



Chair of the  
Board

# Welcome

Thank you for your interest in becoming our next Chair at I CAN. We are the UK's leading children's communication charity with aspirations to grow.

We have just agreed our new Three Year Plan and are about to embark on an exciting new strategy. We are investing in our influencing work using our Bercow: 10 Years On review as our key influencing platform, and our schools are consistently recognised as Ofsted 'Outstanding'. We are growing our speech, language and educational advisory work and are currently delivering a range of workforce development and parent support programmes. Our plan is to deliver £8.5m of income in this new financial year.

In this brief, we want to share with you who we are, why we exist, what we do, how we are structured and why we think this is a great place to be. In addition, you will find more detailed information about this key strategic leadership appointment.

Our Board is exceptionally capable and committed. We are looking for someone who can build on our current Chair's legacy and help us strengthen and deepen our reach into stakeholder and supporter communities. You don't need to be an educationalist, or to have a personal connection with what we do. But wherever you are now, you will recognise how significant our organisation is within our field of specialism and will share our desire to further strengthen our impact.

You will be a confident and positive leader and ambassador on our behalf with the strategic acumen and emotional intelligence to promote us and steer us through the next exciting era of development.

You can read about our current senior management team at <https://www.ican.org.uk/about-us/> and our Board at <https://ican.org.uk/about-us/our-trustees/> if, having read this brief, you are interested in a conversation our consultants Juliet Taylor and Katy Giddens at Starfish Search (0203 971 0832) will be pleased to speak with you, and can also arrange an informal conversation with our Chief Executive and current Chair, Huw Davies, too.

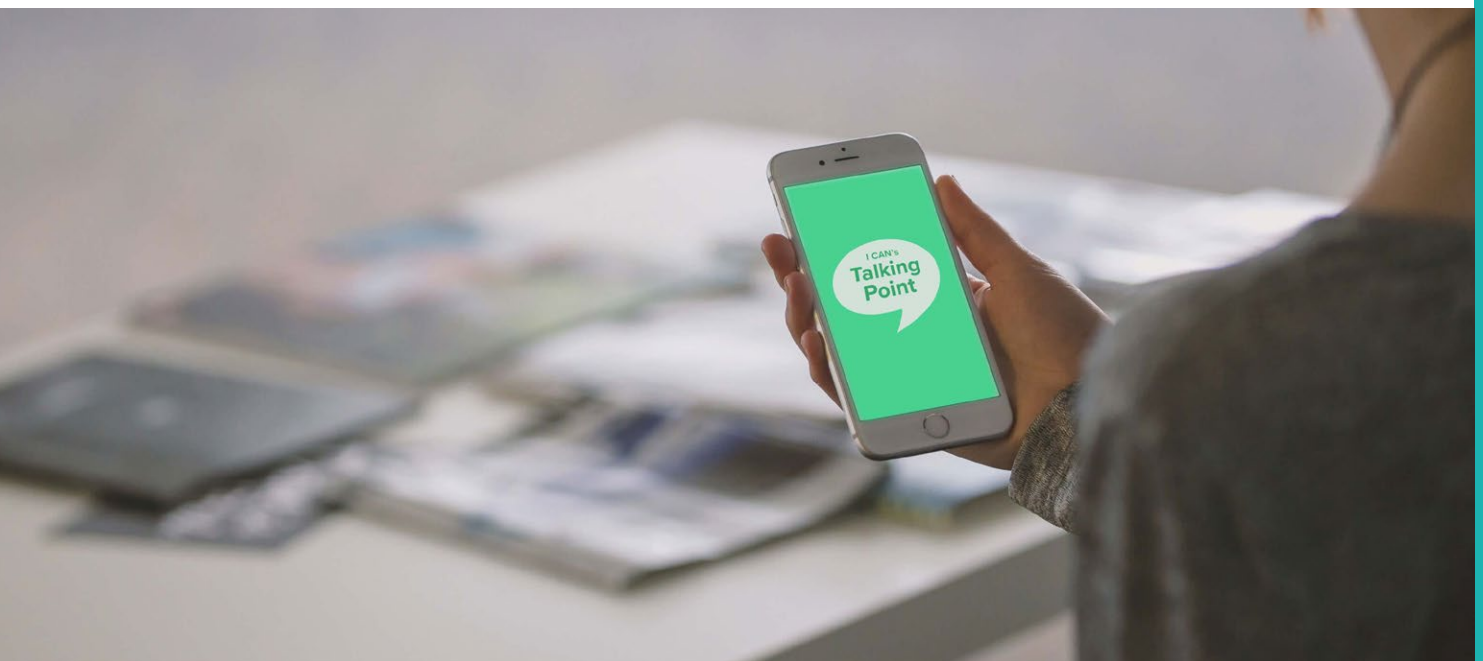
If you believe you might have what we are looking for then we very much look forward to hearing from you.



