

Press release – embargoed till 4pm on 16.01.2013

## **COMMUNICATION COALITION CALLS FOR SCHOOLS TO ACT AS CHILDREN'S SPEECH AND LANGUAGE NEEDS GO UNMET**

The Communication Trust, a coalition of nearly 50 voluntary organisations with expertise in speech, language and communication, has today launched a call for schools to act on the lack of emphasis placed on good communication despite its importance.

*A Generation Adrift* draws together research which demonstrates that many children and young people are not being adequately supported to develop good speech, language and communication skills and children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) are often misunderstood or missed altogether.

The paper highlights that high numbers of children living in poverty have SLCN, that one-third of all children are not working securely in speech, language and communication by the time they reach 5 years old and that 10% of all children have long term SLCN. Most worrying is the fact that there remain huge challenges for staff in accurately identifying children who are struggling with their speech, language and communication skills. The paper also highlights key solutions to the issues of identifying and supporting children's SLCN.

The Trust aims to use the information to target its work at supporting the children's workforce in developing knowledge and skills to support better outcomes for children and young people.

Anne Fox, Director of The Communication Trust, said; "We're keen to raise awareness of the ongoing and changing nature of SLCN so that children's needs are identified whatever stage of education they're at. In order to do this we need to make the education workforce more knowledgeable about SLCN across all age groups so they can monitor children and alter the support they receive as a result. It's about creating communication-friendly environments as a norm, so that all children have the opportunity to develop good speaking and listening skills, and providing targeted and specialist services for those who require extra support. We also need commissioners to be more aware of SLCN so they can provide specialist services where they are required."

The paper also signposts *What Works* - a database of evidenced interventions which can support children with a range of SLCN. Developed in partnership with the Better Communication Research Programme, the aim of the data base is to enable informed decisions to be made around which interventions are most effective for children and young people. The *What Works* prototype will be

launched in the coming months and will be available to anyone who works with children. The Trust has also developed *Talk of the Town*, a community-led programme which aims to support early identification and positive outcomes for children and young people, within local communities.

Author of the paper, Professional Director Wendy Lee said: “Parents and teachers often know that children are struggling, but can have real difficulty identifying that the cause is a speech, language and communication need. Parents and teachers often tell us they don’t have the knowledge, skills or confidence to support children with SLCN. Young people themselves say people don’t really understand their difficulties. We want to support positive changes, so we’ve created resources and products like *What Works* and *Talk of the Town*. We want good speaking and listening skills to become intrinsic in schools, so that using and developing these skills becomes the norm in all lessons. Some children will have long term communication needs; these children need support to communicate to the very best of their ability and those around them understand the nature of their needs. It can make all the difference.”

The paper was launched at a Parliamentary Event organised by the Trust entitled ‘How schools can meet children’s speech, language and communication needs’ and sponsored by Robert Buckland, MP for South Swindon.

*A Generation Adrift* can be downloaded from our website [www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk](http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk)

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*For more information, or to arrange an interview with Trust Director Anne Fox or Professional Director Wendy Lee, please contact Lynne Milford, Press & PR Officer, on 0207 843 2564 or [lmilford@thecommunicationtrust.org.uk](mailto: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
- It does this by raising awareness, influencing policy, promoting best practice among the children’s workforce and commissioning work from our members.
- It harnesses collective expertise to support the children's workforce and commissioners to meet the speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) of all children and young people.
- In 2011, 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.
- In December 2012, the Trust released an evaluation of the *Hello* campaign and published its planned strategy for 2013-17.
- These documents and other information about the Trust is available here: [www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk](http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk)