



Are you a grandparent bringing up a grandchild?





**Are you bringing up your grandchildren?  
Are you worried about them using drugs and alcohol now,  
or in the future?**

Then this leaflet is for you. It has been written with grandparents bringing up their grandchildren for other grandparents bringing up their grandchildren. It will give you some ideas and information based on the experiences of grandparents like you.

The first thing to remember is that you can make a big difference. The fact that you genuinely care about your grandchildren can make a crucial difference to their lives. Giving them the time and space to talk with you and communicate about their worries is the first step to keeping them safe.

Second, it is important to realise that you are not alone. Many hundreds of grandparents across the country who are bringing up their grandchildren worry about drug and alcohol use and how to talk to their grandchildren about staying safe. There are others in the same position as you, who may have struggled to cope with their children misusing drugs and alcohol and who are now afraid of what will happen to their grandchildren.

This leaflet is written by and for grandparents whose children are misusing or have misused drugs or alcohol. However, it is important to remember that the majority of young people do not use illegal drugs and, while the impact of drug/alcohol misuse can be devastating, most young people moderate or completely stop using illegal drugs, and moderate their alcohol use by their mid 20s.

**How will I know my grandchild is at risk?**

Many grandparents worry they will miss the signs that their grandchildren are in trouble. If things just don't feel right and you are worried about your grandchildren, talk with them. Trust your instincts and the fact that you are likely to know your grandchildren better than anyone. Mood swings, anger and periods when they are withdrawn can be signs that young people are struggling, but they are not automatically proof that young people are at risk of misusing drugs/alcohol. However, if you are worried about their behaviour and you are also finding any of the items listed in the box below, it is possible that drug/alcohol misuse is an issue for them.

**Objects to look out for:**

Spoons discoloured from heating, tin foil, pill boxes, tiny bits of cling film, sugar lumps, syringes or needles, cigarette papers, lighters, cigarette ends made of card, butane gas canisters, shredded cigarettes, pipes, small stickers or transfers, small bottles.

**How to talk with your grandchildren about drugs**

We know it is not always easy to talk with or listen to your grandchildren who may express themselves in a confused or angry way. Here are a few things to remember:

- **Reassure them** If your grandchildren have a drug or alcohol problem, or are at risk, it is vital that you reassure them that you'll be there for them and that you won't reject them.



- **Talk with them when you are calm** It is important to recognise that your own fears and anger can stop you really hearing what your grandchildren are saying. When you are feeling angry or upset, it's OK to take time to get support for yourself, but try to talk to your grandchildren when you are feeling calm and can give them the space to be heard and understood.
- **Get information** Find someone who can provide you with accurate information about drugs and alcohol – preferably an agency with specialist knowledge (see below for a list of agencies that can help).
- **Get support for yourself** Bringing up grandchildren can be a challenge at the best of times. If you are worried about them using drugs or alcohol you are likely to be under a lot of pressure. You are not alone and you don't have to do this on your own. There is no shame attached to seeking help to protect your grandchildren and you are not to blame for your grandchildren's behaviour. Find someone you can talk to and trust, someone with whom you can share your fears and concerns.
- **Don't make assumptions** Because children's parents have had a drug or alcohol problem does not mean they will automatically develop problems themselves. The fact that they have your love and support can make a real difference.

## Information

There are lots of information leaflets about drugs which can tell you what drugs are, what they do and how they can affect your grandchildren. One place to start might be [www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com). If you don't have access to the internet DrugScope have a range of leaflets about drugs, which they will send to you free of charge:

### DrugScope

40 Bermondsey Street  
London SE1 3UD

**Email** [info@drugscope.org.uk](mailto:info@drugscope.org.uk)

**Information line** 08707 743 682

**Tel** 020 7928 1211

**Fax** 020 7928 1771

## Support

Finding someone who understands both the rewards and challenges of raising grandchildren can be hard enough. Finding support when you are worried about your grandchildren's drug/alcohol misuse can seem impossible, but there are agencies which can help. The following national organisations can help people from all over the country, they can also put you in touch with groups and services that can offer you support in your local area.

### Adfam

Adfam supports family members and others affected by someone else's drug or alcohol misuse.

25 Corsham Street  
London N1 6DR

**Email** [admin@adfam.org.uk](mailto:admin@adfam.org.uk)

**Tel** 020 7553 7640

**Fax** 020 7253 7991

## Grandparents Plus

Grandparents Plus raises the profile of grandparents and the extended family as providers of essential care, especially to vulnerable children.

18 Victoria Park Square  
Bethnal Green  
London E2 9PF

**Email** [info@grandparentsplus.org.uk](mailto:info@grandparentsplus.org.uk)

**Tel** 020 8981 8001

## Grandparents' Association

The Grandparents' Association supports grandparents in a variety of different situations by providing an advice and information line, publications, support groups, and grandparent and toddler groups.

Moot House, The Stow,  
Harlow, Essex CM20 3AG

**Email** [info@grandparents-association.org.uk](mailto:info@grandparents-association.org.uk)

**Tel Office** 01279 428040

**Tel Helpline** 01279 444964

## Family Rights Group

The Family Rights Group provides advice and support for families whose children are involved with social services.

The Print House  
18 Ashwin Street  
London E8 3DL

**Email** [office@frg.org.uk](mailto:office@frg.org.uk)

**Tel** 020 7923 2628

**Fax** 020 7923 2683

**Advice Line** 0800 731 1696

*(Open: Mon–Fri, 10am–12pm and 1.30pm–3.30pm)*



**Mentor UK** has been working with Adfam and Grandparents Plus, with funding from the Department of Health, to assess the needs of grandparents who are bringing up their grandchildren so that they can help protect their grandchildren from developing problems with drugs and alcohol.

Having worked closely with grandparents around England, this leaflet has been produced.

Mentor UK is a registered UK charity that works in conjunction with its partners in the International Mentor family. Our mission is identical: to focus on the prevention of drug misuse in our efforts to promote the health and wellbeing of children and young people and to reduce damage to their lives. Mentor aims to support the effective use of human, financial and intellectual resources to achieve this goal.



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