

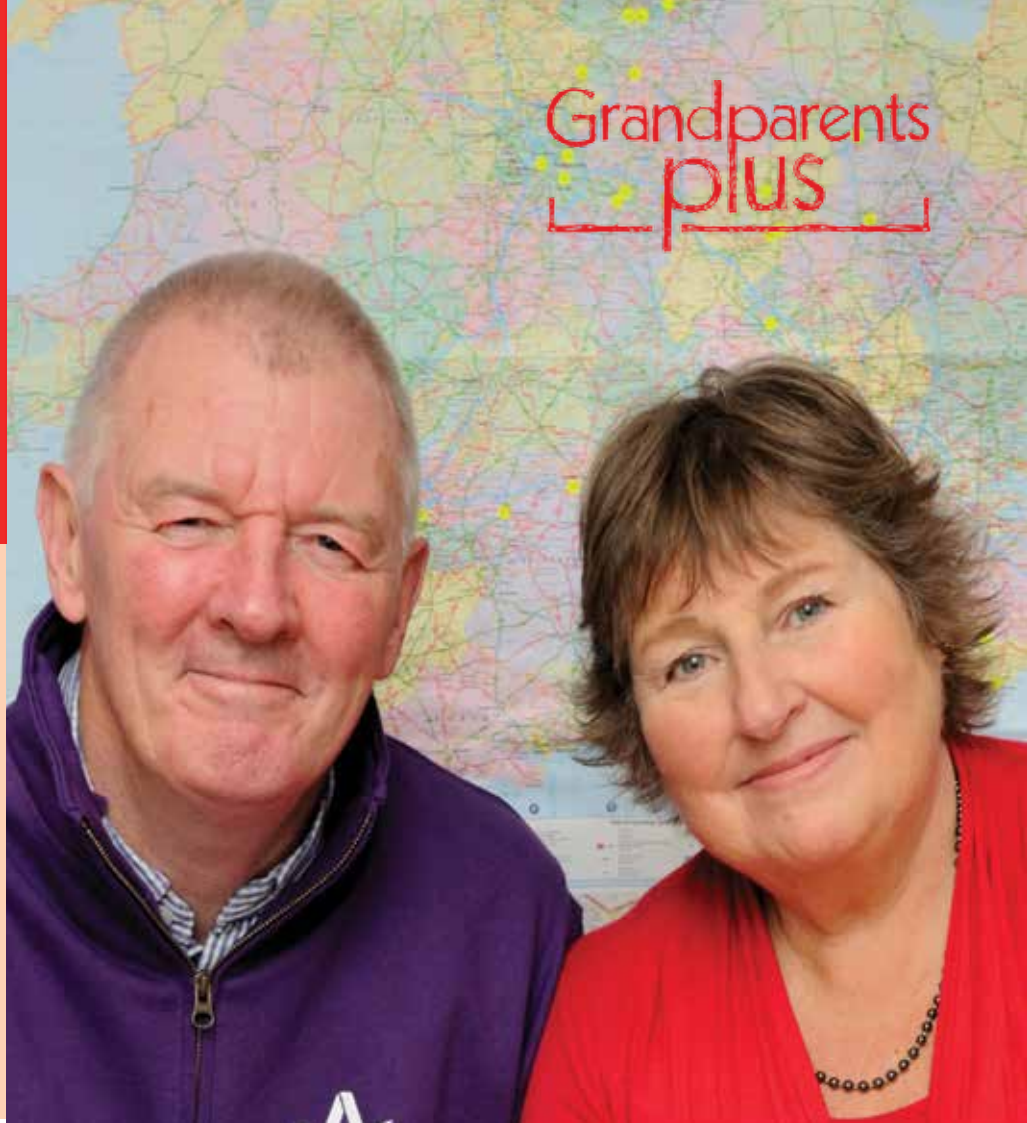
# Kinship First

Grandparents  
plus

*For members of the  
Grandparents Plus Support  
Network for the wider  
family raising children*

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"I was so worried they would forget all about us"



## Dates for your diary

Don't miss the chance to join us at our 2016 Family Fun Day!

We'll be heading back to Gulliver's theme parks in Milton Keynes and Warrington on Saturday 1 October.

Thanks to funding from the Family Holiday Association we can offer families free places to join us on the day. Places are limited so please go to our website to book or call us on 020 8981 8001.

