

New Advice and Information Service launches

At a time when many local advice services are being cut back, we have launched a new advice and information service aimed at grandparents who are raising their grandchildren and other family carers who have stepped into care in the absence of parents. There are thought to be over 200,000 family and friends carers raising 300,000 children often because of parental alcohol or drugs misuse, abuse or bereavement, domestic violence, imprisonment, disability, mental ill health or a combination of factors. Our advice and information service provides:

- **Comprehensive benefits advice**
- **Information and signposting on legal orders, education, caring for a disabled child or adult, housing, employment rights, debt, pensions, parenting and more**

We also run a free peer-to-peer support network for grandparents and other family carers who are bringing up a relative's or friend's child.

If you know anyone in this situation or you want to find out more contact our advice line on 0300 123 7015 10am-3pm Mon- Fri, or email advice@grandparentsplus.org.uk. Further information is available at www.grandparentsplus.org.uk/advice.

We are particularly interested in hearing from other organisations, MPs or professionals who are in touch with families in this situation.

Family Justice Review – spotlight on grandparents

Press coverage around the Family Justice Review interim report focussed heavily on the recommendation affecting grandparents. The Review's proposals include a recommendation for parenting agreements in which parents would set out the importance of grandparent and other relationships for the child when parents separate. This is something we have been calling for and very much welcome. Research shows that grandparents play a vital role in cushioning the impact on children of parental separation and divorce. Our report **My second mum and dad** which we produced in partnership with Ann Buchanan and Julia Griggs of Oxford University, whose research was funded by the ESRC, found that teenagers regarded it as their right to remain in contact with their grandparents. Yet many grandparents, usually dad's mum and dad, lose contact with their grandchildren altogether. We want to see this important relationship recognised, valued and supported by the family justice system and by separating parents.

But we are disappointed that the Review didn't go further and remove the requirement for grandparents to seek leave of the court when applying for a contact order – this seems to us to be a basic step that all political parties had (prior to the election at least) accepted. Nor did they seize the opportunity to make recommendations that would improve the way family courts work for family and friends carers, barely registering the issue. The consultation closes on **23rd June** and we will be responding to the proposals. You can read more about the work of the Review **here**.

Gransnet has arrived!

In a reversal of generational roles, **Mumsnet** has given birth to **Gransnet**. The new social networking site for grandparents will be driven by their users in the same way as Mumsnet. It is too early to say whether Gransnet will achieve the same reach and impact as Mumsnet but with 14 million grandparents and a rapidly ageing population, it stands every chance of doing so. We wish it well and look forward to working with them in the future.

And they've got competition from the people who were there first – **Grannynet** has also re-launched their website offering advice, a discussion forum and more. Clearly grandparenting is fast becoming the family role that everyone is interested in!

New Business Development Manager Role

Do you want to make the move from the private sector to the voluntary sector? Are you someone with a strong commercial background who could spare some time to work voluntarily for a small and growing charity to get a new scheme off the ground?

We are developing an ambitious commercial rewards club for grandparents, focusing on supporting the grandparent/grandchild relationship and we need to secure the commercial expertise to help us get the scheme off the ground. You would be shaping the business plan, making the contacts with retailers and service providers and securing the contracts. An exciting opportunity that is devoted to Grandparents Plus' income-generation activity, this role is ideal for a secondee from the private sector or for someone who has worked in a business development capacity for a larger voluntary organisation.

We are looking for someone who can commit to this voluntary role full-time or part-time for a period of 6-12 months. If you have a strong commercial background and a good range of contacts, who has the energy to drive a new project forward then we want to hear from you.

In return we offer the opportunity to work as part of a vibrant and growing, high profile charity at a critical time. Your work could make the difference to the charity moving on to its next stage of development. You would be working closely with the CEO and would gain valuable insights into applying commercial expertise in the third sector. If the role is successful there may be an opportunity for it to become a paid post at a later date.

Apply by sending your CV and a covering letter to info@grandparentsplus.org.uk. **Closing date is Friday 27th May.**

You can download an information pack from our website at www.grandparentsplus.org.uk/vacancies. If you want to discuss the role you can ring Sam Smethers or Oonagh Murphy-Jack on 020 8981 8001.

Coming up...

Monday 13 June – we are off to Newcastle to hold a Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Network event for grandparents and family carers plus professionals working in family and friends care. We're working with a number of other local and national organisations. To find out more contact alison.blaxland@grandparentsplus.org.uk

Wed 29 June – at a central London conference we will be launching a new campaign, funded by Comic Relief, focussing on the challenge of parenting again when you are over 65. To reserve your place for *Too old to care?* And to find out more contact our Campaigns Officer, peter.hulme@grandparentsplus.org.uk. More details and a programme will be available shortly.

As always, if you want to find out more about our work, please do get in touch.