

Media Release

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Action needed to tackle damaging impact of loneliness at Christmas

- **76% of Family Action workers say isolation is a bigger problem at Christmas**
- **Report calls for extra investment in services to tackle loneliness**

LONELINESS is a hidden predator that preys on vulnerable and disadvantaged families, particularly at Christmas, according to a new report by national charity Family Action.

The report, *No More Lonely Christmases*, argues that the conventional image of loneliness or isolation – of an older person living on their own – does not tell the full story and that some families can feel intensely isolated too.

A snapshot survey of frontline Family Action workers, carried out for the report, found that:

- 59% of families referred to Family Action support workers show signs of, or have discussed, being lonely or isolated
- 92% of support workers say isolation and loneliness have a significant impact on the quality of life of families who use our services
- 73% of support workers regard loneliness and isolation as a key challenge for service users at Christmas
- 76% consider loneliness and isolation to be more of a problem during the Christmas period than at other times.

Failure to tackle isolation can have a significant impact on an individual's health and well-being, and increases the risk of destructive and costly family breakdown.

The key to preventing and overcoming isolation and loneliness, the report says, is to intervene early with individual, social and community support to give people someone to talk to, the confidence to ask for help when they need it and the opportunity to form stronger social bonds and constructive relationships.

The report calls for extra investment in effective intervention services which recognise and mitigate the costly symptoms of loneliness. It gives examples of

services already provided by Family Action which support mothers with post-natal depression, young carers, families requiring intensive support and adults experiencing mental health problems.

David Holmes, Chief Executive of Family Action, said: “Far too little is said about the grinding threat posed by social isolation and loneliness. It is a hidden predator that needs to be exposed and tackled. We know it is an issue for many elderly people but it is an issue for many vulnerable families too.

“Our report demonstrates how failure to address social isolation and loneliness at an early stage just stores up problems for the future. Problems that will inevitably require longer term and costlier interventions down the line. The report contains a message of hope in showing how a little help at the right time can make families happier and stronger – not just at Christmas or for a few short weeks, but all year round and for years to come.”

Notes to Editors

- For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact Andy Tate, senior media and campaigns officer at Family Action, on 020 7241 7632, 07867 504051, or at andy.tate@family-action.org.uk.

About Family Action

Family Action transforms lives by providing practical, emotional and financial support to those who are experiencing poverty, disadvantage and social isolation across England. The charity has been building stronger families since 1869, and today works with over 45,000 families and children through 120 community-based services. Thousands more are supported with financial assistance through education and welfare grants programmes. Family Action’s innovative services include early years care, help for children and families and adult mental health support. Reaching out to those in need, we strengthen families and communities, build skills and resilience and improve the life chances of children and adults. www.family-action.org.uk