

# Letter from the #LetsTalkCommunication coalition

*Sent via email - please reply to: [peter.just@rcslt.org](mailto:peter.just@rcslt.org)*

The Rt Hon Sir Ed Davey MP  
The House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

6 February 2024

Dear Sir Ed,

As we approach the general election, we wanted to take this opportunity to write to you about the importance of spoken language and communication in children and young people's development and therefore their whole life. We know the importance you attach to these issues.

We are a coalition of over 50 organisations dedicated to improving the lives of children and young people, including through supporting, developing, and promoting their spoken language and communication. We have co-authored the attached brief that we hope you will consider while drafting your manifesto.

We believe that the party who is looking to form the next government must address the fact that children and young people are now more likely than ever to have spoken language and communication challenges, and even greater problems getting the help they need to address these issues. The facts are that:

- **one in ten** children have a long-term speech, language and communication need.
- **1.9 million** children and young people are struggling with talking and understanding words.
- as many as **50% of children in areas of social disadvantage** start school with language difficulties.
- **7% of all children** have a lifelong condition called Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) which reduces their ability to understand and express language.

But there are solutions that we wanted to share with you. We are calling on you to include these in your manifesto:

- Recognising that spoken language and communication is at the heart of developing and improving literacy and numeracy, as well as fundamental to children's emotional development and mental health;
- Building on efforts to develop all children's language and communication in the Early Years by a sustained focus on spoken language and communication across all ages and stages of education;
- Ensuring children and young people with long-term speech and language challenges receive the support they need, including identifying those difficulties in the first instance, and timely access to speech and language therapy where required;
- Supporting teachers and schools to develop their students' spoken language and communication, and embed spoken language and communication requirements through high quality guidance, training and resources;
- Additional targeted support to address the ongoing impact of the pandemic on children's speech, language and communication development.

If, as a country, we don't address these problems, many children and young people will not be able to live up to their potential. Children and young people and their families need all parties to promise to include these policies in their manifestos, so that whoever forms the next government, children and young people will start getting the support they need.

Yours sincerely,

**Ace Centre**, Bob Birchall, Chief Executive

**Action Cerebral Palsy**, Pilar Cloud, Chief Executive

**Action for Stammering Children**, Ria Bernard, Chief Executive

**ADHD Foundation - The Neurodiversity Charity**, Dr Tony Lloyd, Chief Executive

**Afasic**, Linda Lascelles, Chief Executive

**Ambitious about Autism**, Jolanta Lasota, Chief Executive

**ASLTIP**, Sarah Buckley, Chair

**Association of YOT Managers**, Jacqui Belfield-Smith and Diz Minnitt, Chair and SEND and Speech and Language Lead

**Auditory Verbal UK**, Anita Grover, Chief Executive

**Autistica**, Dr James Cusack, Chief Executive

**BACCH**, Professor Doug Simkiss, Chair

**BACD**, Dr Catherine Tuffrey, Chair

**BACP**, Dr Phil James, CEO

**BATOD**, Sue Denny, President

**Better Communication CIC**, Marie Gascoigne, Director

**BASW**, Julia Ross, Chair

**British Dyslexia Association**, Chivonne Preston, CEO

**British Psychological Society**, Sarb Bajwa, Chief Executive

**Cochlear Implanted Children's Support Group**, Tricia Kemp, Group Coordinator  
**Different Strokes**, Austin Willett, CEO  
**Dingley's Promise**, Catherine McLeod MBE, Chief Executive  
**Disabled Children's Partnership**, Stephen Kingdom, Campaign Manager  
**Down's Syndrome Association**, Carol Boys, Chief Executive  
**Elklan**, Henrietta McLachlan, Director  
**Embracing Complexity Coalition**, Dr James Cusack, Chair  
**Headlines Craniofacial Support**, Karen Wilkinson-Bell, Director  
**Intermediaries for Justice**, Catherine O'Neill, Chair  
**Kids**, Katie Ghose, CEO  
**N-ABLES**, Dr Emily Bennett, Chair  
**NAPLIC**, Stephen Parsons, Chair  
**NASS**, Claire Dorer OBE, Chief Executive Officer  
**NASUWT - The Teachers' Union**, Dr Patrick Roach, General Secretary  
**NatSIP**, Rory McDonnell and Caireen Sutherland, Co-Chairs  
**NDTi**, Bill Love, Executive Director  
**Pace**, Rich Wiltshire, Chief Executive  
**pdnet**, Di Caesar, Chief Executive  
**RCSLT**, Steve Jamieson MSc BSc (Hons) RN  
**SAPHNA**, Sharon White OBE, CEO  
**sen.se**, Julie Walker, Executive Officer  
**Signalong**, Tracy Goode, CEO  
**SMiRA**, Shirley Landrock-White, Chair  
**Speaking Citizens**, Tom Wright, Reader in Rhetoric and Principal Investigator  
**Special Needs Jungle**, Tania Tirraoro, Co-director  
**Speech & Language Link**, Pete McLeod, Director  
**Speech and Language UK**, Jane Harris, Chief Executive  
**Speech Bubbles**, Elizabeth Kennedy, General Manager  
**SPTS**, Julie Walker, Lead  
**STAMMA**, Catherine Woolley, Children and Families Programme Lead  
**Symbol**, Debbie Honeysett, Operational Manager (East)  
**Talking Mats**, Margo Mackay, Director  
**The Elizabeth Foundation**, Julie Hughes, Chief Executive  
**The National Organisation for FASD**, Sandra Butcher, Chief Executive  
**Voice 21**, Dr Kate Paradine, Chief Executive

cc: Munira Wilson MP

enc: 'Opportunity for all: maximising spoken language and communication' brief