



We champion the wider  
family who care for children

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**GENERATIONS TOGETHER AT THE TOP**

**Co-Chairs set a new trend for the voluntary sector at Grandparents Plus**

Former Chief Executive of Counsel and Care and Daycare Trust, and intergenerational social entrepreneur, Stephen Burke, is joining forces with Jean Stodgon, founder and formerly Chair of Grandparents Plus to take on an innovative co-chair arrangement at the charity.

Grandparents Plus has also recently recruited six new board members, growing the breadth and depth of its trustee expertise and experience. Staff at the charity have grown in number from just 2 in October 2008 to 9 in 2011. The larger charity will benefit from the combined skills that Jean and Stephen can bring to the role of Chair.

The charity champions the vital role of grandparents and the wider family in children's lives, especially when they take on the caring role in difficult family circumstances such as parental alcohol or substance misuse, bereavement or neglect. Under the leadership of its Chief Executive, Sam Smethers, its work has grown in recent years, becoming a leading campaigning voice in the family sector, publishing influential research and providing a peer to peer support network for grandparents who are raising their grandchildren, and other family and friends carers. The charity is bucking the trend in the voluntary sector and continuing to grow, despite the harsh financial climate. It has reached a critical point in its development and will be looking to both consolidate its work and to grow sustainably in the years ahead.

Jean Stodgon said:

"When Michael Young and I founded Grandparents Plus we did it together and were co-Chairs so this may look innovative for the voluntary sector today, but really it's nothing new!

"I am delighted to be working with Stephen, he will bring his own brand of energy, skills and experience to the role."

Speaking about his new role Stephen Burke said:

“Under Jean and Sam, Grandparents Plus has grown in size and influence. We still have much to do to ensure that grandparents, particularly those raising their grandchildren, can access the advice and support they need. Our strengthened board will help ensure that we fill the gaps at a time when many grandparents will be playing a bigger role in the wider family.

Chief Executive, Sam Smethers added:

“I am really looking forward to working with both Jean and Stephen in the years ahead, together with our new board. I have no doubt they will give us the strategic direction and support we need to go from strength to strength.”

#### **Notes:**

**Stephen Burke** became a trustee of Grandparents Plus in 2003. He is co-Director of [United for All Ages](#), an intergenerational social enterprise. He is also the former Chief Executive of [Counsel and Care](#), a charity giving advice and information to older people, their relatives and carers across the UK. Previously he was Director of the [Daycare Trust](#) which campaigns for quality affordable childcare for all. He has over 25 years' experience in public relations, fundraising, journalism and management in national organisations. His work has been recognised in several major public relation awards. As a local councillor, non-executive director of a health trust and trustee of several charities, he has been involved in a wide range of community initiatives seeking to address disadvantage.

**Jean Stogdon** co-founded Grandparents Plus with leading social entrepreneur, [Lord Michael Young of Dartington](#) in 2001 and has chaired Grandparents Plus since it became a charity in 2002. She worked for many years as a social worker, social services manager and guardian ad litem. She has long been interested in the role of grandparents and until 1999 was Chair of the Grandparents Federation. A Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship enabled her to study the role of grandparents within kinship care in the USA and convinced her that in many situations grandparents and other kin should be the first and preferred choice for the care and protection of children when parents are unable to fulfil this role.

Other trustees:

Dean Casswell, Chief Executive of Bag Books

Geoff Dench, leading academic and writer on grandparenting and family life.

Brian Dimmock, Principal Lecturer in Social Work at the University of Gloucestershire.

Gladys Edwards, former Chief Executive of the Psoriasis Association and a qualified social worker.

Patrick Grattan MBE, former Chief Executive of the Third Age Employment Network.

Maria Hamilton, solicitor specialising in family law.

Helen Jackson CBE, former MP for Sheffield Hillsborough.

Stephen Mold, sales and marketing manager for US technology firm, Roxio and former Conservative Party candidate for Derby North.

Gail Pringle, Agency Development Manager for Refugee Action.

Pat Strachan, Older People's Services Manager for Peabody Housing Association.

Judith Trowell, Professor of Child Mental Health.

For further information or to speak to Jean Stogdon or Stephen Burke contact Chief Executive, Sam Smethers on 020 8981 8001/07961 381630.

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You can read more about the trustees of the charity and find out more about Grandparents Plus on their website.

[www.grandparentsplus.org.uk](http://www.grandparentsplus.org.uk)