

Vital help for children

AS the debate about nursery education continues and it might be worth pointing out that national press reports that John Major has changed his mind on extending nursery education to all as resources allow is incorrect - it was opportune that I was able to visit the Tanglewood Speech and Language nursery run by ICAN.

I CAN is a national charity committed to educating children with severe speech and language impairment, in conjunction with the LEA. It opened last November and has been

attended by children from eight families with ICAN providing the funding until September 1995. There can be nothing more worrying to parents than discovering their child has a specific speech and language impairment.

I CAN say: "Imagine your only contact with the outside world is a faulty radio, which, no matter how hard you try, you cannot tune in properly. Children who cannot communicate properly face a lifetime of frustration and missed opportunities. They suffer from social, educational and emotional difficulties, which, unless treated early enough and in the correct manner, can have serious long-term effects".

The work carried out by Tanglewood staff at is extremely impressive - with a very high teacher/child ratio. It was moving to speak to the parents of children who attend, all of whom have noticed dramatic improvements in their children's ability to communicate in a relatively short period of time. I was deeply

impressed by all that I saw and heard and do believe that we should have more of these facilities for young children in mid Essex. I realise there are many good causes that make demands on the public purse, but it is important to help children and this type of help seems to be ideal for those with speech impairment. As I said when I visited the nursery, I will certainly lobby the LEA and the North Essex Health Authority for funding to seek to ensure that once the pilot scheme ends in September 1995, it can continue with a different funding source. Of course it would be even better if more funding could be provided to extend further the service for children in mid Essex.

MP's DIARY
Simon Burns
MP for Chelmsford

