

From:
To: [Community Affairs Committee \(SEN\)](#)
Subject: Grandparents rearing grandchildren
Date: Wednesday, 12 February 2014 5:23:49 PM

To Senators on committee ,

My husband and myself currently have the care of three of our grandchildren ages 8yrs 10yrs and 11yrs they have been in our care for 3 1/2yrs. I am 65 my husband is 75. The children came to us through a DCP intervention and there is an order till they are 18yrs . I was working and had to give up my employment to take over care of these children, at the time we also had my elderly mother living with us and though my husband was retired it was not reasonable to expect him to cope, while I was at work, with all that was involved in the needs of 3 young children as well as the care of a 90yr old relative.

We were already under a lot of stress being aware of the impact on these children of their parents' lifestyle and always trying to 'look out' for them, fearing that one day there would be a crisis, if not a catastrophe. there is a brother to these children who is seven years older and for a large part of his school years he was a quasi-parent which had a big impact on his schooling.

* Finance isn't such an issue for us as we are in receipt of a subsidy from DCP.

* Having the care of children who are very needy emotionally is very draining and it's hard to get help for them. To go to the private system is very expensive and though DCP will refer you to agencies you still are stuck with a long waiting list and these children need the help at the time of removal from their birth family because all kids love their mum and we become the bad guys for not 'giving us back to mum' So we become overwhelmed dealing with the system as well as the children.

* The children's emotional/ mental state is ongoing, they constantly yearn to be with their mum fulltime though they know why they were removed that does not stop the 'need' to be with their mum and we still often have little people crying because they miss mummy at bedtime which is when their thoughts intrude, this is distressing for them and for us.

* We struggle with the modern age which we have to enter speedily to keep up with the children ,trying to figure out what to allow them to do on your newly acquired computer which you had to get because they belong to the computer age is one issue, trying to get a handle on computer use yourself is a whole other thing, even typing this email is laborious as I have no prior keyboard experience and am slow.

*I belong to a support group which I was lucky to find early, Some people struggle for a long time before they find a group; there is great value in belonging to a group but the group itself needs to be supported as it is really difficult to find

grants that we qualify for in order to support our members with the occasional outing/treat/workshop. Funding goes to high profile groups with paid workers ,those of us going it alone are still expected to produce the same level of knowledge/expertise and standard of application with only us grandparents feeling our way and with no remuneration for time and effort.

* The future is on our minds! How do we cope. 1 When they enter the teenage years 2 If our health fails. These children have already had to cope with massive disruption in their lives will they have to be shuttled off to a foster-home? Will they be split up after all our efforts to keep them together? This is one ongoing stressor.

* DCP can be good at removing children, they are less good at reuniting families. 'We will help' you they tell parents, this 'help' usually means giving a list of telephone numbers of agencies. To someone who has been abusing drugs for years, been in an abusive relationship and has had their children taken away leaving them feeling depressed and hopeless this does not feel like help and we grandparents who are their parents do not have the strength to support them [because we are worn out looking after their children] and so that relationship continues to flounder thereby adding to our ongoing stress.

* Other family members including other grandchildren have to be relegated to the background as we are busy parenting again . We are no longer available to babysit or to have a grandma day, there are many adjustments within the family and for some families this causes a lot of angst.

These are a few of the issues that come when you are a grandparent rearing grandchildren, it's not the same for all as some are 'informal carers' and so don't get the financial assistance that we are fortunate to receive as DCP relative carers and this at least relieves the financial stress that we would otherwise be feeling It needs to be more fair for all; we are all GRANDPARENTS we are not parents and need to be looked at and assessed differently.

I welcome this inquiry and hope that it leads to some changes for ALL grandparents rearing grandchildren.

I am pleased to have been able to have some input into this matter and any further contact is welcome.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Elizabeth Lee