**Huw Davies**  
Chair, Board of Trustees



**Bob Reitemeier**  
Chief Executive



# Who we are and why we exist

I CAN is the leading children's communication charity in the United Kingdom and we were originally formed in 1888.

Our mission is that no child should be left out or be left behind because of a difficulty speaking or understanding.

Our vision is a world where all children have the communications skills they need to fulfil their potential.

Our values are to be Impactful, Collaborative, Aspirational and we ensure No Voice is Unheard.

Children and young people's communication needs are at the centre of everything we do. Our values are designed to enable all parts of our organisation to work together to support these needs, and in doing so become the most effective and influential charity we can be.

## Our core values are:

<b>Impactful</b> Delivering real change for those affected by SLCN	We change lives and unlock potential. We act on current research and create new evidence for the sector through innovative programmes and solutions.
<b>Collaborative</b> <i>Increasing our reach, effectiveness and profile by working together with others</i>	We work in partnership with other organisations, networks and individuals to achieve systemic change that is sustainable and replicable. We are stronger together.
<b>Aspirational</b> <i>Enabling children, young people, their families and ourselves to thrive</i>	We enable as many children and young people as possible to thrive socially and academically. We are the UK's leading charity in children's communication, and we won't compromise on quality or excellence.
<b>No Voice Unheard</b> <i>Recognising that everyone has a valuable contribution to make</i>	We empower everyone to have their voice heard: whether children and young people with SLCN, their families or I CAN staff. We are committed to addressing any unlawful or unfair discrimination and value the difference diversity and inclusion can bring to ensuring that no-one left out or left behind.

## Our two main goals in the Three Year Plan (2020-2023) are to:

- Increase awareness in the education and health sectors that children's speech, language and communication is a fundamental factor in children's development and a key predictor of their life chances. We will:
  - In Year One, establish a baseline of awareness with selected education and health professional groups, and
  - In Years Two and Three publish the results of annual surveys designed to demonstrate their level of increased awareness.
- Improve the language skills of 250,000 children and young people not previously reached by I CAN who have communication difficulties through our schools, our training programmes and interventions, and our support to parents.



# Who we are and why we exist

Communication is crucial. The most fundamental life skill for children is the ability to communicate. It directly impacts on their ability to learn, to develop friendships and their life chances.

Speech, language and communication skills are vital to every person: for brain development in the early years and our attachment to others, for expressing ourselves and understanding others, for thinking and learning, for social interaction and emotional wellbeing, in school, as part of society and in the workplace. Yet the importance of these skills sadly continues to be underestimated.

More than 1.4 million children and young people (10%) in the UK have long-term and persistent speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). Developmental language disorder alone is one of the most common disorders of childhood; affecting 7.6% of all children and young people. In areas of social disadvantage, up to 50% of children experience delayed language. Poor understanding of and insufficient resourcing for SLCN means that too many children and young people receive inadequate, ineffective and inequitable support, impacting on their educational outcomes, their employability and their mental health.

In March 2018, we published *Bercow: 10 Years On* which has provided I CAN with its strongest influencing platform in several years. The report, developed in partnership with the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT), provided a state of the nation analysis of the level and quality of support children are receiving. Over the next three years we will continue to influence public policy.

## What are the statistics telling us?

- Just 26% of young children with SLCN made expected academic progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage compared with 69% of all children.
- Just 18% of pupils with identified SLCN achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of their primary school years compared with 64% of all children.
- Only 20% of pupils with SLCN gained grade 4/C or above in English and Maths at GCSE compared with 69% of all pupils.
- 81% of children with emotional and behavioural disorders have unidentified language difficulties.
- Young people referred to mental health services are three times more likely to have SLCN.
- Children with poor vocabulary skills are twice as likely to be unemployed when they reach adulthood.
- At least 60% of young offenders have communication difficulties.

Sadly, there are now untold millions of people who are navigating their way through life with unidentified and unsupported SLCN. Many of these people struggle to find work, experience debilitating mental health issues and disproportionate numbers end up in the justice system. With severely limited life chances, people with SLCN are being marginalised and neglected by society. This is why I CAN exists as a charitable organisation.

