

Grandparents And Drugs

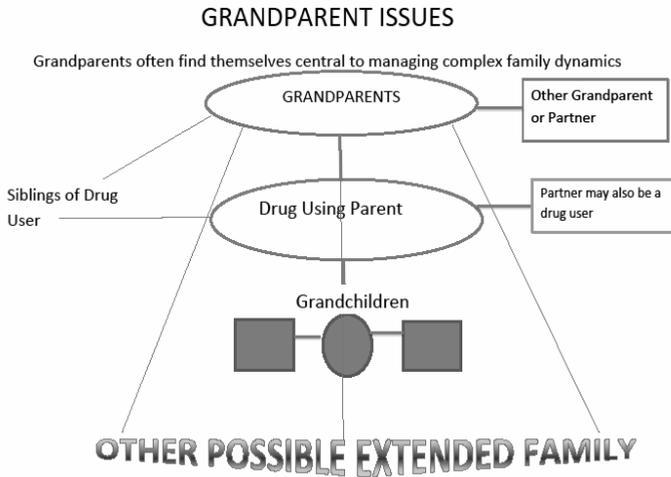
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Most grandchildren would like connection with both the drug using parent AND the grandparents.

Grandparents often lack knowledge about their rights and responsibilities, have access to very little information, are unaware of sources of help or support and often want guidance about the day-to-day practicalities of living with children and young people. They often struggle to cope with the difficult behaviour of the young person and experience problems concerning money, loss of freedom and overcrowding. They need more financial and social work support.

Grandparents have had to make a range of difficult choices:

1. To give up work in order to have time to fight legal cases or look after toddlers or be on call if the grandchild needs time out from school.
2. To take out an injunction against parent/s in order to have access to grandchildren.
3. To decide which grandchild to look after in some cases as other siblings get put into foster care.
4. To keep supporting own child with drug issues – an ongoing battle.
5. Or give up on them if it gets too much either as a result of death by overdose or them not making any effort to change.



Many Grandparents still involved in supporting parent with substance misuse issues – some are disconnected

Grandparents deal with three layers of loss/grief:

1. For themselves.
 - Failure and shame about not being able to prevent what happened
 - On top of own life issues – bereavement, domestic abuse etc.
 - Have also lost out on the much looked forward to experience of being a grandparent
2. For their children
 - Witnessing child/parent's spiralling self-destruction
 - Involvement with criminal activities, theft, prostitution, extortion

3. For their grandchildren

- Witnessing horrors they've been through
- Most children still love their parents (no matter what they've done)

Grandparent/s pulled in all directions

- From parents or partners sometimes trying to get children back and in some cases accusing them of 'stealing' children.
- From other family members (siblings) who may disagree with family decisions made.

From grandchildren

- Who may for example threaten to run away if social services are involved
- And who may be desperate that neither they nor their siblings go into care

From social services

- Initial pressure to take up care of the kin
- Pressure to either give up children or take residency orders
- Legal and financial disputes

From housing – battles to move to larger homes to take in grandchildren

All grandparents bring stories of extreme stress and worry

- Worry for grandchildren but equally for own child
- Lying awake wondering if child will have a drug overdose
- Many not sleeping at night and/or have other stress related ailments
- Social isolation is prevalent – 'you find out who your friends are'
- People crossing the street when they see them
- Avoid social situations because they don't want to have to talk about this with strangers – inevitable someone will ask – do you have any children?
- School children taunting grandchildren – 'your Mum's a druggie'
- However also touching stories where people have pulled together:
- Friends, family, teachers pulling together as support.