



*Press Release – For immediate release (25.10.13)*

## **BRITISH PUBLIC MOVED BY MUSHARAF’S STORY ON EDUCATING YORKSHIRE: BRITISH STAMMERING ASSOCIATION RESPONDS**

The British Stammering Association (BSA), the UK’s national stammering organisation, has today (25<sup>th</sup> October) welcomed the increased awareness and interest in stammering following yesterday’s *Educating Yorkshire* finale.

Aired on Channel 4 last night, *Educating Yorkshire* featured the powerful story of Musharaf (Mushy P), who has a severe stammer, as he prepared for his spoken English to be formally assessed for his GCSE English oral exams at Thornhill Academy in Dewsbury.

The episode featured his teacher and Assistant Head, Mr Burton, as he sought to support him and try a range of tactics to help improve his fluency in the classroom and by liaising with specialist speech and language therapy support.

Cherry Hughes, Education Officer at BSA, says: “Stammering is not well understood and sometimes is mimicked and a subject of mockery in society. What shone through in *Educating Yorkshire* last night was Musharaf’s brave efforts to confront the challenge of speaking and the school did their absolute utmost to understand his needs and meet them.

“The Headteacher referred to the importance of positive relationships in the school and the warmth of those relationships was seen in the programme. The genuine regard that staff appeared to have for pupils created an environment in which Musharaf felt able to confront his speaking difficulties and work out with Mr Burton how best to get through his formal assessment.

“Mr Burton was seen talking with Musharaf’s speech and language therapist - a vital partnership in supporting his experiences at school and home. The therapist’s advice that it might be helpful if there was some normal school background noise when Musharaf was talking seemed to make Mr Burton recall a scene from the film ‘The Kings Speech’. In this scene, the future King George VI was advised to listen to music before talking and it was suggested that Musharaf use earphones to listen to music while he talked.

“This approach worked for Musharaf, who was able to deliver his talk much more fluently than had ever been possible before, using his hands also at the same time to tap out a rhythm. Throughout the whole process, Musharaf was encouraged to talk to staff about his concerns and they did all they could to boost his confidence and give him support.

“The emotional levels were very high for Musharaf and the staff and the conversations between them illustrated the high regard and interest that staff had for this student, and the trust that he consequently felt able to put in them.

“This is to be applauded and is warmly welcomed by the British Stammering Association as research<sup>1</sup> has previously highlighted that experiences at school are influential in the lives of people who stammer and many have been badly affected by their stammering at school.

“At the end of the programme, Musharaf talked at the Leaver’s Assembly after his Year Head reminded everyone that he had wanted to leave in Year 7 because he was teased about his speech. Through helping Musharaf to build up strong relationships, he was able to thank staff and pupils. This heartfelt ‘speech’ brought a tear to the eyes of many there and it appears to many of the British public watching the show. Mushraf was successful in achieving a Grade C in English and it was clear in his demeanour that he had gained immeasurably in confidence and self-esteem.”

One in ten children and young people across the UK have speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) that require support, that’s two - three in every classroom. More than one in a hundred children and young people have a stammer, at least one child in every three classrooms. For these children and young people to progress academically and socially at school, it is vital that support is put in place from the point they enter school.

The BSA has developed a series of online resources that can help school staff and parents to implement successful support strategies and encourage students to become academically confident and have a greater self-awareness of their learning needs. The resources, which ideally should be used in partnership with the therapist to provide individual support, have the potential to reduce the negative impact of stammering at school.

For more information on resources for primary and secondary schools, visit [www.stammeringineducation.net](http://www.stammeringineducation.net) and <http://stammering.org/expertparent/>

For more information about the launch of the Employers Stammering Network, visit [http://www.stammering.org/media\\_isad2013\\_pressrelease.pdf](http://www.stammering.org/media_isad2013_pressrelease.pdf)

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#### **For further information**

For further information or to arrange an interview with Cherry Hughes, Education Officer at BSA, please contact:

Laura Smith - Tel: 07766 651366, email – [lsmith@consiliumcommunications.co.uk](mailto:lsmith@consiliumcommunications.co.uk)

Della Bolat - Tel: 07841 763833, email – [dbolat@consiliumcommunications.co.uk](mailto:dbolat@consiliumcommunications.co.uk)

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<sup>1</sup> Dr Clare Butler, Newcastle University Business School, "University?... Hell No!": Stammering through Education. International Journal of Educational Research, v59 p57-65 2013

## Notes to editors

### About the British Stammering Association

- The British Stammering Association is the UK's national charity on all aspects of stammering.
- The BSA provides an extensive information and support service through a helpline, a specialist education advice line, a number of websites ([www.stammering.org](http://www.stammering.org), [www.stammeringineducation.net](http://www.stammeringineducation.net)), and runs projects and campaigns.
- For more information about the BSA, visit [www.stammering.org](http://www.stammering.org)
- [To coincide with International Stammering Awareness Day on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October, the British Stammering Association launched the Employers Stammering Network backed by E&Y \(formerly Ernst and Young\), Accenture and DHL.](#)
- [For more information visit and the press release can be downloaded from \[http://www.stammering.org/media\\\_isad2013\\\_pressrelease.pdf\]\(http://www.stammering.org/media\_isad2013\_pressrelease.pdf\)](#)
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