



Press Release

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HELLO CAMPAIGN WELCOMES CALLS FOR A ‘BALANCED DIET’ OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The *Hello* campaign – 2011 national year of communication – has welcomed international research¹ from the University of Cambridge and BT highlighting the impact of technology on well-being and quality of family life. As a result of this research, BT has released their *Balanced Communications Diet*, a 5 point plan to support families in maintaining a healthy relationship with technology.

Hello aims to make children and young people’s communication development a priority in homes and schools across the UK. It is run by The Communication Trust, a coalition of 40 voluntary organisations with expertise in speech, language and communication, in partnership with Jean Gross, the Government’s Communication Champion for children.

Hello, sponsored by BT and Pearson Assessment, has developed **Family Talk Tips**² to go alongside BT’s *Balanced Communication Diet* giving parent’s practical advice on developing their children’s communication skills.

Wendy Lee, Professional Director for The Communication Trust, says; “This landmark research from BT highlights that, despite the huge significance of technology in our lives, nearly 60% of people feel they would benefit from ‘technology free time’. The importance of face to face conversations in families cannot be underestimated. They underpin family life and provide the bedrock for children’s future success in school and beyond. It is encouraging to see that 64% of children value face to face communication and that young people are consciously taking steps to control their technology use.

“In the national year of communication, we welcome the release of practical advice for families that helps them find the right balance in the home with technology. Our *Family Talk Tips* have been developed to complement this by helping parents’ nurture and support children’s communication development.”

Jean Gross, England’s Communication Champion for Children, says; “This new research is very important. Whilst 64% of children value face to face communication, it is concerning

¹ Culture, Communication and Change: An investigation of the use and impact of modern media and technology in our lives available to download from www.bt.com/balance

² The Family Talk Tips have been sent in a separate attachment. You can also download them from <http://www.hello.org.uk/latest-news/latest-news.aspx>

that over a third prefer other ways of communicating. The skills of speaking, listening and expressing yourself are vital to success in life. They form the foundation for everything else and we know face to face interaction in the home helps children to develop these skills. We need exactly what BT is recommending – a balanced communication diet.

“I would urge everyone to connect to the ‘familynet’ as often and for as long as they connect to the internet. Technology can help with this - for example having a chat with your child and then going on the internet to answer a question together or watching TV together and talking afterwards about what you have seen.

“I applaud BT for taking the lead in understanding more about the impact of technology on family life. Their long term commitment to championing children and young people’s communication skills is evident in their support of the *Hello* campaign. This new research builds on their role as leaders in this area and we call on other responsible companies to adopt a similar approach.”

The Communication Trust, a coalition of 40 voluntary organisations with expertise in speech, language and communication, is running the *Hello* campaign in partnership with Jean Gross. *Hello*, sponsored by BT and Pearson Assessment, aims to make children and young people’s communication development a priority during 2011 and beyond www.hello.org.uk.

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To speak to Wendy Lee or Jean Gross directly or to find out more about the *Hello* campaign, please contact Laura Smith, Media and Campaign Manager at the Communication Trust on lsmith@thecommunicationtrust.org.uk or 020 7843 2519 / 07766651366.

To read the full reports from BT and the 5 point Balanced Communication Diet, log onto www.bt.com/balance.

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 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).

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.
- For more information go to www.thecommunicationcouncil.org.