

November 2010 NEWS from Grandparents Plus

Universal credit and welfare reform

The Government's white paper, *Universal Credit: welfare that works*, sets out a radical simplification of the benefits and tax credit system. While many have welcomed the simplification, it is unclear how the 200,000 family and friends carers who are raising children who can no longer live with their parents will fare in the new system.

Benefit changes already announced, such as the 10% cut in housing benefit after one year out of work, will have a negative impact on these families, and could result in more children entering the care system as they experience reduced benefit entitlements and any discretionary local authority support they may get also disappears.

This will put additional pressure on families already fragile and finding it difficult to cope. Under the Universal Credit it is likely that these carers will be treated like any other parent, so all the conditionality rules and penalties will apply. Over half either give up work or reduce their paid hours when they take on the caring role and may be actively encouraged to do so by social workers or see their grandchild go in to care. We know that it is particularly difficult for this group to get back into work. Many of the grandparent carers we are in touch with are worried about what it will mean for them and their families, so we have published a survey and launched a new campaign to highlight this group. You can download a copy [here](#)

Campaign gathers support

'What if we said no?' - a campaign we launched just a few weeks ago has already gathered the support of over 20 voluntary organisations, plus a number of leading academics in the fields of family policy and ageing. 50 MPs have signed an Early Day Motion calling on the Government to protect grandparents and other family and friends carers who are raising children who can no longer live with their parents, from the impact of welfare reform and spending cuts.

You can find out more, email your MP in support or find out which MPs have signed the EDM [here](#)

If you want to sign your organisation up in support email us at info@grandparentsplus.org.uk

Vacancies

We are recruiting an Advice and Information Worker to help us set up a new advice service for grandparents and other family and friends carers. The post is full-time but we will also actively consider job-share and part-time applications. If you have a detailed knowledge of the benefits system, experience of giving advice or running an advice service, a sensitive telephone manner and good communication skills then we want to hear from you. Closing date is Friday 26th November. For more details contact us at info@grandparentsplus.org.uk.

Family Action are recruiting a part-time development worker for their young carers project. To find out more contact Elaine Sheppard on 020 7272 6933. Interviews in November.

New Project

Funded by Comic Relief, we will be taking a look at what it's like to parent again after the age of 65. Most family and friends carers are under 65 but a minority are older. We know there are particular, additional challenges they face as they can find it hard to both cope with their own health needs but also provide the care and support needed by the children in their care.

We'll be carrying out some interviews with older carers and producing a short film that we will use to launch a new campaign in 2011 targeting local service providers. To find out more about this project contact our Policy and Research Manager, Sarah Wellard sarah.wellard@grandparentsplus.org.uk

Kids in Museums Family Friendly Museums Awards, 2010

We are a supporter of the Kids in Museums family ticket campaign because we want to see families in all shapes and sizes able to qualify for family tickets. Kids in Museums are publishing a new report next week but you can also nominate your favourite family-friendly museum by emailing award@kidsinmuseums.org.uk. Closing date is Friday 3rd December.

Coming up in 2011

Spotlight seminar series - working with some of the leading organisations and experts in their field will be taking an in-depth look at the reasons why grandparents and family members have to step in to take on the parenting role.

Our own survey published in October showed that drug and alcohol misuse is the main cause, so we will begin with that issue, but we will also be exploring parental imprisonment, bereavement, abuse or neglect, domestic violence amongst others.