

Grandparents Contribute to Children's Well-being

Research at the University of Oxford has shown how grandparents play a vital role in children's well-being and the results have been informing UK family policy.



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With changing family patterns, increased life expectancy, growing numbers of dual-worker households and higher rates of family breakdown, grandparents are now playing an increasing role in their grandchildren's lives.

Research by Professor Ann Buchanan from the Department of Social Policy and Social Work showed that a high level of grandparental involvement increases the well-being of children. A study of more than 1,500 children showed that those with a high level of grandparental involvement had fewer emotional and behavioural problems.

The role of grandparents is currently unaccounted for in UK family policy, and grandparents have no legal rights to see their grandchildren. However, Professor Buchanan's study has demonstrated that their involvement is strongly associated with reduced adjustment difficulties in all family types, but particularly so amongst adolescences from divorced or separated families.

Professor Buchanan has addressed all parliamentary parties to raise awareness of how grandparents positively contribute to children's well-being. The results of her research suggest that the role of grandparents in UK family policy should be re-evaluated. The current government promises a review on family law to look at how best to provide greater access rights to grandparents.

"This study has been instrumental in helping us to redefine the family for policy makers and service providers, focussing on the role of grandparents in children's lives. Its focus on teenagers was particularly important in demonstrating the importance of grandparental relationships beyond childcare."

Samantha Smethers, Chief Executive, Grandparents Plus



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