



Press Release – For Immediate Release

NOT ALL CHILDREN CAN SPEAK BUT THEY CAN STILL HAVE A VOICE

Imagine being unable to ask for what you want, express how you feel or make a choice about what you do? For some children and young people this is a reality.

June 2011 sees the launch of **Other Ways of Speaking**, a new information booklet for parents and professionals that provides information on the different ways children and young people with little or no speech communicate, how to support them and where to go for further information and help.

Available to order and download from www.hello.org.uk/resources, **Other Ways of Speaking** is a free resource that has been produced by The Communication Trust and Communication Matters with its member organisations 1 Voice, ACE Centre, ACE Centre North, The Makaton Charity, Scope and Signalong.

This booklet explores Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), a term that describes a wide range of techniques children and young people use to support or replace spoken communication. Techniques such as using gestures, signing, symbols, boards and books, adapted computers and dedicated Voice Output Communication Aids (VOCA's).

Katie Clarke, parent of Nadia who uses a communication aid, says, "As it became clear that my daughter would not be able to talk, we spent hours and hours trying to get hold of the right information to learn how to support her. We learnt the hard way that there was very little information in one place so I am delighted to see this new booklet come out. It is just what families need; everything you need to know to start your journey around alternative communication in one place. I wish it had been around when my daughter was younger."

Sandra Hartley, a trustee of Communication Matters; the national voluntary organisation for all those involved with AAC, says; "The inability of a child to walk is well recognised and supported with services and provision of equipment. The inability of a child to talk is, even now, sadly not. We all use different ways to support our conversations be it simple facial expressions or gesturing for a drink in a noisy restaurant. We rely on different ways to get our messages across to others.

“For some children and young people with the most severe communication needs, other ways of speaking are needed to ensure they reach their full potential in life. These children and young people have so much to give. We welcome the launch of **Other Ways of Speaking** to raise awareness and break down barriers to help those who use AAC fulfil their potential and enlighten commissioners as to the huge need for provision of services for this neglected population.”

Anna Reeves, Manager, from Ace Centre North, says; “This ‘easy to read’ booklet includes ten top tips to help people who have little or no experience of talking to people who use AAC. The real life stories depicted in **Other Ways of Speaking** are powerful in helping people understand what AAC is all about.

“It is imperative that the needs of children and young people who have difficulties speaking are identified at an early age. This will help ensure they receive the best support as they face the challenges of learning to communicate. Finding the right method of communication can have a dramatic impact on a child or young person’s life - helping them to express themselves, participate in decisions, and improve their self esteem, which will ultimately impact on their contribution to society at large.”

In the UK today, one in ten children and young people have long term or persistent difficulties with speech, language and communication. Of these children, 1% has the most severe difficulties with communication affecting their ability to express even their most basic needs.

Other Ways of Speaking forms an important new addition to The Communication Trust and *Hello* resource portfolio and has been launched to coincide with this month’s theme ‘Imagine life for those who struggle’.

A number of specialist assessment services exist across the UK to assess the communication and educational needs of those with severe communication impairments. Anyone with concerns or questions about their child’s AAC needs can visit

<http://www.communicationmatters.org.uk/page/resources/aac-assessment-services> for a list of available services.

Hello is the 2011 national year of communication; a campaign to increase understanding of how important it is for all children and young people to develop good communication skills (www.hello.org.uk).

Hello is run by The Communication Trust, a coalition of 40 voluntary organisations with expertise in speech, language and communication in partnership with Jean Gross, England’s Communication Champion for children.

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For further information, please contact Laura Smith, Media and Campaigns Manager for The Communication Trust at lsmith@thecommunicationtrust.org.uk or call 020 7843 2519 / 07766651366.

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.
- To read more about June's activities, log onto <http://www.hello.org.uk/latest-news/latest-news/june-activities.aspx>
- *Hello* is run by The Communication Trust, a coalition of 40 leading voluntary sector organisations; 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 backed by the Department for Education and supported by BT and Pearson Assessment.
- Please visit www.hello.org.uk to sign up for further information on how you can help improve the communication skills of children and young people – so that they can live their life to the full.
- 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).

About Communication Matters

- Communication Matters champions the needs of people of all ages who would benefit from AAC, whatever their condition or geographic location. As a charitable organisation members include people who use AAC and their families, support workers, professionals working in the field as well as manufacturers and distributors of communication systems.
- Established in 1986 as the UK branch of the International Society of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC), it has expertise, knowledge and skills, an international reputation and network to support all people involved in the field of AAC across the UK.
- In support of the *Hello* campaign, Communication Matters and its associate members are organising and supporting a range of events to raise awareness of AAC for adults, children and young people. This includes a wave of regional AAC related activities to run throughout June. Each month, you can read an inspiring AAC real life case study to coincide with the Hello monthly themes.
- October's monthly theme is linking in with the ISAAC International AAC Month. A national event is taking place as well as 'I'll be asking the Questions'; a celebrity interview competition for people who use AAC.
- For more information, visit www.communicationmatters.org.uk or call 0845 456 8211.

About The Communication Trust

- The Communication Trust raises awareness of speech, language and communication issues amongst everyone that works with children and young people. It was founded by Afasic, BT, CDC (Council for Disabled Children) and children's communication charity I CAN.
- The Communication Trust manages a coalition of 40 voluntary organisations and an advisory group that includes the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, Association of Educational Psychologists and the General Teaching Council.
- The Trust's work is supported by the Department for Education and other funders. More information can be found at www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk.