

FAMILY MATTERS CHARTER FOR GRANDCHILDREN

Scottish Ministers' vision for children and young people in Scotland is that they are safe, nurtured, achieving, healthy, respected and responsible, active and included.

This means that parents or guardians, grandparents, teachers, doctors, social workers and other people who are responsible for helping children and making decisions about their lives must do all they can to protect and care for them, to help them to do well at school and to make sure that they are happy, supported and confident.

Families are important to children

Families come in all shapes and sizes. Grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins can all play an important role in nurturing children. While parents are responsible for caring for their children and making sure their needs are met, the wider family can play a vital supporting role.

Family life is usually happy but sometimes there can be difficulties. These can range from family quarrels through to divorce and separation to ill health or death. During these times, the children in the family may need extra support. They may want someone to talk to, or simply a safe place where they can have fun. Grandparents can and do play a vital role in helping children to maintain some stability in their lives.

Sometimes, children or young people may lose contact with their grandparents. This can be for a variety of reasons. There may have been a family quarrel, a house move, or a change in who is caring for the children.

When there are problems in families, it can be difficult to see a solution. Tempers can run high, and family members may take sides. Everyone involved should be prepared to put the welfare of the child first and be ready to compromise. Whatever the problem in your family, it is important to look beyond your own feelings to help the children stay in touch with the people who are important to them as well as to adjust to a new situation.



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It is important that parents, grandparents and other family members speak to, and treat each other, with respect. You may not get on, but you can still be civil for the sake of the children. Try to avoid arguing with, or criticising, family members in front of the children. It can be very upsetting for them.

On occasions professional organisations such as social work departments or the courts can become involved and may have to make decisions that will have a lasting impact throughout a child's entire life. In these circumstances it is vital that the loving and supportive role that the wider family, in particular grandparents, can play is respected and protected for the child.

FAMILIES ARE IMPORTANT TO CHILDREN – GRANDCHILDREN CAN EXPECT:

- To be involved with, and helped to understand, decisions made about their lives.
- To be treated fairly.
- To know and maintain contact with their family (except in very exceptional circumstances) and other people who are important to them.
- To know that their grandparents still love them, even if they are not able to see them at the present time.
- To know their family history.
- The **adults** in their lives to put their needs first and to protect them from disputes between adults – not to use them as weapons in quarrels.
- **Social workers**, when making assessments about their lives, to take into account the loving and supporting role grandparents can play in their lives.
- The **courts**, when making decisions about their lives, to take into account the loving and supporting role grandparents can play in their lives.
- **Lawyers and other advisers**, to encourage relationship counselling or mediation when adults seek advice on matters affecting them and their children.

Further copies available from www.scotland.gov.uk/familylaw or phone 0131 244 3581.