## New e-news for members

**We are introducing new monthly news bulletins for all members who receive our information by email.**

If you currently receive information by post just update your preference to email and you will be entered into a prize draw to win a £25 book token.

Please email your updated details to [support@grandparentsplus.org.uk](mailto:support@grandparentsplus.org.uk).

## Terry's terrific tour set to raise over £7,300

Terry Keen has completed his amazing tour of England – cycling from Berwick upon Tweed in the North East to Helston in Cornwall. Terry, pictured above with wife Jacquie, turned 70 during his journey and travelled 1,500 miles. He even found time to deliver a special birthday card to the Queen to celebrate her 90th birthday.

Continued overleaf ...

## Summer fun in the North East

This summer sees family activities taking place across the North East.

All events have been planned by kinship care support groups with support from the Relative Experience Project.

Activities include picnics, treasure hunts and sponsored walks.



Fun in the sun: an event at Kirklees Hall in July.

We are also pleased to tell you that, thanks to funding from the Big Lottery Fund, we have started working on a proposal to roll-out the Relative Experience Project to other areas in England and Wales.

Part of the planning has involved focus groups with kinship carers – many thanks to all those who took part in the groups held at Wallsend, Ealing, Enfield, Islington and Leicester in July.

The roll-out of the project is not yet confirmed but we will let you know as soon as we have any news.

If you live in the North East and want to find out more about the Relative Experience Project, or the planned summer activities, please contact Yvonne Brown by calling 0191 257 2504 or email [yvonne.brown@grandparentsplus.org.uk](mailto:yvonne.brown@grandparentsplus.org.uk).



### Continued from cover

“Terry is a real inspiration and we are delighted that, after 49 days on the road, he arrived safe and well in Helston,” said Grandparents Plus Chief Executive Lucy Peake. “He’s met a lot of kinship carers on his journey and we really hope that we will be able to fundraise together again in the future.”

It’s not only Terry who has been busy raising money for Grandparents Plus. Staff members Nicola Kerr and Sarah Wellard have both completed gruelling challenges to raise much needed funds for the charity.

“My wife Amy and I took part in the Isle of Wight Challenge in April,” said Nicola. “I work for the charity providing information and advice and Amy is a child care solicitor who often represents family members and children.



“We had the most amazing time – it went extremely well and we completed 25 km in just under five hours. The walk was quite challenging both in distance and terrain – the Isle of Wight coastal path is extremely hilly – and we raised just under £600. Next year we are contemplating the half challenge, which is 53 km (33 miles). We welcome anyone who wants to join us on our next adventure!”



Policy and Research Director Sarah raised over £1,000 for Grandparents Plus and Green Tara Trust, who work in Nepal. “It was fantastic to run the Hackney half marathon with 16,000 other people, and to feel supported both by all the friends and colleagues who sponsored me and the thousands of local people who turned out to cheer us on.”

Support group leaders have been busy too. Jonk Watts, from Birmingham, is raising funds using his cooking skills. Jonk and wife Jan hold monthly dinners at their house and split the money raised between their support group and Grandparents Plus.

Our work depends on donations. We were left a legacy from a member which is helping to fund our vital advice service for kinship carers. A local Waitrose in London raised almost £450 for us after we were selected as a charity for their Community Matters Scheme. We’re a small charity and every penny really does make a difference.

**Could you be mentioned in our next newsletter? There are lots of ways that you can get involved and raise much needed funds for Grandparents Plus. Perhaps you could nominate us in a local store or hold a coffee morning? Contact Alana by email at [alana.genge@grandparentsplus.org.uk](mailto:alana.genge@grandparentsplus.org.uk) or call 020 8981 8001 for more ideas or support.**

## Would you like to take part in our Royal challenge?

The Grandparents Plus team, led by CEO Lucy Peake, will be pounding the pavements and parks of London on Sunday 9 October to raise vital funds to support our work. It’s not too late to join us – just go to our website at [www.grandparentsplus.org.uk](http://www.grandparentsplus.org.uk) or give us a call on 020 8981 8001 for details of how to get involved.



# How will the Universal Credit changes affect you?

Universal Credit represents a major change to the benefits system. Jo Raine, Advice Service Manager, explains what will happen.

“Universal Credit is intended to be simpler than the current system of benefits and tax credits as it is payable in all sorts of different circumstances, whether you’re working, looking for work, sick or disabled, or caring for children or a disabled person,” says Jo. “It takes the form of a single monthly payment to a household.”

