



PRESS RELEASE

[FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE]

LAUNCH OF VITAL SUPPORT FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH EATING DISORDERS

National charity *Care for the Family* is launching the first UK telephone befriending service for parents of children with an eating disorder. Available from 1st October 2010, the new service will be the first to offer parents one-to-one, ongoing support from trained 'befrienders' who have themselves been through the experience of watching their own child struggle with an eating disorder.

Care for the Family, whose aim is to strengthen family life and help those facing family difficulties, set up the service because it is frequently contacted by parents of children who have an eating disorder and are seriously ill. Studies suggest that eating disorders in children are at an all time high with as many as a quarter of adolescent girls in the UK currently affected¹. Half of nine to ten year olds say they want to be thinner² and anorexia has been reported in children as young as seven³.

Katharine Hill, Director of Policy, Research and Development at *Care for the Family* says: "People can develop an eating disorder at any stage of life, but those most at risk are children and teenagers. Having a child with an eating disorder affects the whole family and can place a huge strain on relationships between parents and with siblings. We want parents to know they are not alone."

"We know that telephone befriending services can help parents to feel supported because we already run other national befriending networks that draw alongside families with particular needs," continues Katharine. "We're confident that our latest initiative, especially for parents of children with eating disorders, will benefit parents right across the UK."

As part of a new working partnership, all befrienders will be trained and supported by Anorexia & Bulimia Care (ABC), a national charity with more than 20 years' experience in this area. The expertise of the trained, volunteer befriender will be matched as closely as possible with the situation of the parent needing support. Each befriender will offer practical encouragement and insights drawn from real life, giving parents reassurance and emotional support to help them cope. The relationship will be informal and non-judgmental and the parent will be able to speak to the same person for as long as they need it.

The new service will complement national helplines that currently provide members of the public with information and advice about eating disorders. "In our experience, people value general helplines but tend to use them on an ad hoc basis," says Jane Smith, Director of ABC. "The parent befriending network will be a unique and much needed additional service that provides personal, ongoing support."

To arrange to speak to a befriender call (029) 2081 0800 or email eatingdisorders@cff.org.uk .
For further information on eating disorders visit www.careforthefamily.org.uk/supportnet.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

- **To arrange an interview with Katharine Hill**, Director of Policy, Research and Development at *Care for the Family*, please contact our press office:

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- **Care for the Family** is a national charity which aims to strengthen family life throughout the UK and help those facing family difficulties. Over the past 21 years, over 350,000 people have attended the charity's events, workshops and family-building breaks. Many more families find support through its resources and other initiatives – including stepfamilies, bereaved parents, families where children have additional needs, those parenting alone and those widowed young.

The charity successfully runs national telephone befriending services that support parents of children with additional needs ('Another Way'), those parents who have lost a child ('Bereaved Parents Network') and those who have been widowed at a young age ('A Different Journey'). It is seeking accreditation as an Approved Provider of the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation.

For more information please contact:

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W www.careforthefamily.org.uk

- **Anorexia & Bulimia Care** is a national charity founded in 1989. It has developed into one of the country's leading eating disorder support charities, producing resources and offering training and support to those with an eating disorder as well as their families. ABC supports and advises over 18,000 people each month.

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¹ Source: "Eating disorders 'rife in girls'," 4 September 2001, www.news.bbc.co.uk

² Source: "Body image issues 'want to be thinner'," Berger, Schilke and Strauss 2005

³ Source: "Anorexia children/Great Ormond Street" September 2006, www.news.bbc.co.uk