

The Importance of the Grandparent's Role

By Head of Service, Sally Heaven-Richards

Having been blessed with wonderful grandparents myself, I always believed that they can play an incredibly valuable role in the lives of children. Subsequently, my children have benefitted from having brilliant grandparents and now finally as a grandparent myself, I have opportunity to bless my own grandchildren.

When we decided that adoption was a way of becoming a family (or at least extending it in our case), my husband and I were keen to involve our family and close friends. We made sure to involve our parents in our adoption journey from the very beginning. Our daughter was going to be the first adopted child in our family and we wanted to share as much of the information that we were being given as we could, about how best to care for adopted children.

Our parents were always keen to know how the process was going and were so thrilled the day that we were approved as suitable to adopt. They eagerly anticipated the arrival of another grandchild and we kept them informed all of the way. My dad in particular found it really difficult to understand why there were so many children that needed to be adopted and wanted us to adopt them all. I recall my mom telling a friend in no uncertain terms that she was sure she could love an adopted child just as much as her other grandchildren!

When we were eventually selected and approved to adopt our daughter, our families were so excited and just as they had with their other grandchildren, our parents eagerly anticipated her arrival.



Because we had explained the adoption process fully they understood why our daughter would need some time to settle in before they would get to meet her. Still, friends and family sent us congratulation cards, flowers and gifts and we kept in touch by phone every day. Our parents dropped off food, did some shopping for us and even helped with some ironing in the early days so that our daughter and us could concentrate on getting to know each other, for which we were really grateful.

Eventually our parents got to meet our daughter, keeping it very low key, and getting down on to her level to play, they were quickly very popular visitors. We eventually celebrated our daughter's adoption day together. Our parents have proved to be trusted carers for our children over the years and to this day they and our daughter enjoy a very special bond. From

helping out with homework and reading, to endless board games, day trips and even holidays they have been very much involved in her life.

Because of their previous experiences, sometimes adopted children will need to be cared for differently to other children in the family. In order for children to feel accepted into your family, people close to them may need some help to know how to introduce themselves, what to say or how to answer their questions. Our social workers and support workers can help you to explain this to your family and friends.

At Adopters for Adoption we offer an information session for friends and family, providing information about adopted children, how best to care for them, the process of adoption and how they can support you.

Many of our social workers also meet grandparents during the assessment

process, often they have been identified as referees. It is particularly helpful to involve them in the assessment process if they are it is anticipated that they will provide childcare or even be named as testamentary guardians for your adopted child/ren.

It's not unusual for some of our single adopters to bring a parent (a soon to be grandparent) along with them for support when they attend our adoption panel. In some cases it has been helpful for them to attend training as well, especially if they live in the same family home.

As adoptive parents, we were always conscious that our daughter has a birth family, birth parents, siblings and grandparents and that as she grew up she might be curious about them. We would have been willing to keep in contact with them via letterbox contact. Although we have always spoken openly about them, sadly in our case, we had no information about her grandparents.



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