

Hello – key messages



In a nutshell...

- Being able to talk and listen well is important.
- Learning to talk doesn't happen by accident! Adults play an important role.
- More children than you think struggle to learn to talk about 1 million in the UK.
- Poor language puts children at risk of literacy, behaviour and social / emotional difficulties.
- The earlier we spot children who have difficulties the better.

Why have a national year

- Speech, language and communication underpins everything we do, though these skills are often taken for granted. Communication is a skill that we learn and develop but for some children, their daily struggle to communicate means they are shut out of everyday life.
- Over 1 million children and young people in the UK – that's two to three in every average classroom – have some form of speech, language and communication need. This can affect them severely and for life. Often their barriers are invisible to others; their needs can be misinterpreted, misdiagnosed or missed altogether.
- In areas of poverty, over 50% of children start school with delayed language skills. Their speech may be unclear, vocabulary is smaller, sentences are shorter and they are able to understand only simple instructions. This puts them at a huge disadvantage to their peers as they struggle to learn and make friends.
- Early intervention is critical if we are to avoid a generation of young people with poor language and reduced employment prospects. The choice is simple – spend now on better identification and help for these children or spend later on picking up the costs to society.

About Hello

- *Hello* is the national year of communication – a campaign to make children and young people's communication development a priority in homes and schools across the UK
- *Hello* 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. Backed by the Department of Education, *Hello* is sponsored by BT and Pearson Assessment
- *Hello* will improve understanding and provide information on typical communication development, how to spot if children are struggling and where to go for help and support.
- A recent *Hello* survey of 6,000 people (January 2011) showed that only 20% were aware of the talking milestones. 82% of parents felt that more information on how children develop speech, language and communication would be helpful, but only 22% would ask their parents, grandparents or friends for information.
- *Hello* aims to ease what is often a difficult journey for families affected by speech, language and communication needs. This means ensuring children's difficulties are picked up and, when appropriate, referred to specialist support such as speech and language therapy as early as possible.

Where to go

- Every child has the right to be properly supported as they learn to communicate. Visit www.hello.org.uk to sign up for regular updates. You can also find more information about the campaign's monthly themes, key activities and how you can get involved.
- If you are concerned about the communication development of your child or a child you work with, you can check their progress at www.talkingpoint.org.uk and access further help and support.