

## How Can I Help Other Grandparents & Grandchildren

Let your MSP or MP know about your situation. They can't push for change if they aren't able to prove to Parliament the scale of the problem facing UK families. If you need assistance with how best to do this please ask us.

Join our group. The more members we have the louder our voice.

Come to our regular meetings; your experiences can help others.

Set up a meeting place in your area.

Suggest to us any ideas you have that would help raise awareness.

Give your time to help us give out leaflets at events to provide the information you have benefited from.

Please give us your feedback to tell us if our advice has been of help to your family so we can continue to help others.

### Help us to help you & others

Detach

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Post code.....

Phone.....

email.....

### Membership - £5 annually - additional donations always welcome

By cheque to **Grandparents Apart UK**, 22 Alness Cres., Glasgow G52 1PJ  
or pay on-line with any credit card or through Paypal on our website

## Grandparents Apart UK



0141 882 5658 / 01560 322937 / 01563 821869

Non-political - Non profit making - Staffed by volunteers - Totally confidential

### Bringing families together - In the best interests of the child

We are all grandparents who have been denied contact with our grandchildren. We have all suffered the same devastation and sorrow that this causes. We also understand how this affects the children.

**PLEASE DON'T ASSUME IT WILL NEVER HAPPEN TO YOU - IT HAPPENED TO US -**

This situation happens for all sorts of reasons, death of one parent, separation of the parents, family fall outs, drugs related conflicts, involvement with authorities, the list goes on and on.

We hold group meetings and it feels good to talk with other grandparents who have experienced the same problems.

Many grandparents have succeeded in maintaining or regaining contact because of common sense ideas used by others. Don't worry about being different or embarrassed, we're all the same, we have all missed our grandchildren and them us, even the children who don't know we exist. Come along to our meetings and have a chat, join our group if you can. The more members we have, the sooner authorities will have to admit the scale of the problem. Help us to help you and your grandchildren.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Do I have a legal right of contact with my grandchild** - Not a particular right of contact as a grandparent, but you can go to court to seek contact just like anyone else who has an interest in the child.

**What is my first step** - you've done it; contact Grandparents Apart UK or any other family support group for guidance. Do remember that you may need to change your attitude to help resolve the situation. Remember it is for your grandchildren.

**How can I help the situation** - Record everything. Do not get involved in any arguments or fights as this could result in a court order being issued preventing contact. Perhaps another family member could help diffuse the situation.

### **What qualifies Grandparents Apart UK to give information**

- We have been through what you are going through right now. We are not lawyers and do not give legal advice, but by sharing our experiences and what has worked in different circumstances and situations we can help each other.

**What areas do Grandparents Apart cover** - UK and we have been contacted from overseas

**What have Grandparents Apart achieved** - Over the years we have raised the profile of grandparents dramatically by our involvement with the Scottish Government. We helped create the Charter for Grandchildren - see page 7 We also help create The Parenting Agreement to assist separating parents focus on the children.

**How can I get support** - see various contact numbers on page 6

**How do I apply for contact through the courts** - see Law section on page 4

**Is there an alternative to court** - see Mediation section on page 5

## **Charter for Grandchildren**

On our website or available by contacting Grandparents Apart UK.

### *Excerpt*

Families are important to children - grandchildren can expect:

- To be involved with, and helped to understand, decisions made about their lives
- To be treated fairly
- To know and maintain contact with their family (except in very exceptional circumstances) and other people who are important to them
- To know that their grandparents still love them, even if they are not able to see them at the present time
- To know their family history
- The ADULTS in their lives to put their needs first and to protect them from disputes between adults - not to use them as weapons in quarrels
- SOCIAL WORKERS, when making assessments about their lives, to take into account the loving and supporting role grandparents can play in their lives
- The COURTS, when making decisions about their lives, to take into account the loving and supporting role grandparents can play in their lives
- LAWYERS AND OTHER ADVISERS, to encourage relationship counselling or mediation when adults seek advice on matters affecting them and their children.

