



## Damian Hinds' speech on social mobility

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) welcomes the Department for Education's recognition that communication is crucial to social mobility, and the Secretary of State's pledge to halve the number of children starting school without the early speaking or reading skills they need by 2028.

Speech and language therapists have a central role in delivering that ambition. They help develop early communication, provide advice and support to parents and carers and training to early years practitioners, as well as providing therapy to support children's individual needs. We look forward to sharing our members' unique clinical expertise in speech, language and communication as part of the Government's proposed coalition to narrow the gap in early language skills.

The Secretary of State's speech today is a positive step, but more needs to be done. The recent **Bercow: Ten Years On** report, published by the RCSLT and I CAN, the children's communication charity, made a series of recommendations on how speech, language and communication can be strengthened in the Government's social mobility strategy. In particular, we recommend that the following steps are taken to improve:

- **Support beyond the early years:** we need to ensure support is available for all children and young people who have difficulties communicating, including those who require more specialist provision, and those who need support throughout school and beyond.
- **Joint working:** while we welcome the Department for Education's focus on language and communication, it is critical that other Government departments do the same, including the Department of Health and Social Care which has a key role to play. Without it the over 10% of children – some 1.4m in the UK – with long-term communication needs will not receive the support they need to achieve their potential and have the best possible chance in life.
- **Cross-Government strategy for children:** communication – like social mobility - is everybody's business and while we welcome the announcement of a summit in the autumn, in order for sustained and system wide improvement, we are calling for a cross-Government strategy for children, with speech, language and communication at its core.

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### Notes

**Bercow: Ten Years On** is an independent review of the state of provision in England for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs. It makes a number of recommendations to improve support for children and young people, their families and the professionals who work with and support them. Specifically on social mobility, **Bercow: Ten Years On** recommends that the Department for Education should strengthen the place of communication and language in its strategy by:

- supporting opportunity areas to develop plans to improve communication and language skills across the age range, not just in the early years;
- promoting use of best practice for addressing delayed language through the use of evidence-based intervention and training programmes;
- identifying communication and language as a focus for the next round of annual Pupil Premium Awards for schools;
- ensuring that any new initiatives to work with families, such as the plan to identify and spread evidence-based home learning environment programmes, involve experts in early years practice and speech, language and communication, as well as parents and carers in their development and implementation;
- including high-level provider expertise and outcomes in speech, language and communication in the criteria for evaluating tenders for the planned Centre of Excellence for Literacy Teaching and associated English Hubs in disadvantaged areas; and
- funding a national programme of roadshows on how to teach language for Reception and Key Stage 1 teachers, similar to the previous phonics roadshows.

For more information on *Bercow: Ten Years On* see: <https://www.bercow10yearson.com/>

For more information, please contact Peter Just on [peter.just@rcslt.org](mailto:peter.just@rcslt.org) or 020 7378 3630.