



Press Release - for immediate release (7.01.2011)

## **Hello 2011 – A Year To Help All Children Communicate**

As the Kings Speech hits cinemas across the country, 40 voluntary organisations are working with the Government's Communication Champion, to make children's speech and language development a national priority.

Talk, Listen, Take Part: January 2011 heralds the start of *Hello* ([www.hello.org.uk](http://www.hello.org.uk)), the National Year of Communication - a year long campaign to help all children and young people live life to the full by making communication a priority in homes and schools across the country.

*Hello* is run by The Communication Trust; a unique coalition of 40 voluntary organisations with expertise in speech, language and communication alongside Jean Gross – the Government's Communication Champion.

Anita Kerwin-Nye, Director of The Communication Trust, says; "The *Hello* campaign will raise the profile of speech, language and communication development to unprecedented heights. We could not ask for a better way to capture the public's interest in this subject than with the release of the Kings Speech.

"It packs an emotional punch with its portrayal of one man's struggle to communicate. Today, 1 million children and young people in the UK have some form of long term communication difficulty – that's 2-3 in every UK classroom. The Kings Speech will help people understand the impact of a stammer. However, public recognition and understanding of other communication difficulties remains regrettably low.

"For many children and young people their communication difficulties are more hidden. This means they are too often misunderstood, misinterpreted or just missed altogether. If you struggle to communicate, you struggle in life – from learning in the classroom to making friends and finding employment. It is high time for this 'invisible' difficulty to come out of the shadows and into the spotlight."

The national year of communication was originally proposed in John Bercow MP's *Review of Services for Children and Young People 0-19 with Speech, Language and Communication Needs*. It found that 77% of parents who responded to the review did not get information and support when they needed it. It also identified "grossly inadequate recognition across society of the importance of communication development."

The *Hello* campaign will provide parents and professionals with a range of information and resources that will build greater awareness of children and young people's communication milestones and how to spot if they are struggling. Milestone posters, easy to understand publications, 'ages and stages' booklets and top tips will be available from [www.hello.org.uk](http://www.hello.org.uk).

Talking Point ([www.talkingpoint.org.uk](http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk)) has been refreshed and enhanced for the *Hello* campaign and includes information and advice on every aspect of children's communication development. New to Talking Point is the 'progress checker' to enable parents to see how a child is doing.

Anita Kerwin-Nye continues, "In the current climate, resources are becoming ever more scarce. That's why 40 organisations have come together through *Hello* to pool our expertise and resources so that we can make the biggest difference possible in 2011. When it comes to children and young people's communication, a focus on early intervention not only saves costs down the line but can also prevent family heartache.

"Through the *Hello* campaign, The Communication Trust is constantly looking at new, effective and evidence based models of working. We are focused on getting the best information of what works in practice out to voluntary, private and public organisations as well as to health and education professionals."

Our ability to communicate – to say what you want to say and to understand what other people are saying - is fundamental. Communication is a skill that we learn and develop and is something we can all improve. But for some children, their daily struggle to communicate means they are shut out of everyday life.

In the UK today, over 1 million children and young people have some form of speech, language and communication need. In areas of poverty, over 50% of children start school with delayed language skills. This puts them at a huge disadvantage to their peers as they struggle to learn and make friends.

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#### **About Hello and the National Year of Communication**

- *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 over 35 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 backed by the Department for Education and supported by BT and Pearson Assessment.

- Please visit [www.hello.org.uk](http://www.hello.org.uk) to sign up for further information on how you can help improve the communication skills of children and young people – so that they can live their life to the full.
- 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)*.
- Jean Gross was appointed Communication Champion in January 2010 to work 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 on the Communication Champion, log onto <http://www.thecommunicationcouncil.org/>.

#### **About 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 over 35 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.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk](http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk).
- To subscribe to The Communication Trust's monthly newsletter email 'subscribe' to [enquiries@thecommunicationtrust.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@thecommunicationtrust.org.uk). This will include regular updates on *Hello*.