**Join us and help us to make a real difference!**



# What we do

## Our key activities include:

- Running two Ofsted 'Outstanding' residential special schools to support children and young people with the most severe and complex language needs.
- The development and distribution of interventions to support individual children and groups of children with delayed language – currently implemented in over 5,000 nurseries, children's centres and schools.
- Direct support to parents of children with SLCN each year through a dedicated telephone and video enquiry service where they receive advice from a qualified speech and language therapist, as well as access to our online portal, I CAN Talking Point.
- The administration of the Communication Consortium, a body of over 25 organisations who support children and young people with communication difficulties.
- The provision of clear and robust evidence from our work to government and policy makers to influence practice and policy across the UK, in support of all children who have language difficulties.
- Working in partnership with other organisations, campaigning for better information, advice and improved services to the hundreds of thousands of children and their families not receiving the speech, language and communication support they need.
- The delivery of speech and language programmes aimed at the nation's workforce responsible for the education and care of children with SLCN.

Supporting our front-line workforce, we have a Trustee Board, a Senior Management Team, two School Leadership Teams and School Governing Bodies, and a range of professional functions in the areas of philanthropy, sales, marketing, monitoring and evaluation, communications, project management, finance, office management, health and safety, cleaning and catering, and human resources. All of us are passionate about improving the life chances of children with SLCN. We employ approximately 180 staff across three main sites in Central London, Surrey and the East Midlands, as well as several home-based workers.

We are now embarking on an exciting new Three Year Plan taking us to March 2023 and beyond, so this is a really exciting time to join us. There are a number of websites where you may find some useful information about us.

Our general I CAN website

<https://www.ican.org.uk/>

The Communication Trust website

<https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/>

I CAN's Talking Point website

<http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk/>

The Bercow Ten Years On website

<https://www.bercow10yearson.com/>

Meath School website

<https://www.meathschool.org.uk/>

Dawn House school website

<https://www.dawnhouseschool.org.uk/>

We are members of The Social Business Trust (SBT), the National Association of Independent Schools and Non-Maintained Schools (NASS) and the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO).

You can read more about these organisations at [www.socialbusinesstrust.org](http://www.socialbusinesstrust.org), [www.nassschools.org.uk](http://www.nassschools.org.uk) and [www.ncvo.org.uk](http://www.ncvo.org.uk).



# What we do

## How our Three Year Plan supports children

To support the children with the most severe and complex SLCN, we run two specialist residential schools, one in Surrey and one in Nottinghamshire. To support the 10% of children with long-term SLCN, we have an outreach programme that provides training and support for schools and nurseries. In 2020/21 we will initiate a developmental language disorder pilot in mainstream schools as a means to support these children.

To support the 50% of children in some areas with delayed language, we distribute through our Social Enterprise our menu of programmes, notably our Talk Boost series, to help these children catch up to their peers. To support the children's workforce, we manage the Communication Trust of 25 organisations, whom together have a wealth of information and advice for parents and practitioners. To support parents we provide a free enquiry service where they can have dedicated time with a speech and language therapist, and administer our Talking Point website, which receives 1 million unique visits per year.





# Role profile

## Role summary

To further the charity's mission within its charitable objectives through holding the Board and Executive Team to account and providing leadership to the Board of Trustees.

## Main responsibilities

The Chair will hold the Board and Executive Team to account, with appropriate support and challenge, and act as an ambassador and the public face of the charity, in partnership with the Chief Executive and senior leaders.

## Strategic Leadership

- Provide clear and engaging leadership to the charity and its Board, ensuring that I CAN maximises its impact for its beneficiaries.
- Support the Chief Executive to lead and manage the organisation well, give regular feedback on performance and conduct annual appraisal.
- Keep abreast of social policy as it affects children and young people with speech, language and communication difficulties.
- Ensure that the Board operates within its charitable objects and provide a clear strategic direction for the charity.
- Ensure that Trustees fulfil their duties and responsibilities for the effective governance of the charity and develop Trustee knowledge and capability.
- Ensure that the Board fulfils its duties and responsibilities to ensure the sound financial health of the charity, with systems in place to ensure financial accountability.

## Governance

- Ensure that the governance arrangements are working in the most effective way for the charity and that the Board regularly reviews major risks and associated opportunities and satisfies itself that systems are in place to manage and mitigate risks.
- Appraise the performance of the Chief Executive and Trustees annually.
- Ensure the Board of Trustees is regularly refreshed and incorporates the right balance of skills, knowledge and experience needed to govern the charity effectively.
- Ensure a suitable deputy is appointed when unable to attend key meetings.