Eventually it will completely replace the following benefits:

- Income Support
- income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Housing Benefit
- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit

However, the introduction of Universal Credit has been beset by difficulties and is taking much longer than the Government originally intended. “It’s likely that very few of you reading this item will be receiving this new benefit,” says Jo.

## When will these changes affect you?

“It’s a very confusing picture. In most areas of the country, Universal Credit has only been introduced for certain new benefit claimants – mostly single people without children who are looking for work,” says Jo. “However, as from May 2016, the Government is slowly rolling out Universal Credit area by area for all new claims. They are intending that this process is completed by June 2018.”

If you live in one of the areas where the full Universal Credit system has been rolled out you will have to claim Universal Credit instead of making a new claim for one of the benefits listed above.

“If you’re already claiming one or more of the benefits above, and you don’t have a change in circumstances, you can continue claiming your existing benefits,” explains Jo. “Current plans are for existing claimants to be transferred to Universal Credit between 2018 and 2021.”

## What about pensioners?

If you’re a pensioner you won’t have to claim Universal Credit. However, in the future this will change for pensioners who have a partner under pension age, unless you’re already receiving Pension Credit.

“As Universal Credit will eventually replace Housing Benefit and Child Tax Credit, and is only for working-age people, pensioners who have to pay rent and/or have dependent children will need to be supported in a different way,” says Jo. “Therefore there will be some changes to Pension Credit so that it includes support for rent and an additional amount for dependent children.”

See [www.grandparentsplus.org.uk/universal-credit](http://www.grandparentsplus.org.uk/universal-credit) for more information about Universal Credit. The Citizens Advice website at [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) also has lots of helpful information, including the different eligibility criteria in different areas. Contact our Advice Service if you have any questions about Universal Credit and how it affects you.



# News & resources...

## Haven for holidays



Grandparents Plus has teamed up with Haven to offer our Support Network members the chance to save up to 10% off Haven holidays or breaks.

Haven has 36 sites dotted around the UK coastline, so you're never too far away from your next seaside getaway. Family breaks are what Haven is all about and their parks have something for everyone – splash around in their heated indoor and outdoor pools, relax in their restaurants and bars, enjoy their live entertainment and free kids' clubs all season or get out and explore the local area.

You can save up to 10% on your next break by calling 0333 202 5243 and quoting CH\_GRANDPARENTS or by visiting [haven.com/grandparentsplus](http://haven.com/grandparentsplus).



## The Kinship Care Guide for England

Do you have your copy of the second edition of the Kinship Care Guide for England?

The Guide helps kinship carers understand their rights and responsibilities, and the things to consider when facing the decision of whether to step in to care for a child who is unable to live with their parents.

It also provides detailed guidance on what the law says, the different types of kinship care and legal orders, and what help is available to kinship carers.

*"The best thing I've seen for kinship carers. Every kinship carer should receive this when they start looking after a child."*

Shelly James, kinship carer

Order your copy at the discounted price of £4.95 plus p&p or £2.95 for a digital download. Go to our website at [www.grandparentsplus.org.uk/kinship-care-guide-england](http://www.grandparentsplus.org.uk/kinship-care-guide-england) or call Alana on 020 8981 8001.



## Children and Social Work Bill

A new Bill before Parliament introduces a range of controversial measures aimed at reforming social work and improving support for adopted children.

Grandparents Plus, as a member of the Kinship Care Alliance, has been seeking to ensure that children in kinship care also benefit from measures in the Bill aimed to help children achieve in education and to give Special Guardians the same rights as adoptive parents to paid leave when they take on the care of children.

We'll keep you updated on the Bill in future newsletters.

## Research news

Many thanks to everyone who has taken part in our research study looking at how young people growing up in kinship care are getting on in adolescence and adulthood.

We interviewed a total of 53 young people and 43 carers. We will be launching the findings in the Autumn.

## Survey 2016

The winner of a £30 voucher for completing our annual members' survey is Christopher Williams, a kinship carer from West Yorkshire who is raising his six siblings.

Findings from the survey will be released in the autumn.

## Support Fund extended

Good news for children with SGOs who have previously been looked after by the local authority. Their carers now have the same rights as adoptive carers to get help with therapeutic support from the Adoption Support Fund.

Further information can be found at [www.adoptionsupportfund.co.uk](http://www.adoptionsupportfund.co.uk).

