

From:
Open letter from a coalition of organisations (see below).
Correspondence contacts:

Ms Kamini Gadhok MBE
Chief Executive
Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists
RCSLT 2 White Hart Yard
London SE1 1NX
ceo@rcslt.org

Mr Bob Reitemeier CBE
Chief Executive
I CAN
I CAN 31 Angel Gate Goswell Road
London EC1V 2PT
breitemeier@ican.org.uk

7 March 2019

Dear Prime Minister,

Children and young people with speech, language and communication needs

We are writing to you as professionals and organisations concerned with the speech, language and communication of children and young people to urge you to do more to address the need for action.

We were pleased to hear you say at Prime Minister's Questions on 21 March 2018 that 'We do not want to see any child held back from achieving their potential, and that includes ensuring that children with speech, language and communication needs are given the support they need.'

In the year since there has been some encouraging action from government, including the Department for Education's focus on closing the word gap and the decision to recommission joint special educational needs and disability inspections from Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission.

However, there is much still to be done. There are five areas where urgent action is needed to improve the life chances of the 1.4 million children and young people with speech, language and communication needs in the UK.

First, **joint commissioning** based on a robust analysis of local need will be key to ending what is currently a postcode lottery for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). The establishment of the SEND System Leadership Board is a welcome first step. Given the extent to which SLCN cuts across education, health and social care, justice and other policy areas, we believe that there should be a commitment that commissioning for SLCN will be an explicit focus of the Board.

Second, the Government's ambition to improve social mobility by supporting early language development is clear, but more than 10% of children have speech, language and communication needs that will require **support well beyond the early years**. Measures to improve joint commissioning could improve access to specialist support, but need to be underpinned by an evidence-based pathway for school-age children and young people that also includes universal and targeted support. This could build on the pathway which Public Health England is developing for children aged 0-5.

Third, **teachers and teaching assistants** need to be supported to enable all children and young people to develop language and communication skills. This means being able to identify children and young people who may have speech, language and communication needs as early as possible and to support them effectively. This could be addressed both through the early career framework for new teachers, as well as through providing national programmes of training for all education staff.

Fourth, with increasing pressures on schools' time and budgets, it's essential that **schools are encouraged** from the top to give speech, language and communication the priority it deserves. This should include providing guidance to schools and other education settings on how they can use their pupil premium funding to develop language skills, as well as ensuring Ofsted inspections consider the way that teaching improves pupils' spoken language and supports pupils with speech, language and communication needs.

Lastly, some groups of **vulnerable children and young people** are much more likely to have speech, language and communication needs than their peers: those excluded from school, those who are looked after, in the justice system, and with mental health problems. Practitioners working in these settings need to be trained in how to recognise speech, language and communication needs and to respond effectively. They must also have access to specifically commissioned speech and language therapy services for those young people who need them.

The means to achieve this could be a cross-government strategy to ensure the join-up of education, health, justice and care. This could build on the very welcome cross-government working group on family support in the early years.

We hope that you will show the vision and leadership to ensure that the government builds on the work it has already done. Over a million children and young people with speech, language and communication needs, their parents and those who work with them are waiting anxiously to hear from you.

Yours sincerely,

Anna Reeves
CEO, Ace Centre



Professor Sonia Blandford
Founder and CEO, Achievement for All



Steven Gauge
Chief Executive, Action for Stammering Children



Dr Roger Wicks
Director of Policy & Campaigns,
Action on Hearing Loss



A national charity since 1911

Dr Tony Lloyd
CEO, ADHD Foundation



Norman G. Goodwin CBE
Chief Executive, Adoption Matters



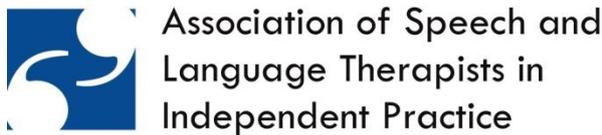
Linda Lascelles
Chief Executive, Afasic



Jolanta Lasota
Chief Executive, Ambitious About Autism



Sarah Lyons
Chair, Association of Speech and Language
Therapists in Independent Practice (ASLTIP)



Kathy Roberts,
Chief Executive, Association of Mental Health
Providers



Andy Peadar, Chair and
Diz Minnitt, Speech and Language Lead,
Association of Youth Offending Team Managers
(AYM)



Anita Grover
CEO, Auditory Verbal UK



Jon Spiers
CEO, Autistica

AUTISTICA

Building brighter futures through autism research

Natasha Finlayson
Chief Executive, Become

BECOME.