## Useful Contacts

National Family Mediation - 0300 4000 636  
Scottish Mediation Network - 0131 556 1221

Parentline - 08000 28 22 33

Families Need Fathers - 03000 03000 363

Women's Aid National Helpline - 0808 2000 247  
Scottish Women's Aid - 0131 226 6606

Mankind Helpline - 01823 334244

Victim Support Male Helpline - 0808 801 0327

Children 1<sup>st</sup> - 0131 446 2300

Social Services Council (complaints) - 0845 603 0891

Local Councillor, MP, MP, MSP etc - check your local council's website, or local papers. Also, Write To Them is a direct contact site if you enter your postcode

Grandparents Association - 0845 434 9598

Grandparents Plus - 0300 123 7015

Grandparents Action Group - 01952 582621

Family Rights Group - 0808 801 0366

Family Law Association - check website for Family Law Solicitor in your area

Family Law Solicitors -  
Caroline Paton, McKinstry Group - 01292 281711  
Barbara Black, Taylor & Henderson - 01294 278306  
Elizabeth Welsh Solicitors - 01292 284786

## FAQ contd.

**What should I expect from Social Services** - Be aware that Social services sometimes take control rather than help and support (we are trying to change this attitude). Go along with everything they ask of you and be amiable. If you challenge their decisions you will be labelled un-cooperative and possibly excluded

**Social Services are shutting me out, what should I do** - Ask for an explanation of their decision. Contact the Social Work supervisor and Head of Social Work services. It may also be necessary to contact a Family Law Solicitor. Your MSP may also be able to help.

**How can I be a good grandparent** - Grandparenting is a bit like parenting, but times have moved on and grandparents must accept changes in mothering techniques and attitudes. Support and advice when offered can be helpful, but overbearing insistence can be scary and daunting for parents. The child is the responsibility of the parents and although sometimes difficult to watch, the parents must be allowed to make their own mistakes and find what works best for them. Being a grandparent means being there to help when asked, but knowing when to take a back seat; knowing the difference between supporting and interfering. Most grandparents love to see their grandchildren, but are just as happy when they go back home and this is how it should be.

**How can I help my situation** - Whatever the problem we advise keeping communication open as much as possible. If pride gets in the way, just think - my grandchild needs me.

If you feel that you need help there are groups that offer a mediation service for grandparents. It may be wise to try this before all communication is lost. A mediator is impartial and will help both sides to reach an agreement if both parties are willing to compromise in the best interests of the child.

## **Law**

Because grandparents don't have a particular legal right of contact with their grandchild the legal process can be expensive and uncertain. We always advise trying to resolve the situation by non-legal routes (see mediation). However, if you see no alternative do seek advice from a FAMILY LAW SOLICITOR. The solicitor should tell you if your case has the appropriate criteria for success i.e. that contact would be in the child's best interest. Legal Aid is available for such cases and your solicitor will tell you if you are eligible. Be aware that the legal process works at a very slow pace and quick solutions just do not happen. Do be prepared to chase the solicitor up to keep things moving.

Keep a diary of any appointments or phone calls and anything discussed or promised. Also keep note of any time spent with the child. It would also be useful to keep note of any promises, threats, intimidation or accusations etc. from the parents.

## **Social Services**

If you have concerns about any child's safety or wellbeing please contact your local Social Services or Children 1<sup>st</sup> to discuss your worries. Be aware that this may result in the parent denying you contact with the child so you must decide if maintaining contact and monitoring the situation might be an option. However if you have concerns the child's safety is being compromised you must seek help. Remember to mention the Charter for Grandchildren and go along with whatever Social Services ask of you if at all possible, otherwise you may well be excluded from matters relating to the child. Keep a diary of any social work visits or phone calls and anything discussed or promised. Also keep note of any time spent with the child. It would also be useful to keep note of any promises, threats, intimidation or accusations etc. from the parents.

## **Mediation**

Finding your own solution can be better for everyone and reduce conflict meaning less stress for everyone. Family mediation services can help by listening, discussing and supporting families to resolve their differences. To succeed this needs everyone to be willing to work together and compromise will be necessary. This is possible if everyone focuses on the child and how any conflict is affecting the child. Too many adults are so involved in their own anger or stubbornness that the child and his or her interests and feelings are forgotten or go unnoticed. Boundaries and plans can be written down to remind everyone to stick to the agreement reached. Sometimes a cost is involved but if you are eligible for Legal Aid this can also contribute to the cost of Mediation.

It is important that parents, grandparents and other family members speak to and treat each other with courtesy. You may not get on, but you can still be civil for the sake of the children. Just because the adults have fallen out doesn't mean the child has stopped loving each adult. Avoid criticising or arguing with each other in front of the children. It can have lasting bad effects on them.

## **Kinship Care**

Kinship care is when a family member cares for a child when their parents are unable to do so.

We have always promoted kinship care as the best options for children where no safety considerations exist. As down to earth family members we see that maintaining existing family relationships increases security and stability for children.

Financial help is available and how this is applied for and awarded is currently under review. Social Services need to be involved at present and this can deter some Kinship Carers from applying for that much needed help.