



EMBARGOED UNTIL 7 MARCH, 00:01 hours

**A LITTLE LESS CONVERSATION... A LITTLE MORE ACTION REQUIRED TO SUPPORT
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION NEEDS**

In an unprecedented move, leading organisations from the world of children's health and social care, education, justice, disability and poverty have come together today (7 March 2019) to urge the Government to do more to improve support from children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).

Coordinated by I CAN, the children's charity, and the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT), the coalition of over 60 organisations has sent an open letter to the Prime Minister calling on the Government to tackle the inequality of services for some 1.4 million children and young people with SLCN in the UK. The coalition wants to see urgent action in five key areas, which will improve the life chances for these children and young people, enabling them to reach their full potential.

The coalition urges action on:

- Joint commissioning to put an end to the postcode lottery of support for these children and young people;
- Support for children and young people with long-term, persistent SLCN, who require some level of specialist help during and beyond their early years;
- Providing professional development for those working in education, including teachers and teaching assistants, to enable all children and young people to develop language and communication skills. Teachers also need to be able to identify children and young people with SLCN as early as possible so they can be supported effectively;
- Incentivising schools to give speech, language and communication the priority it deserves;
- Training practitioners who are working with vulnerable children and young people, including; looked after children, those in the youth justice system or who are living with mental health issues, in how to recognise SLCN and respond effectively. They must also have access to specifically commissioned speech and language therapy services for those children and young people who need them.

The letter to the Prime Minister comes as I CAN and the RCSLT publish the first anniversary update to their joint report, *Bercow: Ten Years On*, which looked at the state of provision for children and young people with SLCN in England.

Of the 47 recommendations for action made in the report, 17 of them have been implemented. However, far more needs to be done by the Government.



Bob Reitemeier CBE, Chief Executive at I CAN said: “Since we launched the Bercow: Ten Years On report, last year, the Government has made inroads to improving the support available to children and young people with speech, language and communication needs. Language development for children under age five is high on the Government’s agenda, but for school-age children, and those with long-term needs, such as developmental language disorder, there has been little change.”

Kamini Gadhok MBE, Chief Executive of the Royal College of Speech & Language Therapists, added: “The Government’s ambition to tackle social mobility by supporting early language development is clear. However, around 1.4 million children and young people have speech, language and communication needs and need help during and well-beyond the early years. The implementation of a cross-Government strategy for children and young people – involving health and social care, education and justice would enable children and young people to fulfil their potential.”

ENDS

For further information about the report and for all media enquiries, please contact Freddie Cocker, Communications Officer at I CAN, on 0207 843 2539, 07814 707270 (out of office number) or email fcocker@ican.org.uk

To receive an embargoed copy of the open-letter to the Prime Minister, please contact Freddie on the details above.

Notes to Editors:

About I CAN

I CAN is the children's communication charity. The charity specialises in helping children develop the speech, language and communication skills they need to thrive in a 21st- century world.

Children and young people can fail to reach their potential because communication difficulties are not visible, often mistaken for something else or not noticed at all. I CAN's mission is that no child should be left out or left behind because of a difficulty speaking or understanding.

For further information on I CAN’s work visit ican.org.uk or talkingpoint.org.uk or follow on Twitter [@ICANcharity](https://twitter.com/ICANcharity) and Facebook at facebook.com/icantalk.

About the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) is the professional body for speech and language therapists in the UK, representing over 17,000 members. It facilitates and promotes research into the field of speech and language therapy – the care for individuals with communication, swallowing, eating and drinking difficulties. It promotes better education and training of speech and language therapists and is responsible for setting and maintaining high standards in education, clinical practice and ethical conduct. For more information on RCSLT and its Giving Voice campaign visit www.rcslt.org