THE CHARITY FOR CHILDREN IN CARE
AND YOUNG CARE LEAVERS

Dr Hilary Cass OBE
Chair, British Academy of Childhood Disability

BACD

British Academy of
Childhood Disability

Dr Andrew Reeves
Chair, British Association for Counselling and
Psychotherapy

bacp

counselling
changes lives

Dr Ruth Allen
CEO, British Association of Social Workers

BASW

The professional association for
social work and social workers

Helen Boden
CEO, British Dyslexia Association

British Dyslexia

Association

Helen Hewitt
Chief Executive, Chailey Heritage Foundation



Professor Dame Sue Bailey OBE DBE
Chair, Children and Young People's Mental
Health Coalition (CYPMHC)



Kathy Evans
CEO, Children England



Claire Cunniffe
Chief Executive, CLAPA



Toby Hewson
Co-Chair, Communication Matters



Amanda Batten
CEO, Contact



John Simmonds OBE
Director of Policy, Research and Development,
CoramBAAF



Dame Christine Lenehan
Director, Council for Disabled Children



Christopher Rossiter
Chief Executive, Driver Youth Trust

Sophie Kayani
Chair, Dyspraxia Foundation



Joshua Coleman
Chair of Trustees, Find A Voice



Bob Reitemeier CBE
Chief Executive, I CAN



Adam Annand
Associate Director, London Bubble



Peter McCabe
Chief Executive, Headway – the brain injury association



the brain injury association

Dr Cheryl Adams CBE
Executive Director, Institute of Health Visiting



Julie Wooton
Chair of Trustees, Max Appeal



Janine Tregelles
Chief Executive, Royal Mencap Society



Sally Kelly
Chair, National Association of Virtual School Heads



Purnima Tanuku OBE
Chief Executive, National Day Nurseries Association



National Day Nurseries Association



Stephen Parson
Chair, NAPLIC



Professionals supporting language and communication development

Mark Lever
Chief Executive, the National Autistic Society



Susan Daniels
Chief Executive, National Deaf Children's Society



Paul Marshall
Chief Executive, National Development Team for
Inclusion



Dr Mary Bousted and Kevin Courtney
Joint General Secretaries, National Education
Union



Maureen Morris and Mrunal Sisodia
Co-chairs, National Network of Parent Carer
Forums



Sandra Butcher
Chief Executive, National Organisation for Foetal
Alcohol Syndrome-UK (NOFAS-UK)



David Bateson OBE
Independent Chair, National SEND Forum



Clare Howard
Chief Executive, Natspec



Peter Dawson
Director, Prison Reform Trust



Stephen Parsons
UK Convenor, RADLD



Liza Dresner
Director, Resources for Autism



Kamini Gadhok MBE
Chief Executive, RCSLT



Richard Kramer
Chief Executive, Sense



Tracy Goode
CEO, Signalong



Dr. Shirley Landrock-White
Chairperson of SMiRA (Selective Mutism
Information and Research Association)



Lois Cameron
Director, Talking Mats Ltd



Jane Powell
CEO, The British Stammering Association



Laurence Guinness
Chief Executive, The Childhood Trust



Dalton Leong
Chief Executive, The Children's Trust



Sarah Allen
Acting Chief Executive, The Ear Foundation



Kevin Williams
Chief Executive, The Fostering Network



Chloe Hayward, Executive Director and
Dr Andrew Bateman, Chair
The United Kingdom Acquired Brain Injury
Forum



Prof. Sarah Niblock
CEO, UK Council for Psychotherapy



Emma Thomas
Chief Executive, Young Minds