## In memory of Alyson Luff

It is with great sadness that we say goodbye to Alyson Luff, Grandparents Plus Helpline Co-ordinator, who died in April 2016 after losing her battle with cancer.

Alyson first joined The Grandparents' Association as Operation Manager in November 2010, leaving in December 2011 to return to teaching. In June 2013 she rejoined the charity in the role of Helpline Co-ordinator; delivering telephone support for grandparents denied contact with their grandchildren and those who are raising their grandchildren. She continued in the role after the merge of the two charities.

Alyson was always very patient and considerate when dealing with callers, she was a great listener and was highly valued. Alyson recruited, trained and supported volunteers with information to enable the service to run smoothly.

She was much more than a colleague, she was a friend to staff and made a significant contribution to the helpline and the charity as a whole, touching the lives of so many who spoke to her. We will all miss her vibrant and positive nature.



## Supporting women in prison and the grandparents raising their children

Our successful prisons outreach project in Leeds, funded by the Charles Hayward Foundation, has provided much-needed support and advice to 29 grandparents who are raising grandchildren. Prisons Outreach Worker Jane Kenington worked with women in HMP Askham Grange and HMP New Hall prisons who referred their parents for support.

"We were able to support a really hard to reach group," explained Jane. "Many grandparents in this situation don't readily access services due to the perceived stigma of having a child in prison. Home visits enabled us to get to know them and to help them access financial, practical and emotional support, as well as connect with other kinship carers through the Grandparents Plus Support Network if this is something they wanted to do."

Grandparents Plus continues to support kinship carers in Leeds through our national Support Network and Advice Service.

## Congratulations!

**Congratulations to Alice Taylor, who received a North Tyneside Council Chairman's Commendation Bronze Award in June.**

Alice received the award in recognition of the invaluable befriending support she has given to kinship carers and for the time she's given to the development and running of the Wallsend support group.

She is a kinship carer who is raising her grandson and has been a volunteer with the Relative Experience Project since August 2014. Alice is an enthusiastic fundraiser and is passionate about supporting kinship carers and the children they care for.



## Helplines & groups

### National

#### **Grandparents Plus Family and Friends Advice Line**

Tel: 0300 123 7015 (10am–3.00pm)  
[www.grandparentsplus.org.uk](http://www.grandparentsplus.org.uk)

#### **Family Rights Group**

Tel: 0808 801 0366 (10am–3.30pm)  
[www.frg.org.uk](http://www.frg.org.uk)

### South West

#### **Kinship Care Support Group**

**Bristol** – meets every Monday during term time in Southmead, Bristol. For more information call Julie on 07407 443381.

### Yorkshire

#### **Otley Grandparents Support Group Leeds**

– meets the first Wednesday of the month at Otley's Children's Centre. For further information contact Katy Coultas on 0113 3782861 or email [info@otleychildrenscentre.co.uk](mailto:info@otleychildrenscentre.co.uk)

### North West

#### **Kinship Carers Liverpool (formerly PADA)**

– provides support to grandparents and family carers who are bringing up children due to their parents' drug or alcohol use. For more information Call Pauline Thornley on 0151 270 2108 from 10.00-6.00 Monday to Friday.

**A full listing of support groups can be found on our website – [www.grandparentsplus.org.uk](http://www.grandparentsplus.org.uk)**

### Include your details...

If you run a group and would like to include your details please email [support@grandparentsplus.org.uk](mailto:support@grandparentsplus.org.uk)

## A grandparents' story

# “I was so worried they would forget all about us”



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**“We didn’t know where they had gone and social services wouldn’t tell us anything.”**

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From not seeing her grandchildren to becoming their full-time carer, life has gone full circle for Angela Nicholson and her family.

“The girls are my son’s children and we used to help out a lot when they were little, having them for overnight stays and at weekends. We tried to help their mum and dad out as they didn’t have much money and were living in a council house. We didn’t really know what was going on but there were a lot of arguments and things getting thrown around. Social services became involved but their mum used to try and avoid them, going out when they were supposed to visit.”



When the family moved nearer to Angela and her husband Pete she encouraged them to keep in contact with social services, believing it would be for the best. “They lived round the corner, the girls and mum even moved in with us for a while but my son wasn’t allowed to, the social services assessments meant they weren’t supposed to be seeing each other.”

Then suddenly their mum left, taking the girls with her. “I think it’s what social services advised her to do,” says Angela. “We didn’t know where they had gone and social services wouldn’t tell us anything. We didn’t see them again for two years. It just about killed me. I was so worried they would forget all about us. I’d done so much with them; took them for their injections, to the doctors. And then suddenly we just stopped seeing them.”

