



## **Hello - welcome to the 2011 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. *Hello* aims to make communication for all children and young people a priority in homes and schools across the UK so that they can live life to the full. The campaign is backed by the Department for Education and supported by BT.

The national year was originally proposed by John Bercow MP – now Speaker of the House of Commons – in his 2008 *Review of Services for Children and Young People (0-19) with speech, language and communication needs*. The review identified a **“grossly inadequate recognition across society of the importance of communication development.”**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the ability to communicate – to say what you want to say and to understand what other people are saying - is fundamental. Speech, language and communication underpins everything we do, though these skills are often taken for granted. Babbling babies do not become talkative toddlers by chance. 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. This can affect them severely and for life. 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.

A child with a speech, language and communication need may have speech that is difficult to understand. They might struggle to say words or sentences or not understand words that are being used. They may have difficulties knowing how to talk and listen to others in a conversation or simply have a limited vocabulary. Children may have any combination or all of these difficulties. These barriers are often invisible to others, meaning their needs are often misinterpreted, misdiagnosed or missed altogether.

*Hello* seeks to support you wherever you are – in your school, nursery, health centre, parent and baby group or local authority – to help improve the communication skills of children and young people in your area so that they can fulfil their potential. *Hello* will provide information and guidance on typical communication development, how to spot if children are struggling and where to go for help and support. There is a series of monthly themes to help you think creatively about how you can link into the campaign and explore in depth some of the key aspects of children’s communication development.

We will be using the national year to prompt tangible improvements for children, young people and families affected by speech, language and communication needs. This will include more support for parents and carers, earlier identification of difficulties as well as earlier and more appropriate referral to specialist support. Visit [www.hello.org.uk](http://www.hello.org.uk) to get involved and sign up for regular updates.

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