

## **New paper calls for early years communication strategies in local authorities**

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### ***Guidance paper published by Talk To Your Baby now freely available***

The National Literacy Trust's early language campaign, Talk To Your Baby, has published a freely available guidance paper - Guidance for developing a strategic approach to speech, language and communication in the early years. Built upon on-the-ground regional work with early years practitioners, the new paper provides all local authorities with a structure for a sustained approach to early communication work.

The paper calls for local authorities to ensure that early years communication is a designated responsibility within an authority. Currently, early years communication provision is characterised by effective but short term initiatives, and often lacks both a central point of responsibility and sufficient senior management buy-in within authorities. TTYB's paper promotes a community-wide focus on early communication, provides steps to ensure a sustainable approach to the issue, and focuses on prevention strategies to reach children and their parents at the earliest stage. It also highlights six best practice case studies of current initiatives and incorporates resources that demonstrate best practice.

Recent government reviews and initiatives such as the Bercow Report and Every Child a Talker have put a spotlight on early years communication issues. The Bercow Report into the provision of services for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs [SLCN] found that up to 50% of children in some socio-economically disadvantaged populations have speech and language skills that are significantly lower than those of other children of the same age. Both the Bercow Report and Every Child A Talker have highlighted the need for local authorities to address early years communication provision. TTYB's guidance paper offers a platform for authorities to develop a sustainable and authority-wide approach to provision.

Liz Attenborough, Manager, Talk To Your Baby said:

"Communication is the basis on which all children learn, achieve and make friends. It is vital to the development of children's social and emotional well-being. It is clear that help is needed to consolidate some of the short-term early language initiatives and turn them into long-term strategies. This guidance paper and the six featured case studies will make a big difference."

Guidance for developing a strategic approach to speech, language and communication in the early years was written by Dr Cathy Hamer as a result of regional work from Talk To Your Baby, both funded by the JJ Charitable Trust. [Read more about the paper.](#)

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#### **Notes to editors:**

1. The Bercow Report (led by John Bercow, MP) is a review of the provision of services for children and young people with speech, language and communication

needs. The final report was published in July 2008 following an interim report in March. The review was launched in September 2007 by DCSF and DH. It looked at how services can provide the best provision for early intervention and how local services can work closely together. Views were sought from parents and health and education professionals as part of the review.

## **2. Every Child a Talker (ECAT)**

Every Child a Talker (ECAT) is a government initiative to provide training and support to those working with young children on early years language development. The programme aims to improve practitioners' knowledge and understanding, enable them to support the development of children's speaking and listening skills and spot any children with problems at an early age.

3. Six case studies are included in the guidance paper, from Coventry, Hackney and the City, Leicester, Plymouth, Stoke-on-Trent and Warwickshire.

## **4. About Talk To Your Baby**

Talk To Your Baby is a campaign run by the National Literacy Trust to encourage parents and carers to talk more to children from birth to three. For more information visit [www.talktoyourbaby.org.uk](http://www.talktoyourbaby.org.uk).

## **5. Background to Talk To Your Baby**

There is concern that increasing numbers of children are suffering from communication difficulties, and teachers and nursery workers feel young children's speaking and listening skills are on the decline. One of the contributing factors is believed to be the lack of time adults and young children spend talking together. A survey showed that among nursery workers, 89% are worried that the occurrence of speech, language and communication difficulties amongst pre-school children is growing. The lack of adult and child time spent talking together was highlighted as the key reason by 92% of them (ICAN, 2004).

## **6. National Literacy Trust**

The National Literacy Trust is an independent charity that changes lives through literacy. It links home, school and the wider community to inspire learners and create opportunities for everyone. [www.literacytrust.org.uk](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk) The National Literacy Trust is a registered charity in England and Wales, no. 1116260, and a company limited by guarantee, no. 5836486, Registered office: 68 South Lambeth Road, London SW8 1RL

## **7. JJ Charitable Trust**

The JJ Charitable Trust is one of the Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts. JJ's main areas of interest are literacy, environmental education in the UK and environment projects overseas.  
[www.sfct.org.uk/jj.html](http://www.sfct.org.uk/jj.html)