

Services available to tackle grandcarer stress

April 13 2016, by Lily Yeang, Sciencenetwork Wa



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

Juggling finances, maintaining a social life and looking after your own health are just some stresses associated with becoming a fulltime carer for your grandchildren, an ongoing study into grandcarers has revealed.

Last year 3723 West Australian children were found to be in out-of-home care, with 48.9 per cent in relative/kin care, according to statistics from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

Kin care is virtually synonymous with grandcare, co-author Edith Cowan University researcher David Coall says.

This occurs when [grandparents](#) assume care of their [grandchildren](#) due to [parental substance abuse](#), severe illness or death.

Dr Coall and fellow ECU researchers (in collaboration with NGO Community Vision) interviewed 49 West Australian grandparents who have taken on the role of raising their grandchildren 24/7.

They recorded the grandparent's experiences, concerns and health status for the study.

The most common challenges they faced included financially providing for their grandchildren's basic (food, accommodation, clothes, transport), medical and counselling needs.

Other challenges included obtaining legal custody of their grandchildren, enrolling them into school and interacting with their grandchildren's parents.

"Unfortunately, the help these grandparents provide to their families often comes at a huge financial, physical and mental health cost," Dr Coall says.

"Grandparents...tend to become socially isolated from their former friends, community and other family members and consequentially struggle financially and emotionally to cope with their changed circumstances."

Dr Coall says these challenges can significantly impact on a grandcarer's state of mental wellbeing and it is important to recognise when and where to seek help and advice.

Support for grandparent carers

Dr Coall says there are a number of grandparent support groups in the community, with some run by Wanslea and Community Vision, which people should actively seek out.

The [Centrelink Grandparent Advisor](#) is also a good point of call, with the Grandparent Adviser Line available for free on 1800 245 965.

"This service helps grandcarers establish what money they may be able to receive from the government and puts them in contact with a range of services," Dr Coall says.

But this only helps if grandparents actually know about them, he says.

For the online savvy, [raisingchildren.net](#) is another useful resource for those wanting to know more.

This article first appeared on [ScienceNetwork Western Australia](#) a science news website based at Scitech.

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