**New Report: Lonely Lockdown**

**Life for siblings of disabled children in the UK**

Sibs supports siblings who have a brother or sister with a disability, SEND or long-term health condition. This report is the result of a survey undertaken in collaboration with University College of London family researcher, Dr Georgia Pavlopoulou. The survey conducted with 640 parents explored the experiences of siblings of disabled children, under the age of 18, during lockdown 3. This is a follow up report to our first survey undertaken in May 2020. Key statistics are:

**81% of parents said their sibling child’s mental health had worsened**

**43% of siblings were providing more care in lockdown**

**40% siblings were feeling isolated and missing support from family and friends**

**53% of parents said that respite or a break would have helped siblings cope**

Dr Georgia Pavlopoulou, University College London Researcher and Sibs’ Trustee says

“*The least-studied familial relationship before and during the lockdown is the sibling relationship.  Our data suggest that limited support is currently provided in relation to the coronavirus pandemic to siblings of disabled children and their families. Siblings have had limited or no access to close friends, extended family members and community groups, experiencing high levels of loneliness. Chronic loneliness and social isolation have become recognised as a serious public health issue. Siblings are at higher risk of loneliness and/or lack of social support due to unexpressed emotions, fear of stigma, worries and awareness of community’s prejudice against developmental and health problems that their brother or sister face and fear of rejection. During the pandemic siblings are worried about their parents who also reported challenges with their mental health and self-care. Most importantly the survey highlights the protective role of belonging and the important role schools, educational psychologists and local communities may play in providing opportunities to respite services and foster peer connections. Mental health professionals working with neurodivergent families need to consider how their teams may offer space to all family members, including siblings, to process and work through their emotions in constructive ways as well as practical family support such as respite time.”*

Clare Kassa, Chief Executive at Sibs says

*“We were well aware from our report published in May last year, that the first lockdown for siblings of disabled children had been traumatic, isolating and difficult. Our new report confirms that although some things had changed or improved, overall the mental health impact has, if anything, become worse. Services and support were patchy at best, and yet again, siblings were so often just not seen as needing any extra help. As one parent told us “They (siblings) are forgotten about more than the disabled child and the disabled child has been forgotten, so that says it all”*

*Siblings should not be the forgotten children. We call on government to make sure that siblings of disabled children are recognised as children in need of recovery support, as part of a whole family approach.”*

**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

**Sibs charity**

* Sibs [www.sibs.org.uk](http://www.sibs.org.uk) is the only UK charity dedicated to supporting siblings who have grown up with or are growing up with a disabled brother or sister.
* Children and young people growing up with a disabled brother or sister, often get less attention from parents and have more worries and responsibilities than their peers.
* There are an estimated half a million young siblings growing up in the UK.
* Sibs provides direct support for young siblings through YoungSibs [www.youngsibs.org.uk](http://www.youngsibs.org.uk) an online support and information service for children and young people aged 7-17 who have a brother who is disabled, has special educational needs (SEND) or a serious long-term condition.
* Sibs relies on the support of Trusts and Foundations and the generosity of individual donations to fund its work – Sibs receives no statutory funding.
* Sibs works towards a vision of a world in which siblings of disabled children and adults are seen, understood and valued.

**Full report available:**  [https://doi.org/10.14324/000.rp.10125424](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fdoi.org%2F10.14324%2F000.rp.10125424&data=04%7C01%7C%7C48705f8469ad4539755d08d8f4679b38%7C1faf88fea9984c5b93c9210a11d9a5c2%7C0%7C1%7C637528073128145568%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C2000&sdata=vDe8ZBvnFGXHS1ogvNBiUjNzTGQ%2BWFU%2BCrHHSa8xEXg%3D&reserved=0)

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