance of communication skills. It found that 69% of boys compared with 57% of girls said they were either 'very confident' or 'confident' when speaking in front of classmates.

Jean Gross said: "This new research is really important. It exposes the myth that boys don't want to improve their communication skills. In fact, they are acutely aware of the need to be good communicators, and many are very confident to speak out. The challenge for the children's workforce and for the *Hello* campaign (the national year of communication) is to make sure that boys' confidence is matched by competence. We'll need to find ways to help them to evaluate their own performance and challenge themselves to do better."

"The research also suggests that we need to encourage teachers and parents to focus time and energy on building girls' confidence in communicating - particularly in situations that are more 'formal' than the everyday conversations that are within their comfort zone. A growing number of schools are using strategies that give girls time to prepare a response to a question by talking with a partner for a few minutes, and then calling on them specifically to answer. This often works better than the traditional 'hands up' approach."

"Year on year we are seeing a growth in the level of communication skills required by young people to make a success of their lives after leaving school. Today's workplaces require people who can get a point across, listen well to others, and work in teams. Worryingly, 47% of UK employers say they can't find recruits with these speech and language skills. It is therefore vital that we do all we can to help everyone – both boys and girls – become confident, skilled communicators."

Jean Gross is working in partnership with The Communication Trust; a coalition of 40 voluntary organisations who are running the *Hello* campaign, the national year of communication. *Hello* aims to make children and young people's communication development a priority during 2011 and beyond.

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To speak to Jean Gross directly or to find out more about the Hello and National Literacy Trust gender research, please contact Laura Smith at the Communication Trust via [lsmith@thecommunicationtrust.org.uk](mailto:lsmith@thecommunicationtrust.org.uk) or 020 7843 2519 / 07766651366.

**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](http://www.thecommunicationcouncil.org).

### **About the *Hello* campaign**

- *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 (including The National Literacy Trust); 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](http://www.hello.org.uk) for further information.
- 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).