

**Press release**

**Date:** embargoed until 27 January 2015; 00:01

**First “Open Doors” evaluation shows small cash grants support more significant change**

Family Action, supported by LankellyChase Foundation and NEF Consulting, today release the first findings from the innovative Open Doors programme. The programme distributes small cash grants via a network of partners who provide support to people experiencing extreme poverty and severe and multiple disadvantage (SMD).

Initial analysis of the impact of the programme shows:

- Small grants ease pressure, enabling recipients to focus on other areas of their lives that need addressing via the support provided by partner organisations
- Recipients of grants report a significant improvement in wellbeing as it enables them to make changes in their life that provide a greater sense of control, trust and security
- Partner organisations state that grants help improve the relationship and engagement between recipient and worker

The report also highlights that the majority of grant recipients are receiving additional support with housing, mental health issues and training and employment. Domestic abuse is one of the most common areas of SMD reported on applications.

*“It [the grant] has brought an element of normality back to what was a really abnormal environment. It is a platform for opportunities. When you have the little things in place, you can put the bigger things in place too.” Helen\*, grant recipient.*

*David Holmes CBE, Chief Executive of Family Action said “The initial findings from the Open Doors Programme indicate quite clearly the role that small cash grants, as part of a programme of support, can play in facilitating deeper and more far reaching change in the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in society. We are excited to continue this work to understand the long term sustainability of the change.”*

*Alice Evans, Director of Systems Change at LankellyChase said “The report shows the stark and awful reality faced by individuals every day. Without financial support it is not clear to me how individuals will be able to turn their situations around. With the future of Local Welfare Assistance uncertain, this report provides clear evidence that cash grants continue to play a pivotal role for individuals.”*

The full report can be found at [www.family-action.org.uk/opendoors](http://www.family-action.org.uk/opendoors)

**ENDS**

**For further information and full case studies please contact:**

**Email:** [media-pr@family-action.org.uk](mailto:media-pr@family-action.org.uk)

**Mobile:** 07903 074174

**Notes to Editors**

\* names have been changed to protect anonymity

From the launch of the programme in August 2013 to the beginning of November 2014, 464 grants have been made to a total value of £148,353. The average grant given was £320.

Recipients of grants are not only experiencing extreme poverty but also at least two areas of Severe and Multiple Disadvantage (SMD) such as:

- Serious mental health problems
- Homelessness/at imminent risk of being made homeless
- Domestic abuse
- Sexual exploitation
- Substance misuse
- Frequent contact with the criminal justice system (but not in prison)

Grants are applied for via partner organisations that provide additional support to address SMD.

Partners include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bethany Christian Trust</li> <li>• Birmingham &amp; Solihull Women’s Aid</li> <li>• The Cathedral Archer Project</li> <li>• Cranstoun</li> <li>• Eaves</li> <li>• Family Action Kent Intensive Family Services</li> <li>• Family Action Newham Families First</li> <li>• Hull Lighthouse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ISIS Women’s Centre/Nelson Trust</li> <li>• Local Solutions</li> <li>• Richmond Fellowship</li> <li>• Riverside</li> <li>• St Mungo’s Broadway</li> <li>• Street Talk</li> <li>• Together Women Project</li> <li>• Women @ the well</li> <li>• Women Centre Ltd</li> </ul>
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**About Family Action**

Family Action is a charity committed to building stronger families by delivering innovative and effective services and support that reaches out to many of the UK’s most vulnerable people.

We seek to empower people and communities to address their issues and challenges through practical, financial and emotional help.

Our work is wide-ranging and includes help for parents-to-be, the provision of many Children’s Centres in local communities, intensive family support, emotional health and wellbeing services, counselling, mediation and therapies, support in schools and financial grants programmes.

**About LankellyChase Foundation**

LankellyChase Foundation exists to bring about change that will transform the quality of life of people who face severe and multiple disadvantage.

We focus particularly on the persistent clustering of social harms such as homelessness, substance misuse, mental and physical illness, extreme poverty, and violence and abuse.

**About NEF Consulting**

NEF Consulting is a social enterprise founded and owned by NEF to help public, private and third sector organisations put NEF’s ideas into action.

NEF Consulting are experts in Social Return On Investment (SROI) analysis and using well-being measurement in impact assessment.