



Media Release

13 September 2013

Make time to listen to your children, parents urged

- **New leaflet for parents asks them to make quality family time for speaking and listening**
- **Includes advice on what mums and dads can do to help develop their children's communication skills**
- **Leaflet from Family Action and NAHT is second of four produced under the banner 'Ready to Learn Every Day'**

A new leaflet published today by charity Family Action and school leaders' union NAHT is urging parents to set aside time to listen to their child without distractions.

The leaflet suggests parents should aim to put aside their mobile phones even for short periods to avoid being tempted to respond to texts or calls while listening to their children so youngsters get the message that their news and views are important.

This is the second leaflet in a joint series on school readiness produced by the partnership between Family Action and NAHT. The 'Speaking and Listening' leaflet focuses on tips for parents to enable school-age children to become confident communicators by developing their speaking and listening skills. It will be distributed to NAHT's 28,500 members who will be encouraged to distribute it to parents.

The new leaflet has been released because speaking and listening are regarded as basic skills which many parents assume their children will pick up naturally. Family Action and NAHT have published the leaflet to ensure parents are able to help their children develop speaking and listening skills.

Studies have shown the links between speaking and listening and a child's cognitive development and this leaflet contains a number of tips for parents. Research by the National Literacy Trust last year found nearly one in seven parents fail to help their children develop literacy and communication skills on a daily basis, for example by reading with them or discussing school work.

The main piece of advice is to lead by example – parents should show their child how to be a good listener by listening to them first. Patience is key to this – mums and dads should refrain from interrupting or finishing their children's sentences for them. They should try to give their full attention, for example, by not checking their mobile phone during conversations.

Children who can communicate well with others will think about what they say and choose the right words, listen to instructions from their teacher and listen to their classmates before speaking. They will also do better at reading and writing.

Parents who listen carefully to their children are also better placed to pick up problems connected with hearing or speech and language development.

While not all parents will need encouragement to take these steps, the campaign is aimed at prompting those who could do more to stop, think, and listen.

David Holmes, Chief Executive of Family Action, said: "We all know how easy it is to be distracted by our mobiles when with our children. That's part of modern life. But this leaflet is a reminder to parents about the importance of making time to listen actively to our children. We all need to do this so that children in turn learn to speak and listen well.

"We want all children to be able to reach their potential and be ready to learn at school and we hope our new guide, produced with NAHT, will be helpful to parents."

Bernadette Hunter, president of NAHT, said: "We're pleased to issue our second leaflet with Family Action, which aims to help parents find ways to make the most of talking and listening with their children. We hope parents will find the information helpful when it comes to prioritising quality time for conversations with their children.

"It's easy for everyone, even parents, to be distracted by the immediacy of electronic communications. We understand the pressure and temptation to respond straightaway but it's important parents spend time speaking and listening with their children."

Notes to Editors

- Family Action has been chosen as NAHT Charity of Choice for 2013/14.
- The two organisations are planning a range of awareness and fundraising activities over the year including a dress down day – Dressed Down and Ready to Learn – from September 2013. A series of five assembly plans has been created to support the Ready to Learn Every Day campaign. For more information visit www.family-action.org.uk/naht.
- The Speaking and Listening leaflet is available [HERE](#).

- **Media contacts**

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About Family Action

Family Action has been a leading provider of services to disadvantaged and socially isolated families since 1869. We work with over 45,000 children and families a year by providing practical, emotional and financial support through over 100 services based in communities across England. A further 50,000 people benefit from our educational grants and information service.

About NAHT

NAHT is an independent trade union and professional association with 28,500 members in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Members include head teachers, deputies, assistant head teachers, bursars and school business managers. They hold leadership positions in early years, primary, special, secondary and independent schools, sixth form colleges, outdoor education centres, pupil referral units, social services establishments and other educational settings. The membership represents leaders in 85 per cent of primary, 40 per cent of secondary and virtually all special schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.