



For immediate release:

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Comprehensive handbook on Specific Language Impairment (SLI) officially launched for parents and families across the UK

Parents and families of children and young people with Specific Language Impairment (SLI) will today have access to the first comprehensive guide on SLI, officially launched today by I CAN, the children's communication charity, and Afasic.

Commissioned by The Communication Trust, as part of the *Hello* campaign, the *SLI Handbook* aims to provide a clear and concise guide on SLI, to help identify and support children with this 'invisible' difficulty. Endorsed by Jean Gross, the Government's Communication Champion, this handbook will help both parents and practitioners to better understand the issue, find practical ways to support children and young people with SLI and signpost to further support.

About 7% of all children and young people have SLI, and are often as intelligent, able and healthy as other children, except they have enormous difficulty talking and understanding language. SLI is not caused by any known neurological, sensory, intellectual or emotional difficulty, so many children and young people across the UK have needs that may be missed or misdiagnosed. SLI is a very broad term, with some children having mild problems that are short-lived, with others having severe and persistent difficulties with both understanding and talking.

The *SLI Handbook* uses clear language and illustrations to ensure it is accessible to parents and professionals who will encounter children with these needs. This will include: teachers, TAs, SENCOs, Educational Psychologists, SLTs, Paediatricians and Occupational Therapists.

Mandy Grist, I CAN Communication Advisor and *SLI Handbook* author, said, "Parents and practitioners often tell us there isn't one place to find comprehensive information about SLI. The Bercow Review of Services for Children and Young People with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) in 2008 found that 77% of parents did not get the information and support that they needed when they needed it. SLI is often misunderstood and 'invisible'

as children try to hide their difficulties by imitating others or their frustrations come out through negative behaviour. Finally, families and practitioners can use this handbook to help identify, understand and support these children and young people so they can live life to the full and achieve their potential.”

Linda Lascelles, Afasic Chief Executive, said, “At the heart of the *Hello* campaign is supporting children and families affected by speech, language and communication difficulties, including SLI. 7% of all children struggle in school and throughout their lives with this ‘invisible’ difficulty. The *SLI Handbook* is an essential resource to empower parents and families by providing them with easy to understand information on SLI. The *SLI Handbook* was written by I CAN and Afasic with parents specifically in mind, and will give them accessible information and useful guidance from the first instance when their child’s needs are identified, through to accessing the right services and how to support children throughout their education.”

A parent of child with SLI, said, “The handbook explains SLI clearly and in an easy to understand way. We found it very difficult to get any information when our child was diagnosed, especially a clear explanation of SLI. This is a really helpful booklet and will definitely be very useful and informative to other parents.”

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For more information, interviews and pictures, please contact Emma Selim (Press and PR Officer) at eselim@ican.org.uk or 0207 843 2543.

Notes to Editors:

For more information on Specific Language Impairment, please go to www.ican.org.uk/SLI
Or <http://www.afasicengland.org.uk/publications/glossary-sheets/>

For more information on the *SLI Handbook* and to order a copy, please go to <http://www.ican.org.uk/slihandbook>

John Bercow MP’s Review of Services for Children and Young People with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) reported in July 2008. One thousand parents and children responded to the on-line questionnaire, ten consultation groups were held around England and the Review team visited over 60 schools and services across the country. For more information on the Bercow Review, please go to <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/Bercow-Report.pdf>

About I CAN:

- I CAN is the children’s communication charity. www.ican.org.uk or www.talkingpoint.org.uk
- We are here to ensure that no child is left out or left behind because of a difficulty speaking or understanding.
- Nobody wants a child’s potential to be wasted. It happens because communication difficulties are not visible, often mistaken for something else, or not noticed at all.

- I CAN's mission is to make sure that everyone in contact with children knows how important communication is, what a communication difficulty looks like and what they can do to help.
- We do this through:
 - Increasing public awareness of the problems children face.
 - Giving expert advice to parents and families about what to look out for and what to do via our enquiry service.
 - Providing assessments for children so that their families know what support will meet their needs.
 - Giving teachers and people working with children the skills to help children who struggle.
 - Campaigning to ensure children and families get a better deal.
 - Producing resources, DVDs, posters and other information to help parents and practitioners support children with their communication development.

At the very heart of I CAN are our special schools which give expert care and education to children with problems so severe their needs cannot be met elsewhere.

About Afasic:

- Afasic is the parent-led UK charity representing children and young adults with speech, language and communication impairments.
 - It works to achieve their inclusion in society and provides support to their parents and carers. Afasic does this through its publications, national help-line and website as well as training for young people, parents and professionals.
 - Afasic members meet in local groups in many areas of the UK.
 - Afasic works in partnership with local and national government, professional and statutory bodies and other voluntary organisations.
 - Today, Afasic:
 - has over 2000 members – parents, professionals and supporters
 - is recognised as an authority in its field
 - provides training for parents and professionals
 - offers a helpline for parents
- <http://www.afasicengland.org.uk/>

About The Communication Trust and the *Hello* campaign:

- 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 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.thecomunicationtrust.org.uk
- *Hello* is the national year of communication – a campaign, run by The Communication Trust, to increase understanding of how important it is for children and young people to develop good communication skills.
- *Hello* is run in partnership with Jean Gross, the Government's Communication Champion and is backed by the Department for Education and Department of Health. It is sponsored by BT and Pearson Assessment.
- Please visit www.hello.org.uk for further information.