

## March 2011 NEWS from Grandparents Plus

### **New pensions proposals welcomed**

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Rt. Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP used a [speech to Age UK](#) this month to announce radical changes to the state pension system. The reforms would mean flat rate pension, estimated at £140 per week regardless of the number of contribution years they have in their record. The intention is to simplify the system, removing older people out of means testing and making it easier for them to plan and save for their retirement. These reforms would be particularly good news for women who tend to have incomplete National Insurance records and are more likely to have to rely on means-tested pension credit. Pensions Minister Steve Webb has long been a champion of the reforms which now look much closer to becoming a reality.

Commenting after the Secretary of State's speech, Sam Smethers, Chief Executive of Grandparents Plus said:

*'These proposals will transform our pensions system for the better and should be widely welcomed. It will particularly help women who have spent time during their working lives caring for their children, grandchildren or other family members. At the moment they are likely to retire with an incomplete pension record and find themselves in poverty.'*

### **Welfare reform bill debated**

The welfare reform bill had its 2nd reading in the Commons on 9th March. DWP Select Committee Chair, Anne Begg MP raised concerns about the uncertainty in the proposals for family and friends carers who are raising children who can no longer live with their parents. Grandparents Plus, Family Rights Group, the Grandparents' Association and others are lobbying as the Kinship Care Alliance (KCA) for changes to the bill. We are particularly concerned about the impact of moving more family and friends carers onto Job Seekers' Allowance, and housing benefit changes which will adversely affect them. You can download KCA's 2nd reading briefing [here](#)

### **New research and event on sibling carers - Raising Brothers and Sisters**

To date sibling carers have received little national attention. Family Rights Group are publishing the first piece of research in the UK about sibling carers. Based upon interviews with these carers, an internet survey of their situation as well as a review of international research, it will present new insights into the experience of being a sibling carer: how these arrangements came about, how life has changed for sibling carers who are acting as parents to their own brothers and sisters, the obstacles they encountered, and the support which would have helped.

The conference, to be held on **Thursday 17th March** will also see the launch of new advice materials by Family Rights Group specifically for sibling carers. It will also be an opportunity for sibling carers to discuss with practitioners and decision makers, what help and support at local and national level would make a difference.

If you are interested in attending this event, please contact Family Rights Group on 020 7923 2628 or via the website [www.frg.org.uk](http://www.frg.org.uk)

### **Kids in Museums - Flexible Family Ticket Campaign**

Grandparents Plus is backing Kids in Museums' Family Ticket Campaign because we want to see service providers reflect the diversity of family life in the way they promote themselves to families and the offers they make. We are teaming up with Kids in Museums and the Family and Parenting Institute in a workshop at the Museum of London in Docklands on Monday 21st March where the focus will be on how museums, galleries and other service providers can become truly family friendly. To book a place or to find out more click [here](#).

### **Awards for All Ages**

Intergenerational Social Enterprise, United for All Ages has launched the first annual Awards for All Ages to celebrate and promote projects and people leading the way on all ages work. There are five categories and the entry form and judging criteria are on their [website](#). The closing date for entries is 31st May 2011.

### **NEW VACANCY - Interim Chief Executive (Maternity Cover, part-time, 9-12 months)**

Would you relish the opportunity to lead a small, dynamic, successful team through a period of rapid growth and change? Grandparents Plus is seeking an Interim Chief Executive who can bring senior management skills and experience to build on the achievements of the charity so far.

You may be looking for your first job at this level, or you may be an experienced Chief Executive who wants to scale back into a fulfilling part-time role.

If you have a background in the child welfare, family policy or age and equality sectors, sound financial management expertise, experience of leading teams and managing a range of stakeholder relationships together with a strong track record in fundraising then we want to hear from you.

In return we offer flexible working, a generous leave package and an exciting, challenging and supportive working environment.

You can download an information pack, application form and equal opportunities monitoring form [here](#). For an informal conversation about this post please contact the Chief Executive, Sam Smethers on 020 8981 8001.

Closing date is Friday 25th March. Interviews will be held on Tuesday 12th April.

### **Coming up...**

**May 2011** - As part of our Spotlight Seminar Series looking at the reasons why grandparents and other family members step in to provide care, we will be linking up with Action for Prisoners' Families and focussing on parental imprisonment. Date is still tbc but if you would like to attend this event or to find out more about this series please email [ben.wheatley@grandparentsplus.org.uk](mailto:ben.wheatley@grandparentsplus.org.uk).