

Kinship Care Northern Ireland

Exploring inequalities in caring:
grandparents' experiences of
kinship care

Statistics from NI Census 2011

- 8655 children living in households in NI without their birth parent
- 6794 kinship carers were caring for 8655 children
- Of those children being cared for by relatives the largest proportion (28%) were being cared for by grandparents
- 16% of kinship carers were aged 55-64, and 10% were aged 65 and over
- 54% of kinship carers were males and 46% females
- Almost 1/4 of kinship carers reported having day to day activities limited by long term health problem or disability
- 18% of kinship carers also provided care for someone else
- Almost one third of households with kinship care arrangements were located in the most deprived areas in Northern Ireland

Figures from Caring for Kin Project September 2013 - date:

- Engaged with 338 older kinship carers and their families
- 82% females and 18% males
- 84% aged 50 or above
- 72% are grandparents
- Helpline has handled 1927 calls from older kinship carers
- Secured almost £600,000 for kinship carers in unclaimed benefits / allowances

Issues facing older kinship carers

- Lack of support, information and knowledge
- Poverty and unemployment
- Long term illness / disability
- Inadequate housing
- Multiple caring responsibilities
- Grief / loss
- Changes in relationships with family members and friends and feelings of isolation
- Neglecting own self care due to caring responsibilities
- Dealing with a range of emotional and behavioural difficulties in the children they are caring for
- Supporting adult children with their difficulties whilst also caring for grandchildren

Challenges in supporting older kinship carers

- Hard to reach families
- Keeping their family issues private
- Location / transport
- Feelings of shame, guilt etc
- Fear of seeming unable to cope
- Complexity of behavioural problems
- Lack of knowledge around technology / social media
- “Old school” way of parenting
- Health difficulties / inability to attend activities

Services we provide to tackle issues

- Information – via Freephone Helpline or face to face through home visits or drop in facility
- Access to financial and legal advice / assistance
- Advocacy Service
- Referral to Kinnections Programme for Small Grant up to £1500.00
- Kin Together Groups
- Training
- Activities
- Foodbank vouchers

Our achievements

- We have established a specialist support service for kinship carers and their children.
- We have secured awards in recognition of our older kinship carers and the children in their care.
- We have improved the confidence, self esteem and resilience of grandparents raising their grandchildren.
- We have secured almost £600,000 for grandparents raising their grandchildren.
- We have helped make some of the most amazing kinship carers count in Northern Ireland.



If you require more information or if you would like to make a referral please contact:

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