

Press Release – Embargoed: 00.01hours Monday January 16th

Leading Communication Coalition welcomes final report of the Communication Champion for Children

The Communication Trust, a consortium of nearly 50 voluntary groups specialising in speech, language and communication, has welcomed today's report (16.01.2012) from outgoing Communication Champion Jean Gross, which highlights the needs of the 1 million children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) in the UK today.

The report *Two Years On: report of the Communication Champion for children* details recommendations to Government, local authorities and the voluntary sector for the future of speech, language and communication services for children. It has been published to coincide with the end of the National Year of Communication (known as the *Hello* campaign).

Anita Kerwin-Nye, Director of The Communication Trust, said: "This final report from outgoing Communication Champion, Jean Gross is welcomed. Over 2011, The Communication Trust has worked in partnership with the Champion to successfully deliver the national year of communication.

"We are pleased with how far the national year has taken us. Without a doubt Jean's work as Champion has expedited growth in understanding and awareness of the vital importance of speech, language and communication. The passion and unique role of the voluntary sector has fuelled so much change that is now starting to benefit children and families.

"This includes campaigning for John Bercow's landmark review into services for children and young people with SLCN, advocating for a Communication Champion and playing a key delivery role in running the National Year of Communication and seeing its legacy through into 2012. This work has ensured that speech and language is now part of the political zeitgeist.

Kerwin-Nye continues: "However, despite some improvements, speech, language and communication is still a new and emerging issue. This makes it fragile and vulnerable. Huge churn is being felt in the education and health system with for example the growth of academies and changes to SEN provision. The Communication Trust's next five year strategy will focus on supporting primary and secondary schools around developing all children's communication and meeting the needs of those with SLCN. This builds directly on our successes in early years.

“National Curriculum’s Expert Panel has recently recommended that speech and language should play a key role across the curriculum. This news, as well as the inclusion of communication alongside literacy and numeracy in Ofsted’s criteria for an outstanding school, is warmly welcomed. The Trust will play a key role in disseminating information, resources and by undertaking direct work in schools to ensure school staff are ready and confident in this area. “

Kerwin-Nye concludes: “As part of the legacy of the *Hello* campaign, we will continue to grow and develop our innovative programme *Talk of the Town*, which takes a community approach to tackling speech, language and communication across early years, social services and health. We will increase the reach of our parent facing resources through partnerships with BT and Pearson Assessment who sponsored *Hello*, by exploring new partnerships with the likes of Netmums and by continuing our work with 200 local co-ordinators across the country.”

A full version of *Two Years On* is available from www.hello.org.uk

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Notes to editors

- The Communication Trust is a campaigning voice for children with speech, language and communication needs. It raises awareness, influences policy, promotes best practice among the children’s workforce and commissions work from its members.
- It is a coalition of nearly 50 leading voluntary sector organisations and an advisory group, which includes the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, Association of Educational Psychologists and the General Teaching Council.
- The Trust ran *Hello* the national year of communication – in conjunction with Jean Gross, the Government’s Communication Champion for Children – aiming to make children’s communication a priority in homes and schools across the UK. The Trust was one of the campaigning voices that secured the Bercow Review in 2008, which ultimately led to the year of communication.
- For more information about the Trust visit www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk or www.hello.org.uk