

## **The Communication Trust – a manifesto for Speech, Language and Communication**

With the upcoming election on the 8<sup>th</sup> June rapidly approaching, the Communication Trust is calling on all main political parties to ensure that a greater emphasis is placed on supporting children and young people's speech, language and communication across the country.

Language difficulties are a defining factor in social disadvantage - by the age of five, 75% of children who experience poverty persistently throughout the early years fall below average in their language development, compared to 35% of children who never experience poverty. 50% of children starting school in the most disadvantaged areas will have speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) and in school aged-children, the likelihood of being identified as having SLCN is 2.3 times greater for children eligible for free school meals and living in areas of disadvantage.

Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) are the most prevalent type of Special Educational Need (SEN) in state funded primary schools - a recent study revealed that 7.6% of children in primary schools (two in every classroom) will have a developmental language disorder. However, analysis of the SEND data shows that only 2.6% of children are identified by the SEND system, demonstrating that children and young people's needs are being missed.

With the right support in place, it is entirely possible to break the link between language difficulties and disadvantage. However, without effective action from those in power, real change is impossible. For this reason, we are calling on political parties to adopt our speech, language and communication manifesto, as follows:

1. To include mandatory elements on developing all children and young people's speech, language and communication skills in Initial Teacher Training.
2. To ensure that that all early years settings have at least one member of staff qualified in speech, language and communication to Level 3.
3. To rapidly consult and put in place a new plan for the future of children's centres which puts speech, language and communication at its heart, with a specific focus on developing early language and communication skills in children under two.
4. To maintain communication and language as a prime area of assessment in any future baseline assessment on school entry.
5. To ensure that curriculum and accountability frameworks focus on oracy in secondary schools and FE to ensure functional skills preparation for employment.

### **Every child understood**

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