



make chatter matter

highlights

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Make Chatter Matter is I CAN's three year awareness-raising campaign to ensure that speech, language and communication are embedded at the heart of children's policy. The campaign highlights the importance of communication as the foundation for children's learning and social development.

Principally supported by the BT Better World Campaign and Openreach, *Make Chatter Matter* has sought public support and government backing for:

- **Informed parents** - all families should automatically receive information on communication development and be confident on where to go to for help when a child has speech, language and communication needs.
- **Skilled staff** - the children's workforce should have the necessary skills to support typical communication development, to identify potential problems and to develop strategies to support children with speech, language and communication needs.
- **Communication friendly settings** - all settings should provide language rich environments, support communication development and help early identification of difficulties.
- **Specialist provision** - those with severe and complex communication needs should be able to access the help they and their families need.

The campaign launched in October 2006 with the publication of *I CAN Talk The Cost to the Nation of Children's Poor Communication*. This landmark report set the bar in generating awareness about the fundamental importance of children's communication development and early intervention, as well as the links between language and life chances. It has become the calling card for the issue.

Make Chatter Matter brings together a coalition of 65 organisations and high-profile individuals who recognise the importance of communication skills including: The Children's Society, Confederation of British Industry, Whizz-Kidz, Capital Shopping Centres, National Childminding Association (NCMA), Dr Tanya Byron and the Mental Health Foundation.

The campaign has secured support from parliamentarians, high profile opinion formers and key members of the media. Children's communication is now a stated government priority and is firmly on the political agenda. All three main political parties are devising policies to tackle the issues raised by I CAN's *Cost to the Nation* report and the I CAN and BT Better World Campaign *Language and Social Exclusion* report.

Informing parents and carers

The campaign has not just been about changing policy. Thanks to the support of partners like the BT Better World Campaign and Openreach, I CAN has been able to develop resources for families and practitioners. Through its partnership with Capital Shopping Centres, I CAN has run shopping centre events in Stoke, Nottingham and Thurrock, engaging with families and nursery workers and providing them with free resources.

These events have proved so successful that I CAN and Openreach have committed to taking *Make Chatter Matter* on the road, visiting towns across the UK throughout 2008/2009.

“I had no idea that communication was so important for children’s learning. As a new mum I appreciate all the help I can get and I thought the *Chatter Chart* was great. I think all parents should get information like this.”

Parent

Key achievements

- A partnership with the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department of Health to roll out I CAN’s *Early Talk* programme to 200 Sure Start Children’s Centres.
- The launch of the Inclusion Development Programme - a £2 million training package to help teachers, support staff and early years practitioners to support children with speech, language and communication needs and dyslexia.
- The creation of The Communication Trust. Hosted by I CAN and founded by Afasic, BT Better World Campaign, Council for Disabled Children and I CAN, the Trust works to raise awareness of speech, language and communication within the children’s workforce and helps those that work with children acquire the skills that they need.
- John Bercow MP’s *Review of Services for Children and Young People with Speech, Language and Communication Needs*.





The Bercow Review

In September 2007 the Prime Minister commissioned Conservative MP, John Bercow to undertake a review of services for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs - the first in almost a decade. This was a major coup for I CAN's *Make Chatter Matter* campaign.

"I CAN played an important part in the review. Its excellent *Make Chatter Matter* campaign helped to put the issue on the political map in the first place. I am pleased that many of its suggestions have been taken up."

Conservative Shadow Minister for Children, Tim Loughton MP

In responding to the review's call for evidence, I CAN developed and expanded its *Make Chatter Matter* manifesto themes, outlining the need for a year of awareness-raising and a "champion" for speech, language and communication. I CAN offered recommendations around joint working and the commissioning of services for children with speech, language and communication needs and pointed out the importance of ensuring that it was embedded in the primary and secondary curriculum.

I CAN was a member of John Bercow's Advisory Group which, as well as supporting John in producing his report and recommendations, dedicated a huge amount of time to visiting schools, early years centres, local authorities, healthcare settings and formally consulting and speaking with children, parents and professionals throughout the country.

On 8 July 2008 the final report was published. Six key themes emerged from the review, which closely mirror I CAN's *Make Chatter Matter* goals:

- Communication is the 21st century life skill
- More support for parents and families is needed
- Early identification and intervention are crucial
- Commissioning and tailored packages of support should be based on need
- The children's workforce play a crucial role in supporting communication
- Local leadership and joint working around speech, language and communication services are essential.



