

Statement on the Government's Response to the Bercow: Ten Years On - 1st Anniversary Update

I CAN and the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) welcome the cross-Departmental response from the Government to the *Bercow: Ten Years On - 1st Anniversary Update*, which we published in March 2019.¹ This follows on from positive discussions we had with the Minister for Children and Families, Nadhim Zahawi, and the Minister for Care, Caroline Dinenage earlier this year.

Cross-Governmental approach welcome

We are particularly pleased that the response has been issued jointly by the Department for Education, Department of Health and Social Care, and the Ministry of Justice, reaffirming their joint commitment to supporting children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). This cross-governmental approach is exactly what is needed to successfully address the issues highlighted in the 1st Anniversary Update.

Departmental work on SLCN welcome

It is helpful to see a summary of the work the three Departments are involved in which relate to children's SLCN. In particular we welcome and look forward to working in partnership with:

- the Department for Education on the SEND System Leadership Board, Initial Teacher Training and the Early Career Framework
- NHS England on new models of care for children and young people, transformation plans for children and young people's mental health services and the national Allied Health Profession workforce programme
- the Ministry of Justice on evaluation of the AssetPlus model

More needs to be done

However, as the response itself recognises, there is still more to do. We remain deeply concerned that the Government is not doing enough to improve support for children and young people with long-term SLCN. The evidence of this has further grown since the publication of *Bercow: Ten Years On*.²

- A report by the Children's Commissioner for England - *We need to talk: Access to speech and language therapy* - published in June 2019 found enormous levels of variation in reported spending on speech and language services, with a downward trend in more than half of areas.³
- Figures published by the Department for Education last week revealed that across all pupils with SEN, Speech, Language and Communication Needs is now the most common type of primary need, at 22% of SEN pupils.⁴
- In a survey of more than 1,000 parents, carried out by YouGov on behalf of I CAN and the RCSLT, 55% of parents of children with SLCN said their child did not get enough support, and 59% said they had to fight to get support for their child.

We're not alone in saying this

We are not alone in calling for more action; the day after the publication of the *1st Anniversary Update*, more than 60 organisations from the world of children's health and social care, education, justice, disability and poverty sent an open letter to the Prime Minister urging the Government to do more to improve support for children and young people with SLCN.

The Children's Commissioner's report calls on the Government to create a new strategy on addressing speech, language and communication needs, with the appropriate funding to support it, and in launching the report, Anne Longfield highlighted that the next Prime Minister has a key role in helping ensure that happens. Her call for action to be taken to invest in services for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs was echoed by the National Association of Head Teachers, amongst others.

Next steps

We hope that the next Prime Minister will heed the call both of the Children's Commissioner and the over sixty organisations who have publicly urged the Government to do more to deliver better support for the 1.4m children and young people in this country with speech, language and communications needs, their families and the professionals working with them. We remain committed to working with the Government to help achieve that.

We also remain deeply grateful to all those who have supported us so far and look forward to their on-going support as we continue to speak up for communication and speak up for SLCN.

July 2019

References

1 I CAN and RCSLT (2019). Bercow: Ten Years On - 1st Anniversary Update.

Available online: https://www.bercow10yearson.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/I_CAN_1st_ann_update.pdf

2 Children's Commissioner (2019). We need to talk: Access to speech and language therapy.

Available online: <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/cco-we-need-to-talk-june-2019.pdf>

3 I CAN and RCSLT (2018). Bercow: Ten Years On – An independent review of provision for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs in England.

Available online: <https://www.bercow10yearson.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/337644-ICAN-Bercow-Report-WEB.pdf>

4 Department for Education (2019). Special educational needs in England: January 2019 Available online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england-january-2019>