

We can help if you're feeling alone.

Home-Start, a charity supporting families in need, offers help on how parents can cope with feelings of isolation.

Families come to Home-Start for so many reasons- post-natal depression, poverty, multiple births, illness and disability- but in the 40 years since the organisation began, isolation has remained one of the most common reasons for a parent looking for help.

More than 60 percent of families say they need support with isolation. It's something that can be attributed to many factors, like moving away from family support networks, having a partner who works away, or living in a rural community with little or no access to services.

Society and parenting has changed dramatically since Home-Start was set up in 1973, but the fact that parents still struggle with isolation shows that services like it will always be vital to provide a link for families in their local communities.

One mum supported by Home-Start said: "My own parents live hundreds of miles, I was recently widowed, and my little boy had a very unhappy mum. Feeling so lonely took the joy out of parenting and the years that I thought that I always thought should be my happiest were my worst. I knew my isolation was rubbing off on my son, I felt so guilty- just another feeling to add to the fact that I thought I was a bad parent.

I found out about Home-Start through my health visitor. At first the thought of having a stranger in my house terrified me, but as the months went on, I cherished those precious few hours when my volunteer came. Just to know that for one afternoon a week I would get the company of another adult was priceless. We started to go out to the library, the shops, and the park. Other mums started talking to me and gradually I began to come out of my shell and my little boy made friends.

That was two years ago, and although I no longer have my Home-Start volunteer, I will never forget the difference she made to my own life and my son's."

To support an isolated parent by becoming a Home-Start volunteer, visit www.home-start.org.uk or call 0800 068 63 68