

On 20th March 2018, I CAN and the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists published *Bercow: Ten Years On*, an independent review of provision for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) in England. The report contained recommendations to government and local leaders which sought to bring about sustainable and embedded improvements.

Wins

We are delighted that two recommendations have been fully met and confirmed in writing:

2.3: Education Secretary Damian Hinds has announced that he will be asking Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission to design a programme of further local area SEND inspections to follow the current round, due to conclude in 2021. We believe this will be a lever to encourage more joint commissioning and integrated delivery for children and young people with SLCN.

5.6: Public Health England (PHE) have issued a tender to develop, deliver and evaluate an evidence-based training package and e-learning resource for health visiting services on speech, language and communication development. This should support improved early identification of children with SLCN.

Steps in the right direction

We are also pleased to report positive progress in relation to:

- **Social mobility:** the Department for Education's focus on narrowing the word gap has resulted in children's early language being central in proposals to develop the home learning environment and improve literacy teaching. Promoting evidence-based interventions is a key part in this.
- **Identifying need and tracking progress in the early years:** The work that PHE are doing in partnership with the Department for Education on early language will result in changes to the way data on progress in children's early language will be tracked, how information will be shared with parents, and will provide a pathway of support in the early years for SLCN.
- **Inspection of schools and SEND:** Ofsted have been keen to work with us in respect of both school and LA SEND inspections. In both cases, we are planning training for inspectors.

We are grateful to all of the Bercow 10 champions who have played an instrumental role in raising awareness about the *Bercow: Ten Years On* report and the importance of improving provision for children and young people with SLCN. We very much hope their support will continue.

More still to do

While encouraged by initial progress, more needs to be done, in particular:

- **Ongoing support across the age range** – while we welcome the Government's plans to address speech, language and communication in the early years, we also need to help children and young people with long-term SLCN, including those over the age of five.
- **Joint working** – communication is everybody's business and it is critical that all Government departments, including the Department of Health and Social Care, play their full part.
- **Cross-Government strategy for children** – We need a clear and unified message from the highest levels across government which recognises the importance of communication.

We look forward to continuing our positive discussions with the Department for Education, Public Health England and Ofsted, and to having similar discussions with other departments.