



Press Release – For Immediate Release (04.04.14)

READING COMMISSIONING TEAM WINS COMMUNICATION AWARDS FOR SECOND YEAR RUNNING

Reading's Children's Commissioning Team has scooped two top awards for their work in commissioning speech and language services for 0-5 year olds.

The team picked up the **Commissioning Award** for the second year in a row and the **Pearson Outstanding Achievement Award** at the **2013/2014 Shine a Light Awards**. The awards recognised the work the team had done to cut the number of children being identified as at risk of speech and language delay by nearly 50 per cent in the academic year spanning September 2012 to July 2013.

Judges were impressed by the joint working between Speech and Language Therapists (SLT), Health Services, including health visitors, Children's Centres and Early Year's childcare settings to improve the identification of communication delays in children

The team developed a Communication Pack for parents and professionals, distributing it to all 13 Children's Centres and 35 Early Year's settings across the borough. This helps people to implement strategies themselves without the need for specialist support, making services more sustainable for the authority in the current economic climate.

As a result of the support the team offers Children's Centres and Early Year's settings, several have received inspection results praising their focus on communication development, (including those from Ofsted.) The introduction of Young Commissioners helped the service broaden its reach via the internet to increase parental understanding of Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN), and via offering dedicated sessions to young parent groups.

The Awards, held in London on Thursday 3rd April and hosted by Broadcaster and Health Campaigner, Anne Diamond, are run by Pearson Assessment in partnership with The Communication Trust to honour individuals, teams, campaigns, communication friendly settings and communities that have excelled in their support of children and young people's communication.

Jan Gavin, Reading's Lead Councillor for Children's Services and Education, said: "The work carried out by the Council's Commissioning Team in halving children in Reading at risk of speech and language delay in just one year is a magnificent achievement. It is exactly this sort of work which makes a real difference to children's lives and I'd like to congratulate all staff involved."

Michael Beakhouse, Commissioning Officer at Reading Borough Council, said: “The credit for these results needs to be shared amongst everyone who achieved them. The SLT team, Children’s Centres, Early Years childcare settings, Education/Extended Services staff and health workers who’ve been a part of this piece of work. This demonstrates what can be achieved when we all work in harmony. ”

Peter Sutcliffe, Editor of SEN Magazine and a Shine a Light judge, says: “Reading Borough Council’s Children’s Commissioning Team’s strategy demonstrated everything the judges were hoping to see – a collaborative, long-term approach designed to meet the evidenced needs of children with SLCN.”

Anne Fox, Director of The Communication Trust, says: “Congratulations to the Reading Borough Council’s Children’s Commissioning Team for winning the prestigious *Commissioning Award* for the second year in a row and for being awarded the overall *Pearson Outstanding Achievement Award*. Joint commissioning is one of the best ways to offer children’s speech, language and communication services to prevent children slipping into the organisational gaps between education and health departments.

“At a time where health and SEN services are going through significant reforms, Reading Borough Council’s success focuses attention on what can be achieved through commitment, joint working, tenacity and effective use of data and research. Their important work will help to motivate and inspire others.”

For the full list of Shine a Light winners and highly commended finalists, visit www.shinealightawards.co.uk

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For Further Information

For more information, or to arrange an interview with representatives from the Children’s Commissioning Team at Reading Borough Council, please contact Laura Smith or Charlotte Hussey at Consilium Communications by emailing lsmith@consiliumcommunications.co.uk / chussey@consiliumcommunications.co.uk or call 07766651366.

Notes to editors

About the Shine a Light Awards

- The Shine a Light Awards are sponsored and organised by Pearson Assessment in partnership with The Communication Trust.
- The Awards are designed to promote and celebrate good practice in speech, language and communication for individuals, groups and settings which work with children and young people, particularly those with SLCN.
- The awards form part of the legacy of the National Year of Communication (*Hello* campaign) and have become a key event in the speech, language and communication community’s calendar.
- Nearly 80 applications were received with 16 winners and 13 highly commended finalists picking up coveted awards at a glittering ceremony hosted by Anne Diamond.
- 17 judges were involved in the Shine a Light Awards including Janet Cooper, Founder of Stoke Speaks Out, Peter Sutcliffe, Editor of SEN Magazine, Virginia Beardshaw, Chief Executive of I CAN, Sean Stockdale, Editor of Special Magazine, Kamini Gadhok, Chief Executive of the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT), Diz Minnitt, Milton Keynes Youth Offending Team and Hilary Berry, Headteacher at Over Hall Community School.
- For further information and to view the film of the ceremony and the full list of judges, visit www.shinealightawards.co.uk

About Pearson Assessment

- Pearson Assessment is the world's largest commercial developer and distributor of educational assessments and psychological testing materials with over 90 years history of commitment to researching and developing products to a reliable high standard.
- Pearson Assessment is dedicated to the pursuit of professional excellence, leadership, and growth through acquisition, development, publication, and the maintenance of quality assessment tools in order to anticipate and meet the needs of its customers.
- Pearson Assessment have sponsored the Shine a Light Awards since their launch in 2011, as part of the *Hello* campaign (National Year of Communication).
- For more information, visit www.pearsonclinical.co.uk or follow @PsychCorpUK #SAL2014

1. About The Communication Trust

- The Communication Trust is a coalition of nearly 50 leading voluntary sector organisations, which raises awareness, influences policy, promotes best practice among the children's workforce and commissions work from its members.
- It has an extensive advisory group, which includes the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, Association of Educational Psychologists and the General Teaching Council.
- For more information about the Trust visit www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk or follow @Comm_nTrust #SAL2014