

Lonely this Christmas – our survey finds that people will consider spending the holiday alone because of financial worries

This season is a very special time of year. It's a chance to get together with friends and loved ones, show our affection for them through gifts and enjoy a few little luxuries together (like a warm mince pie and a dollop of brandy butter!) as the year draws to a close.

However, it can be all too easy to get caught up in the whirlwind of shopping sprees, party plans, new outfits and costly food items and decorations. Before we know it, we have paid out hundreds of pounds for things we would not dream of spending our hard-earned cash on ordinarily. A recent survey commissioned by Elizabeth Finn Care found that more than two thirds of us will fork out up to £500 this Christmas on presents alone. And while most of us will have savings and our incomes to fall back on, for many other people the pressure that goes along with trying to have the 'perfect Christmas' can drive them to feel they have to spend more than they can afford, or simply go without.

At Elizabeth Finn Care, we know that Christmas time can often be one of the most difficult times of the year for people living in financial need. Many of the people we help tell us that they feel particularly unhappy or lonely at Christmas, as they can't afford to get together with family and friends or feel embarrassed about not being able to send out Christmas cards



Christmas can be a particularly lonely & difficult time.

or invite neighbours round to their homes.

The effects of the UK's economic downturn have meant that even more people are feeling the strain this year. Almost a third of people we surveyed told us that would be spending less money this Christmas, with families with young children particularly hard hit. Nearly two fifths of parents with three or more children under 18 living in their household say they will have to cut back on the amount of presents they buy their children this Christmas while one third say they will buy their children cheaper presents.

However, perhaps most saddening – and something we hear all too often from the people who contact us for support – 16 per cent of those we surveyed said they would have to forego visiting friends and family this year, as they would not be able to afford the travel costs it would take to spend the season together.

Christmas hampers: a symbol of friendship

For Barbara Lambert, feeling like she had to cope on her own was one of the hardest parts of living on a low income. Things came to a head for Barbara when a heart condition forced her to retire from her job as a Nurse. Barbara had brought up five children – including a son, Joel, who has Down's Syndrome and an adopted child, David, who also has the condition – on her own, after separating from her husband. After losing her income due to her health issues at 57, she struggled to make ends meet for herself and Joel, 30, who she continues to care for.

Elizabeth Finn Care supports Barbara with regular financial assistance. As she tells us, the grant she receives makes all the difference to her situation – particularly at Christmas.

"The money I get from Elizabeth Finn Care means that, during the year, I'm able to manage the day to day expenses of mine and Joel's life. When Christmas arrives, the extra help we get means that we can treat

ourselves to something a bit special and not feel guilty about it. I like to buy myself a little luxury – like some nice smellies. It's amazing to think that, because Elizabeth Finn started the charity back in the nineteenth century, people like me, who worked hard for as long as we could, can afford a little something special at Christmas more than 100 years later."

Like all the people Elizabeth Finn Care helps with regular assistance, Barbara receives a Christmas hamper from us, filled with festive treats. "Christmas kicks off for us as soon as the hamper arrives," says Barbara. "We make sure that the goodies go a long way, and that we're able to use them to pad out our meals during January too. For us, it's not just about the contents of the hamper – it's about what it represents. It shows us that there are people out there who care enough to make sure we enjoy our Christmas too."

- Lonely times
- Friendship
- 100ft drop
- 1,000 miles
- 1 Kilo of silver

How can you help?

This Christmas, your support is more important than ever. Elizabeth Finn Care receives more applications from people in financial need than we can currently afford to support.

By giving a gift to Elizabeth Finn Care today, you can make sure that a person struggling with the effects of financial hardship receives the help they need this Christmas.



Mr Lomax with his daughter Emily.

For people like the Lomax family, whose daughter Emily suffers from Cerebral Palsy, your help means they don't have to make difficult choices such as keeping the heating on at the expense of buying household essentials.

For all the people we help regularly, your donation could go towards buying the contents of their Christmas hamper – a sign of goodwill which means so much to people like Barbara and her son Joel.



There is so much we want to achieve in 2011. Please help us keep on being there for people in financial need by making a donation to Elizabeth Finn Care.

Spotlight on our supporters

The people we help come from all walks of life – but they're joined together by the contributions each of them made to society before they were hit by unexpected financial difficulties. Just like them, the people who support us in our work by giving donations, taking part in sponsored challenges and putting on

events in our aid are a diverse, committed and (as you'll find out) brave bunch, willing to go the extra mile to help those feeling the effects of financial need. This Christmas, the continued help of our supporters old and new will make sure we can be there for more people who need us.

100ft drop raises £10,000

Our help is a lifeline to many people who are struggling to cope in difficult situations. More than 70 people took up our call to keep our links to people in financial need strong by abseiling from the Kensington Roof Gardens in London this autumn in aid of the charity.



100ft drop on to High Street Kensington.

People from all across London, as well as celebrities Gail Porter (who presented TV programmes such as *The Big Breakfast* and *Top of the Pops*), and Sam Branson (son of Virgin mogul Richard) took part in the challenge and descended the 100ft drop on to High Street Kensington.

The event was a huge success, in no small part due to the pluck and enthusiasm of the people who got 'roped in' to the action and made the descent. As one participant said, "the abseil challenge was really scary, but it was all in the name of raising money to support people in need." The Mayor of Kensington and Chelsea, who opened the day's activities with a short speech, praised the mettle of the 70 'jumpers' and the important work done by Elizabeth Finn Care to support people of all ages who are feeling the effects of financial need. To date, the efforts of our abseilers have resulted in more than £10,000 being raised for the charity. To find out more or read about how to sign up for next year's event, visit our website:

<http://www.elizabethfinncare.org.uk/Abseil>

1,000 miles for Turn2us

Elizabeth Finn Care Trustee John Stephen took his duty for steering the direction of the charity quite literally this September when he completed a 1,000 mile bike ride from Land's End to John O' Groats to raise money for Turn2us.

Turn2us was set up by Elizabeth Finn Care in 2007 to help people in financial need access the money available to them – from welfare benefits, grants and other financial help – through its comprehensive website (www.turn2us.org.uk). It is now fully part of Elizabeth Finn Care, allowing us to help millions more people who are struggling on low incomes in the UK.

Commenting on his cross-country expedition before he set off, John said: "I am looking forward to starting the journey from Land's End to John O' Groats. I've never done anything on this scale before and we'll see how the body will hold up to 60 miles per day over the course of three weeks."



John completed his journey on 25 September, saddle-sore but triumphant! He exceeded his target of £10,000 by raising over £11,000 which will be used to help people in financial need gain access to the money available to them. This significant achievement means we will be able to continue developing the services we offer, finding new ways to support the 13.5 million people who are living in poverty this Christmas.



A kind gift to help more people to improve their lives.

1 kilo of silver donated to Elizabeth Finn Care

A person who used to get financial help from Elizabeth Finn Care decided she wanted to repay the kindness she received by donating a silver coin weighing more than 1 kilogram to the charity, in the hope that it will allow us to help more people in the future.

The coin, which is about an inch in thickness, is worth approximately £400. This kind gift will contribute to the charity's efforts to alleviate the effects of financial need in 2011, so that more people have the money they need to improve their lives.

**Merry Christmas
& best wishes
for 2011
from all
at**

**Elizabeth
Finn Care**

CONTACT US:

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