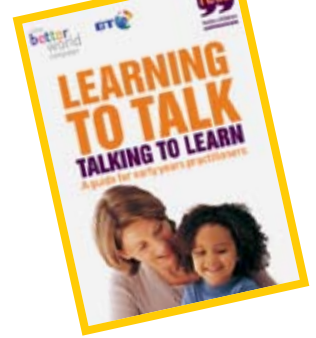
“For all six of I CAN’s *Make Chatter Matter* goals to be embedded at the heart of the review’s recommendations is a major coup for us and the 65 strong coalition of organisations who support our *Make Chatter Matter* campaign. Together, we have tirelessly lobbied for greater awareness on this issue, for investment and development in the three million strong children’s workforce, for all settings to be communication friendly and for greater information on communication development to be available to parent and carers.”

Virginia Beardshaw
I CAN Chief Executive

John Bercow’s final report was welcomed by both Secretaries of State, Ed Balls and Alan Johnson, who accepted all 40 recommendations in full. Highlights of the government response are:

- The launch of *Every Child a Talker* a £40 million programme to support early language development. Linking closely to I CAN’s *Early Talk* programme, and with input from I CAN on the reference group, this programme will increase uptake of existing materials and training for early years workers and parents of pre-school children.
- As a result of *Make Chatter Matter*’s success in raising the issue up the political agenda, the government have accepted I CAN’s proposal for a communication “champion” along with a *National Year of Speech, Language and Communication* and a supporting programme of public facing activities and events. The government will invest some of the £12 million earmarked for speech, language and communication in this area.





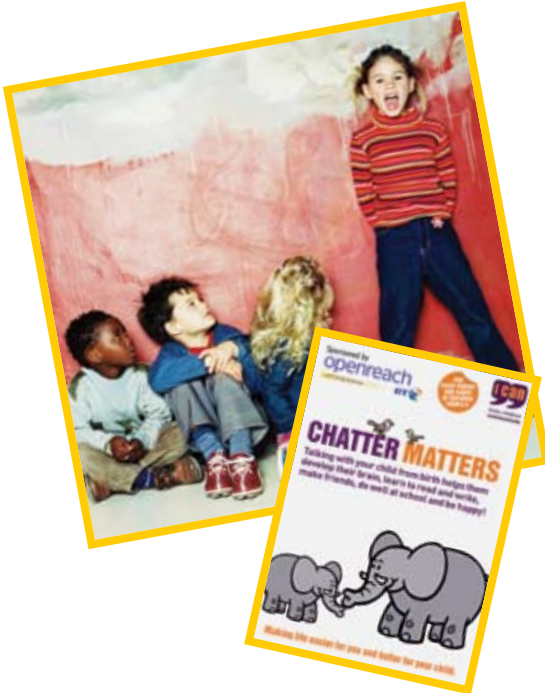
- Reflecting parents' need for information and the success of I CAN's *Talking Point* service, the government has accepted that information services for parents around speech, language and communication need to be improved.
- The announcement that Sir Jim Rose would examine how schools can better focus on speech, language and communication as part of his review of the primary curriculum. This reflects I CAN's shift of focus towards older children and the importance of embedding speech, language and communication in the classroom and the curriculum.

Next steps

The government has shown political commitment to the issue of children's communication. It is crucial that it now delivers a sustainable framework for speech, language and communication.

I CAN will continue to lobby and campaign to ensure that recommendations in the report are implemented and that speech, language and communication run as a thread through all policy related to children and young people. We are seeking to help shape both the Department for Children, Schools and Families Action Plan for Bercow and the Child Health Strategy, both due to be launched in autumn 2008, as well as the Ofsted Special Educational Needs enquiry, Rose Review of Primary Curriculum and Brian Lamb's review.

I CAN's first two years of national campaigning under *Make Chatter Matter* has ensured that speech, language and communication is emerging as a national issue, in the same way that autism and dyslexia became issues a decade or more ago. Over its third year, I CAN will work to secure the campaign's legacy: improved services for children and young people and a generation of children with the speech, language and communication skills that they need to fulfil their potential.



Please contact us if you would like more information on I CAN's *Make Chatter Matter* campaign.

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