Angela and Pete were granted legal aid and went to court so that they could see their grandchildren. “It caused problems with my son, he kept saying that he wanted to be the one to sort it out but he didn’t so we just got on with it,” says Angela. “We were granted access every other weekend.”

Life started to return to normal but then Angela’s son was arrested and sent to prison early in 2013. “The children were allowed letters and calls but they couldn’t see him,” says Angela. Mum met a new partner but Angela was concerned when the girls didn’t want to return home after a visit. “I didn’t want them to go home either. He frightened them, with the eldest he’d tell her off and make her sit on the naughty step all day.” Angela spoke to the girls’ mum, who said she was leaving him and asked her to look after the children while she got things sorted out. “She just left them with us and didn’t pick them up,” says Angela. “I said she could come and live with us but she didn’t. She was having another baby and said she was being kept in hospital, but when I took the girls to see her and their new brother she wasn’t there. She’d let the girls down, not picking them up from school, messing us about.”

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**“The girls had just arrived in the clothes they were wearing ... I got in touch with Jo at Grandparents Plus and she got a new bed for them, and family and friends helped out.”**

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Angela and Pete decided to get a court order so that the girls could live with them permanently and were granted a Child Arrangement Order earlier this year, in February. “It was hard,” says Angela. “The girls had just arrived in the clothes they were wearing. The youngest was behind at school but we found she needed glasses. They both needed school clothes. My husband was out of work and we had to go to the food bank eight times. I got in touch with Jo at Grandparents Plus and she got a new bed for them, and family and friends helped out.

“We were doing a 20-mile round trip to take them to school but they’re settled in a new school now, which has been brilliant. I don’t know what we’d have done without them, they’ve organised support and counselling.”

The girls, who are now 8 and 10, haven’t seen their mum or baby brother since last autumn. “They know what’s happened, we’ve kept nothing from them,” says Angela. The girls’ dad is coming out of prison later in the year but the children will be staying with Angela. “I’ve stuck by him and am hoping he’ll get his life back in order,” she says. “But I’ll be putting the girls first. If I’ve got to choose between them, the children will always come first.”



Hazel, now aged 8, with 10-year-old Demi.

Would you like to share your story with other kinship carers?

**If you are interested in sharing your experiences please call us for a chat on 020 8981 8001 or send an email to [support@grandparentsplus.org.uk](mailto:support@grandparentsplus.org.uk)**

# Raising happy, confident kinship children

Over 80 kinship carers and kinship care professionals gathered in Leicester and Chelmsford this summer for two unique Masterclasses from parenting expert, Dr Karen Treisman.

Part-funded by the Big Lottery Fund and with funding from Essex Charitable Foundation, both events were hugely successful. "Karen had excellent knowledge, understanding and experience – she connected so well with the audience and put everyone at ease," one kinship carer said. "Comforting and reassuring – it gave me so much more hope," said another.

Dr Treisman, who is highly-specialised in the areas of parenting and trauma and attachment, spent the day helping kinship carers to develop a deeper understanding of their children's emotions and behaviour and also offered a whole range of tips and practical tools to help raise more confident, happy and resilient kinship children.

"What was really special about the day was that the kinship carers left feeling so positive," said Project Manager, Susannah Cardy. "Karen gave the audience a clear grounding in how trauma and attachment can impact their children but, crucially, she went beyond this to show them just how much they can do to also build hope and resilience in their children, whatever start they've had in life."

**Grandparents Plus plans to run more masterclasses around the country so keep an eye on our website and newsletters for more details.**



Dr Treisman at the Leicester event.



Kinship carers at the Leicester event.

Photos by Susannah Cardy

## Is Grandparents Plus your charity of the year?

Voting for the JustGiving Charity of the Year Award 2016 has opened and we need your vote.

Winning charity of the year would enable Grandparents Plus to highlight and celebrate all the work we do with kinship carers on a bigger scale.

It's also an opportunity for our members to tell JustGiving about Grandparents Plus and why the charity means so much to them.

It's simple to vote and anyone can take part, whether they are a Support Network member or not, so please share with all your friends and family.

Visit [www.justgiving.com/awards/2016/charity/](http://www.justgiving.com/awards/2016/charity/) to vote online.



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We champion the wider family who care for children

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