# Role profile

## External Relations

- Act as an effective ambassador for the charity and its cause, maintaining close and productive relationships, along with the Chief Executive, with key external stakeholders and key influencers.
- Act as a spokesperson for the organisation, when appropriate and represent the charity at external functions, meetings and events, when needed.
- Facilitate change and address any potential conflict with external stakeholders.
- Promote and get involved in key income generating activities, as required, bringing appropriate contacts to the table.

## Efficiency and Effectiveness

- Chair meetings of the Board of Trustees effectively and efficiently, bringing impartiality and objectivity into the decision-making process.
- Ensure that Trustees are fully engaged and that decisions are taken in the best, long-term interests of the charity and that the Board takes collective ownership of any decisions made.
- Foster and maintain constructive relationships between and with the Trustees.
- Work closely with the Chief Executive to give direction to Board decisions and ensure that meetings are well-planned, meaningful and reflect Trustee responsibilities.
- Monitor decisions taken at meetings to ensure they are implemented and that any reasons for non-implementation are well-understood and brought back on track.





# Person specification

## Part One

### Knowledge and Experience

- Outstanding personal record of achievement.
- Deep experience of operating at a senior and strategic leadership level within an organisation in the public, private or voluntary sector.
- Strong experience of representing organisations externally from public platforms and through effective stakeholder management.
- Significant experience of leading and chairing meetings.
- Financial management expertise with a sound understanding of charity governance issues.
- Understands and accepts the duties and liabilities of the Chair of the Board in a charity context.
- A good working knowledge of Civil Society and current issues affecting it is desirable although not strictly essential.

## Part Two

### Skills, personal style and attributes

- Clear leadership style, with the ability to inspire and motivate staff, volunteers and stakeholders and bring people together.
- Outstanding interpersonal skills and has the personal impact, influence and credibility to represent a significant national organisation.
- Highly effective relationship and alliance building abilities and is comfortable in an ambassadorial role.
- A natural networker who secures confidence immediately, has a diplomatic style and is happy to galvanise communities in support of I CAN and its work.
- Sound judgement; demonstrates capacity for self-reflection and is a clear and independent strategic thinker.
- Team player who enjoys working with others in a small organisation and fosters a collaborative culture.
- Demonstrates a sincere commitment to the mission and work of I CAN.



# Terms of appointment

## **Time commitment**

Between two and two and a half days per month.

This includes quarterly Board meetings that are on weekdays, held in Central London and generally start at 2pm and finish by 4pm; one Board awayday per annum that starts at lunchtime and finishes by no later than 6pm; preparation for meetings by reading Board papers, usually issued 5-7 days in advance of the meeting.

The Chair role also requires a commitment to leading or responding on other Board matters or Board initiatives, and speaking with the Chief Executive on a regular basis. The Chair is also required to promote and get involved in key income generating activities bringing appropriate key contacts to the table.

Trustee Board meetings are scheduled for 29th April 2020 at Dawn House School; 29th July 2020 in London; 28th October 2020 in London; and 27th January 2021 in London.

## **Remuneration**

All Trustee roles are voluntary and reasonable expenses incurred in fulfilling your duties will be reimbursed.

## **Term**

All appointments are for an initial three-year term, renewable by mutual agreement for a maximum of two further three-year terms.

## **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion**

I CAN is committed to equality of opportunity, supports and encourages under-represented groups and values diversity. We seek people from a wide range of backgrounds, who will bring a fresh perspective to the Board and having reviewed our existing Trustees diversity, skills and experience, we are keen for our Board to reflect the diversity of the communities that we work with and we therefore welcome applications from all sections of the community.

## **Safeguarding**

I CAN require all Trustees and committee members to be committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and to respond proactively to safeguarding concerns. We require the Chair of the Board and members of the two School Governing Committees to undertake an Enhanced Disclosure via the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

## **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)**

Please note that it is our policy that all recruitment documentation, including application paperwork, is kept in secure conditions for a period of six months, after which they will be securely destroyed. If you are successful in your application, in accordance with GDPR, we will retain your personal data whilst you are fulfilling a Trustee or Committee Member role with us and for six years after you have left. Please see our volunteer privacy notice at <https://www.ican.org.uk/i-can-volunteer-privacy-notice/>.



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helps children  
communicate

