



Press release

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## New research shows 15% of disabled children feel lonely EVERY DAY

*Inclusive dance charity [Flamingo Chicks](#) launches campaign to inject their signature sparkle and happiness, with a range of celebrity designed tutus!*

The extent of loneliness amongst Britain's 1.8 million disabled children\* has been laid bare in a new survey.

The poll, to mark the Flamingo Chicks charity's 10th anniversary, indicates that **45%** of disabled children feel lonely regularly and of those children, 15% feel lonely **every single day**.

That means 270,000 disabled young people in the UK feel alone 365 days a year.

Since the charity began work in 2013, an incredible 35,323 children have danced with Flamingo Chicks – 11,589 of those in 2023 alone. As part of its campaign work for a fair future for disabled children and their families Flamingo Chicks has done everything from performing at Downing Street to delivering a speech at the United Nations in New York.

The charity's vision is for a world in which disabled people have the same range of opportunities and a culture of integrated social and well-being activity and where everyone works together as equals.

To highlight awareness of such severe loneliness – and to raise vital funds enabling Flamingo Chicks to create new, inclusive opportunities for disabled children – the charity has called on famous faces to design a tutu, including **Lorraine Kelly, Angela Rippon, Briony May Williams** and **Gladiator Fury**, to help bring sparkle, magic and friendship into children's lives through dance. Each of the tutus are available to own by simply making a donation on the Crowdfunding campaign where they are listed as rewards:

<https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/may-100-2024>

'It Takes Two to Tutu', sees the celebrity designed tutus crafted into real tutus, one in grown-up size and the other child sized, with celebrity supporters including Lorraine Kelly,

Evie Pickerill and Andy Day from Cbeebies, Gladiator Fury (aka Jodie Ounsley), Angela Rippon, Amy Dowden, Briony May Williams, Michael Gunning, Lost Voice Guy, Carrie & David Grant, Jayne Middlemiss, Gail Porter, Olive Grey and Marcus Ramtohul, some of whom have shared the following quotes:

*"This project is unique and charming!"* – **Angela Rippon**

*"I'm so passionate about creating opportunities for disabled children to get active and feel empowered. Designing this tutu was so much fun, inspired by my Gladiator colours, my signature blue braids, my cochlear implant and motivational words that have fuelled my journey. I've embraced my disability as a source of strength, and I hope this tutu serves as a reminder that anything is possible."* – **Jodie Ounsley (Gladiator Fury)**

*"Swimming changed my life and my tutu represents that the water is for everyone and great fun!"* – **Michael Gunning**

The tutus are the most beautiful creations, bursting with colour and contrast! Briony's tutu for example features an array of cooking utensils offset with neon animal print. Amy Dowden's tutu is made of shimmery pink sequins and features Welsh Dragons, daffodils and is edged with Breast Cancer ribbons. Fury's tutu features her signature blue braids, cochlear implants and is emblazoned with bright Gladiator hues of red and blue.

The tutus were made by army of Flamingo Chicks' volunteers who came forward to turn the celebrities' ideas into crafted creations.

Flamingo Chicks founder and CEO Katie Sparkes MBE comments: *"Loneliness should have no place in the lives of our disabled children. At Flamingo Chicks, we are dedicated to transforming these numbers."*

*Inclusive opportunities are the cornerstone of true social change. Every child, regardless of ability, deserves the chance to thrive and build connections in a world that celebrates diversity. By fostering inclusivity, we lay the foundation for a society where everyone has the chance to soar. At Flamingo Chicks, we are committed to breaking down barriers and ensuring that disabled children have every opportunity to spread their wings".*

Katie adds: *"Infusing glamour with grace, our celebrity-designed tutus spin a tale of style and philanthropy, twirling towards a brighter future for all. We're hugely grateful to all our celebrities for taking part and helping us highlight this important issue".*

This sense of isolation has a deep impact on disabled children, with a third admitting they 'only sometimes' feel happy. Sadly, just a quarter are happy every day. Only 9% of all disabled children rarely feel lonely.

The study also highlights that 90% of disabled children believe there aren't enough ways for them to make friends within their community. Almost half of respondents rarely or never get to play with non-disabled children... Close to 80% wish they could do so more often – inclusion is key to changing the fortunes of disabled children in the UK.

Terry Mullins, whose son Jack has Down's Syndrome, shares: *"The opportunities for disabled children and young people to mix with their peers has always been so limited. Sadly this often results in young adults and older adults having a restricted life. Anything that offers an inclusive opportunity is to be applauded"*.

The charity is also working to expand its provision of dance classes. Last year 11,589 disabled children and friends went through Flamingo Chicks' classes across the UK. Alongside classes is the charity's 'Agents Of Change' programme, a club for young people wanting to break down barriers to inclusion. Free to join – members have a variety of existing opportunities to hone their skills in advocacy and public speaking whilst forging friendships and boosting confidence. They also meet a host of VIP guests and undertake unique experiences to help achieve their mission.

**ENDS**

**For further information on the campaign, please contact  
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Notes for editors

- Poll was of 150 disabled children and was carried out during February 2024. Full statistics available upon request

[\*UK wide, 11% of children are disabled. Figure from Disabled Children's Partnership February 2024.]

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