

The important role of grandparents within the family.

- Who are grandparents?
 - 13.5 million
 - 33% are aged under 60 – a majority of these are still working.
 - 38% have grandchildren in non-intact families.
 - 21% are step-grandparents

The role of grandparents

- Friend and family support
- Child carer
- Second time parent
- Provides children with a real sense of family continuity and identity.

Family Support

- Grandparents give practical, financial and emotional support.
- 64% give their grandchildren money.
- Who does the grandparent support during divorce and separation? How does the child feel?
- Grandparents as mediators during divorce.

Child Care and Regular Contact

- Up to 82% of grandparents regularly care for their grandchildren.
- 52% have their grandchildren to stay overnight.
- 60% of grandparents in the UK see their grandchildren weekly.
- 64% live within half an hour of the grandchildren.
- In 2000, 13% of grandparents e-mailed their grandchildren weekly or bi-weekly.
- 60% contact their grandchildren by letter or telephone.

Regular Contact (ctd.)

- 59% of grandparents believe that the amount of contact that they have is sufficient.
- 40% want more contact
- 0.5% want less contact.

• University of Oxfordshire research.

Loss of Contact

- Grandparents' Association estimates that 1 million children are denied contact with their grandparents.
- Majority of paternal grandparents lose contact following divorce and separation.
- Family feuds.
- Adoption.
- Courts v mediation.
- Applying for leave.

Impact on Grandparents Following Loss of Contact

- Sense of bereavement.
- Lowered quality of life.
- Poorer emotional and physical health.
- Those who had experienced family feud were most severely affected.
- These grandparents were followed by those affected by divorce.
- Least affected were those grandparents separated from grandchildren by a geographic distance in excess of 100 miles.

Grandparents' Association.

Reg.charity 802850

Parenting Second Time Around

- Why do grandparents become full time carers again?
 - Death of their own child.
 - Abuse of their grandchild.
 - Health reasons.
 - Drink and/or drug dependency.
 - Prison.

Residence

- Kinship carers or family and friends carers?
- 20% of the 56,000 'looked after' children live with extended family members rather than in stranger foster carers.
- About 1% of grandparents (130,000) are estimated to be family and friends carers.
- Better outcomes for the children.
- Application for leave.

Who Decides?

- Article 8 of the *European Convention on Human Rights* 1998 requires public authorities to observe respect for private and family life.
- Do Social Services always respect this?
- Family Group Conferences.
- Who would you choose?

Kinship Care – Who Pays?

- ‘Post code lottery.’
- Kinship care or family and friends care is often a determination.
- Residence Order or Care Order?
- The Mumby Judgement.

And Finally What Grandparents say

- *‘That was the only thing I wanted in this life....a grandchild’.*
- *‘It makes life worth living.....it’s something to look forward to’.*
- *‘I feel as if, compared to work, I’ve achieved something’.*
- *‘Grandchildren keep you young...when they come along you have to go a lot faster’.*
- *‘When it’s your grandchild it’s different – there’s not the worry behind it’.*

What the Children Say

- From a child living with her grandparents: *‘Oh I’m not in care, I live with my Nan’.*
- From a child whose family were arguing over contact: *‘I just wish the judge could bang their heads together’.*
- From soon-to-be 13 year old Robert: *‘Yeah Nan and Granddad can come out to my birthday dinner with me and my mates ‘cos they’re cool!’*