



Press Release

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## Third sector come together to say *Hello* to the 2011 National Year of Communication

*Sarah Teather, Minister of State for Children and Families, gives keynote speech at The Communication Trust's parliamentary event*

The Communication Trust, a coalition of 39 voluntary and community sector organisations with expertise in children's speech, language and communication, has today (18<sup>th</sup> October 2010) drawn together over 150 of the biggest voices in children's communication at the House of Commons, London, to mark the forthcoming 2011 *National Year of Communication*.

The *National Year* – to help all children and young people fulfil their potential through better communication – was originally proposed in John Bercow's 2008 *Review of Services for Children and Young People 0-19 with Speech, Language and Communication Needs*. With the backing of the Communication Champion, Jean Gross, The Communication Trust will manage and deliver the *National Year*.

This inaugural event; sponsored by Robert Buckland MP, unveiled for the first time *Hello* – The Communication Trust's campaign to achieve the aims of the *National Year*, by providing tangible improvements for the 1.2 million children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).

Anita Kerwin-Nye, Director of The Communication Trust, said; "Today's milestone event represents a huge leap forward for the third sector and our partners. The support and passion for *Hello* has been palpable - together we will turn Bercow's recommendations into reality. Our appreciation and thanks go to the Minister, Sarah Teather, for her long-term dedication and commitment to championing speech and language issues. We are also hugely grateful to BT, a founding member of The Communication Trust, for continuing their long term commitment to the cause by supporting *Hello*.

“The *Hello* campaign addresses the issues set out in Bercow and directly complements the Government's current priorities. Parents and families need timely information and support on developing their children's communication, which is why we have set ourselves an ambitious target of reaching every new parent in 2011, amongst other activity. We will greatly improve understanding of SLCN and speech and language impairment (SLI), taking it to a level not seen before.

“No parent should feel alone or have to fight for services because their child's needs have been misunderstood, or in the worst situations, missed altogether. The children's workforce wants more information and support in developing all children's speech and language and in identifying problems early on. We will provide ages and stages booklets, milestone posters, clear and easy symptom checklists that validate concerns and develop approaches to screening for children at pre-school and age 5. Importantly, we will champion the excellent work that is already out there through a 'Good Communication' awards scheme.”

Larry Stone, BT, President Group Public and Government Affairs, said; “Communication is key to our business. But it needs to be everyone's business. We depend on people being able to talk, listen and connect with others. However, as an employer we find increasingly that communication is a skill often lacking in new recruits. Our next generation are growing up in a digital world, but this shouldn't be at the expense of face to face communication. Along with The Communication Trust, we are fully committed to helping all children and young people's communication skills so they can live life to the full.”

Anita Kerwin-Nye continues; “Last week the *Centre for Excellence and Outcomes* (C4EO) specifically recommended that the *National Year* be fully exploited. We embrace that challenge and today showcased our newest publication *Don't Get Me Wrong*. It has been specifically designed for those working with children and young people, who have some knowledge of SLCN, but want more. It forms a welcome addition to our growing suite of information and publications.

“We continue to be grateful for Government support and commitment to improving services for children and young people with SLCN. The Communication Trust embodies efficient third sector working and is a model of Big Society in practice. This, alongside our passion for supporting children and families, ensures we are particularly well placed to take forward Bercow's recommendations.”

Communication is a skill that anyone can learn and improve. It underpins everything we do in life. However, for some children, their daily struggle to communicate means they are shut out of life. 1.2 million children and young people have some form of SLCN. This can affect them severely and for life. In some areas of social disadvantage, upwards of 50% of children are arriving at school with delayed communication skills. They are on the back foot from day one and struggle to learn and make friends.

*Hello* aims to help thousands of children and young people across the UK to improve their communication skills so they can live life to the full. Please visit [www.hello.org.uk](http://www.hello.org.uk) to sign up for regular updates.

For further information please contact:

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Notes to Editors

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

- 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)*.
- The recommendations on how to improve services for children and young people were subsequently accepted by the then Labour Government in the *Better Communication Action Plan*, published in December 2008. This included the appointment of a Communication Champion and a *National Year* to make real and tangible improvements for children, young people and families.
- 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 SLCN.
- Following a competitive tender process, The Communication Trust was appointed by Jean Gross and the Office of the Communication Champion to manage and deliver the *National Year*. For more information on the Communication Champion, log onto <http://www.thecommunicationcouncil.org/>.
- Complementing the Government's commitment to support children with SLCN, *Hello* – a campaign run by The Communication Trust, a group of over 35 charities and not-for-profit organisations with expertise in children's communication – will help to achieve the recommendations of the Bercow Review.
- Together we aim to make 2011 the year when children's communication skills become a priority in schools and homes across the country. 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.

**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*.

**About BT**

- BT is one of the world's leading providers of communications solutions and services operating in more than 170 countries.

- Its principal activities include the provision of networked IT services globally; local, national and international telecommunications services to our customers for use at home, at work and on the move; broadband and internet products and services and converged fixed/mobile products and services. BT consists principally of four lines of business: BT Global Services, Openreach, BT Retail and BT Wholesale. In the year ended 31 March 2010, BT Group's revenue was £20,911 million.
- British Telecommunications plc (BT) is a wholly-owned subsidiary of BT Group plc and encompasses virtually all businesses and assets of the BT Group. BT Group plc is listed on stock exchanges in London and New York.
- For more information, visit [www.bt.com/aboutbt](http://www.bt.com/aboutbt).