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For Immediate Release

## **NEW FACEBOOK APP HELPS YOUNG PEOPLE IMPROVE THEIR COMMUNICATIONS**

*BT and The Communication Trust launch Talk Gym*

BT and The Communication Trust, have today launched a new Facebook application, called Talk Gym, to help young people aged 14-19 develop their communication skills.

The free resource can help build verbal communication skills, so young people can express themselves more effectively. Whether it be face-to-face or via technology such as social media, Talk Gym can help young people prepare for life after school.

The application has been developed as part of BT's sponsorship of the *Hello* campaign, the 2011 national year of communication. The campaign, run by The Communication Trust in partnership with Jean Gross, the Government's Communication Champion, aims to make children and young people's communication skills a priority in homes and schools across the UK. The *Hello* campaign is backed by the Department for Education and Department of Health.

Jean Gross, the Government's Communication Champion for children, said "47% of employers in England have reported difficulty in finding recruits with an appropriate level of oral communication skills. Young people often don't realise how essential their communication skills are until they enter the job market.

"This is too late; we need to be reaching young people much earlier. I applaud initiatives like Talk Gym, which are an excellent solution to this growing concern. The use of innovative routes like Facebook to reach young people on their own territory is a real 'first'. I recommend that teachers embrace this new resource and use it to help ensure young develop the communication skills needed for work and life."

Chris Pike, a Talk Gym trialist aged 17, said, "People my age are constantly being told that we need good communication skills to be successful in life. I think that Talk Gym is a fantastic way for young people to learn more about their communication. It's accessible to everyone, being available online and on Facebook; and it helps young people to overcome issues they may face with communication. It also encourages them to consider how difficult it must be for those with communication difficulties.

"I'm delighted that my friends and peers will be able to use this tool in order to understand everyone a little better, no matter how well they can communicate."

The Talk Gym app gets users to check their 'talk fitness' by asking six questions about themselves and then asking the same questions to a friend or relative via Facebook. The answers appear anonymously in a graph and the app uses the responses to assess the individual's communication ability. The feedback highlights why communication skills are so important and gives tips on being clear, listening, talking in groups and being interviewed. There are also videos presented by young people on [www.bt.com/talkgym](http://www.bt.com/talkgym) giving peer-to-peer advice on becoming better communicators.

Julie Hindley, BT Learning & Skills Manager, said, "Young people are constantly told that they need good communication skills to succeed in school, in the workplace and in life in general. We believe Talk Gym can play a part in prompting a conversation to raise awareness of good communication by young people. Technology is progressively changing the way we communicate and we have created the Facebook application so that young people can easily engage via a social network that they are familiar with."

As with every product in BT's suite of learning and skills resources, Talk Gym was developed in close consultation with teachers and young people. A series of educational resources are available to download for free in order to help teachers make the best use of the Talk Gym Facebook app in the classroom which include guidance for teachers using social media as a learning tool. Talk Gym has been designed to support Speaking and Listening in the National Curriculum for England and Wales, the Cross-Curricular skills in the National Curriculum for Northern Ireland curriculum and several strands in Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence.

To find out more Talk Gym visit [www.bt.com/talkgym](http://www.bt.com/talkgym) to get your fitness tested now.

**For more information, please contact Laura Smith, Media and Campaigns Manager for The Communication Trust on 020 7843 2519 / 07766651366 or email**

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In the year ended 31 March 2011, BT Group's revenue was £20,076 million with profit before taxation of £1,717 million. British Telecommunications plc (BT) is a wholly-owned subsidiary of BT Group plc and encompasses virtually all businesses and assets of the BT Group. BT Group plc is listed on stock exchanges in London and New York.

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#### **About *Hello* and 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. The Trust's work is supported by the Department for Education and other funders. More information can be found at [www.thecomunicationtrust.org.uk](http://www.thecomunicationtrust.org.uk)

*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; 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.

#### **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.thecomunicationcouncil.org](http://www.thecomunicationcouncil.org)

