



## Funding cuts to vital family support services

Dear .....

I am writing to bring to your attention the urgent issue of the Department for Education funding for the vital family support provided by the charity I support, Family Lives. Family Lives provides a national helpline, website and live chat service which currently runs 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Family Lives is facing a cut of over 50% to the funding for these services, with the Department for Education offering £475k of the £990k required. This will have devastating consequences on their capacity to support over 1.5 million families every year through their national services and severely limit the service they will be able to provide in the future.

On behalf of Family Lives, I am appealing to you directly to help prevent the negative impact this will have on so many families, and which completely goes against the Government's commitment to put families at the heart of Government policy and support for the civil society. Family Lives provides a highly respected and in demand service which is great value for money - SROI analysis for 2012-13 found that for every £1 invested in the Family Lives Helpline would likely produce £3.42p of social value.

Now is not the time to remove support for the many thousands of families who need Family Lives when we know that families are being squeezed from all angles in the current economic times and this inevitably has an impact on family life, relationships, parenting and mental wellbeing. Family Lives are not the only charity to see an increase in demand, especially around key issues such as child mental health and bullying, an area where their role is even more vital since the closure of BeatBullying. Family Lives provide a safety net for over 1.5 million families through their helpline, live chat and website, and it would be inexcusable to remove that now.

Family Lives has provided vital support to families for over 35 years, relying on their trained and dedicated body of volunteers to provide the majority of the national support service. Their 24 hour helpline, live chat and website have seen an unprecedented increase in demand over the last year (60% on the website alone) so this funding decision which will severely limit the service they can provide will leave many thousands of families with nowhere to turn to, and be an unspeakable waste of Government investment over the last 6 years.

We urge you to help us to make the case for continuation of appropriate funding to enable Family Lives to support families. They are the leading family support charity, offering help to families at an early stage with a multitude of issues including divorce and separation, bullying, parenting teenagers, mental health issues and much, much more. A reduction in their core service also affects their numerous partnerships providing helplines for Families Need Fathers and Marriage Care, as well as their delivery of the National Offenders' Families Helpline. The support they provide for families cuts across the work of many Government departments and policies, from their role providing help and support for separated families, the impact of bullying on mental health, promoting parenting classes, working with teens around sexual bullying and consent, work with troubled families, and families of offenders – Family Lives epitomises the complexity of family life.

We ask for your support by contacting the Prime Minister on our behalf and helping to raise awareness of the valuable support for families provided by Family Lives.

Yours Sincerely

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President Rt Hon Lord Justice Thorpe, Chair Anastasia de Waal, Chief Executive Jeremy Todd

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