

NEWS from
Grandparents Plus
Thursday 24th February 2009



We champion the wider
family who care for children

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Blunkett backs call to end grandparent
pensions penalty**

Former Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, David Blunkett MP has thrown his weight behind the campaign to end the pensions penalty for working age grandparents who care for grandchildren.

David Blunkett MP said:

"This is the missing part of the jigsaw in the radical re-shaping of pensions and the greater equality of provision which the Government started back in 2005 and which always intended to recognise carers of whatever age, including the tremendous personal commitment of grandparents. It is vital that this addition should be accepted to bring about fair treatment for all."

His support comes as Glasgow North West MP John Robertson introduces an amendment to the Welfare Reform Bill which would give working age grandparents who care for grandchildren for 20 hours per week or more a weekly credit towards their basic state pension.

New regulations due to be laid before parliament in March will introduce the weekly credit for parents, foster carers and carers of disabled adults, but grandparents will be left out. Campaigners say this is unfair and they are urging ministers to think again.

State pension reform was debated during the passage of the 2007 Pensions Act. At the time the Government won praise for its steps to improve pension coverage for women but ministers stopped short of including grandparents, promising to give the issue more thought. Now, campaigners say, as the regulations are being drafted it is the last chance for ministers to make sure grandparents are included.

An early day motion tabled by Anne Begg MP has already won cross party support from over 80 MPs including Liberal Democrat frontbench spokesperson Steve Webb MP and Conservative MP for Worthing, Peter Bottomley.

John Robertson MP said

“Across the country grandparents are relied on to provide much needed care for children and we need to make sure that this is recognised alongside other carers. The Welfare Reform Bill and the introduction of the regulations on this over the coming weeks provide two opportunities to make progress and I hope we can secure the necessary change.”

Sam Smethers, Chief Executive of Grandparents Plus said:

“Support for this campaign is clearly growing. Despite the significant childcare contribution that so many grandparents make they face the added penalty that they may be harming their own pension entitlement by providing that childcare. That cannot be fair and we want the Government to look at this again.”

For further information contact:

Sam Smethers at Grandparents Plus on 020 89818001 or 07961 381630. sam.smethers@grandparentsplus.org.uk

Notes to editors:

1. Grandparent NI Credit amendment

John Robertson MP will be moving this amendment in the Welfare Reform Bill committee on 3rd March 2009.

To move the following Clause:-

'(1) The Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 (c. 4) is amended as follows.

(2) In section 23A(3)(c)(Contributions credits for relevant parents and carers), after first 'in' insert 'unpaid care for 20 hours in that week or more of a grandchild under the age of 12 or of an ill, frail or disabled family member, friend or partner, or (d) otherwise in'.'

2. Grandparents NI Credit EDM 397 79 signatures

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Anne Begg MP | 2. Dr Ian Gibson MP |
| 3. Frank Field MP | 4. Peter Bottomley MP |
| 5. Steve Webb MP | 6. Kelvin Hopkins MP |

That this House recognises the vital contribution of grandparents who provide childcare to two thirds of working families; further recognises that grandparents are fundamental to the success of the Government's welfare reform strategy as lone parents are particularly reliant upon grandparental childcare; acknowledges that over 9 out of 10 grandparents who provide childcare do so for no payment or financial reward; notes that this may be at some cost to themselves, particularly where grandparents who could be in work are unable to be and so do not make national insurance contributions towards their own state pension; welcomes the fact that from 2010 parents and carers who provide care for at least 20 hours per week will receive a weekly credit towards their state pension entitlements; notes that it is overwhelmingly women who are the carers and grandparents in these situations; and urges Government to include the care that grandparents provide in the definition of caring set out by regulation in accordance with Section 3 (3)c of the Pensions Act 2007.

3. Establishing the number of grandparents affected is difficult because this information is not collected. There are 14 million grandparents. More than one third of grandparents spend the equivalent of more than 3 days per week caring for their grandchildren. At least 3 in 10 (28.9%) grandparents are in paid work. Of those grandparents in paid work at third (34.3%) are working part-time and two thirds (65.7%) are working full-time. It is estimated that up to 500,000 grandparents are affected.

4. From April 2010 parents of children aged under 12, those with disabled children, approved foster carers and carers of adults will be able to claim a weekly credit towards their basic state pension if they are providing 20 hours of care per week or more.

5. Baroness Hollis of Heigham's amendment, debated on 4th June 2007, during the passage of the 2007 Pensions Act can be found here.

<http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/ld200607/ldhansrd/text/70604-0006.htm>

6. Grandparents Plus is the national charity which champions the vital role of grandparents and the wider family in children's lives – especially where they take on a caring role in difficult family circumstances. We work to support grandparents and the wider family by:

- **Campaigning for change** so that their contribution to children's wellbeing and care is valued and understood
- **Providing evidence, policy solutions and training**, so that they get the services support they need to help children to thrive
- **Building alliances and networks** so that they can have a voice and support each other, especially when they become children's full-time carers.