A Guide to Setting up
A grandparent and toddler group
NEW REVISED VERSION – JANUARY 2013

About The Grandparents’ Association
The Grandparents’ Association has been working for and with grandparents for many years. 2012 is the charity’s 25th anniversary. It is the views and concerns of grandparents that have shaped and developed our unique and confidential services. Many of these services are run by volunteers – most of whom are grandparents.

“It would be so nice to take my little granddaughter to a group which is especially for us – for grandparents and grandchildren. I feel so out of place in the ordinary toddler groups – the mums seem so young!”

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Introduction

All over England, grandparents who are providing childcare for their young grandchildren are looking for places to be with others in the same situation.

Grandparent and toddler groups are proving the answer to this demand. They are usually held on a weekly basis across a wide range of venues. They are similar to parent-toddler groups, but are specifically for family informal childcarers – primarily grandparents.

The groups are intended partly to combat loneliness amongst the childcarers, who may feel that they are cut off from their peer groups when they are with young children and that they cannot fit easily into parents’ groups because they feel much older.

The groups focus on giving as much play opportunities for the children, and often include special events, parties and outings. Grandparents tell us how much they value seeing their grandchildren thriving and playing with others. These relationships with their peers are key to long term confidence and positive developmental outcomes.

Starting and running a support group is a challenging but hugely rewarding task:

- Challenging because when you start you could feel all on your own and the amount of preparation to get the group off the ground, and then to make sure it runs smoothly, seems a steep hill to climb

- Rewarding because such a group will give help and practical support to grandparents and their families where a grandparent is providing the childcare. Many feel that until the group was set up, felt there was no one listening and nowhere appropriate to go to meet other grandparents trying to cope with similar situations

“The children in the group get on well, they interact. That’s especially important for the first child in any family; my two grandchildren are both first children.”

Our step by step guide

As part of our major project supporting grandparents who are providing childcare for their grandchildren, we have developed a resource for those who are thinking of setting up a grandparent and toddler group in their area. Already available on line, this publication brings together all the essential information you will need.
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SECTION 1: Getting started

- First Steps to Success
- Researching the need for a group in your area
- Finding suitable premises

First steps to success
It may seem like a big undertaking, but even if you have never organised such a group before there are a few first steps you might want to take to help you start up a new group. You don’t have to have any qualifications or experience to set up a group, but lots of enthusiasm helps! However, in order to start a new group it is a good idea to plan ahead.

If you are starting up a new group on your own, one of the first stages you could take is to research other grandparents and toddler groups and talk with others who may be able to help you get the group going. Contacting the Grandparents’ Association is a really good first step because you can find out if there is anyone in your area who has been in touch with us about the possibility of starting a group. We can also help by giving you a contact name of group leader or of a group near so that you can, if you choose, go to the group and talk about the best ways to set up one yourself.

Contact the Grandparent’s Association

Helpline: 0845 4349585
Welfare benefits advice: 0844 3571033
Information on support groups: 0844 3572907

Researching the need for a group in your area
Word of mouth is your most important asset. You might find that you already know a grandparent childcaring for their grandchild who is keen to attend a group. Then she might know others, and before you know it your group is already starting to form.

Researching views
When grandparents contact you and say they are interested in attending, it is a good idea to ask whether they would fill in a small form which will not only enables you to get their details, their preferred times for the group, but also give them the opportunity to tell their stories, plus ideas about how the group could run and who they know who might want to attend.

It is important for the success of the group to find out whether others are prepared to become group volunteers who help get the group going and keep it going. And it means you aren’t taking on all the work!

See the resources and further information section for a sample a flier you can use to find interested grandparents

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Finding suitable premises

Once you have researched the need for a group, and have found other grandparents who would like to attend a group, the next all important step is to find suitable premises.

Many groups use premises where they can hire or book a time for each session they require. These types of premises tend to be based in the community, such as local church halls, school buildings, scout huts and community centres. However, an important first step would be to approach your local Children’s Centre and see if they could offer you a room as part of their services to families. (find this by using the FIS directory on: http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk/nafis or contact your local authority.)

Ideally you will be able to find a place to meet which is free – donated perhaps by those you have contacted when you planning the group. It needs to be somewhere that people can enjoy coming to and must be welcoming. Practical things you need to take into account in choosing your meeting place include:

- Convenience - can people get there easily by public transport or by car
- Size - is it large enough? are there enough tables and chairs
- Does it feel safe and secure? – is the street door childproof
- Comfort - is it quiet and private enough to allow for a comfortable exchange between group members?
- Is there disabled access?
- Are there toilets/washrooms?
- Can you make tea etc?
- Is the heating adequate, and safe?
- Is the floor reasonably smooth and easy to clean?
- Are there kitchen facilities?
- Are toilets and washbasins satisfactory and who will be responsible for cleaning them?
- Is there a safe place to leave pushchairs?
- Are there fire extinguishers? Are they serviced regularly? Are the fire exits kept clear?

A suitable room layout for both and adults should take into account that that adults can sit in comfort near to where the children are playing so that they can be supervised and be able to play in safety.

You may want to take note of the following when looking at potential rooms:

- Babies should be given a separate play area from older children.
- Crawling babies and those just starting to walk should be given a safe area with enough room to practise their new skills.
- Any bikes or sit on toys should have their own area set aside.
- A quiet book corner can be set up for books and stories.
- Any messy play such as painting should be set up near a sink or water supply.

Health and safety

Most importantly, when viewing possible accommodation it is extremely important to take all health and safety matters into consideration as the premises must be suitable for young children.
Grandparent & toddler groups are informal organisations that don’t need to register with OFSTED (unless the sessions run for more than two hours). However, it is up to the group to ensure that all the facilities they run are safe for both the adults and children.

The following checklist will help you to assess possible health and safety risks:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHECKLIST</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Are all socket covers in place, or inaccessible.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Is child access restricted to the kitchen / separate kitchen?</td>
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<td>3. All kitchen equipment out of reach of children.</td>
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<td>4. Is the main door inaccessible to children?</td>
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<td>5. Are all cupboard doors locked or inaccessible?</td>
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<td>6. Are windows only open to provide a comfortable temperature in the room</td>
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<td>and if open, are not accessible to children?</td>
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<td>7. Are toilets clean and appropriate for use?</td>
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<td>8. Are floors clean and undamaged?</td>
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<td>9. Are other floor coverings/rugs in good repair and safe?</td>
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<td>10. Are radiators/ heaters covered or measures taken to prevent accident</td>
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<pre><code>|    or injury (i.e. low heat)?                                           |
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<p>| 11. Is a phone available for emergency use or if none available a        |
|    volunteer has a mobile?                                             |
| 12. Is a volunteer trained as a first aider, or one available on site.   |
| 13. Is the first aid box available and complete?                         |
| 14. Is all play and craft equipment clean and undamaged?                 |
| 15. Is all craft and play equipment, age appropriate for the children    |
|    who will be attending?                                              |
| 16. If outside areas used, have they been checked for litter, play       |
|    equipment safe, and are they secure areas (i.e. gates locked, etc)? |
| 17. Has it been necessary to contact the office?                         |
| 18. Is public liability insurance in place, on view and in date?         |
| 19. Have contact details been provided for the venue office/caretaker?   |
| 20. Are all display boards clear of pins, etc and pictures mounted       |
|    with appropriate fixings?                                           |</p>
SECTION 2: Next steps

- Setting the aims of the group
- Naming the group
- What about members?
  - Finding and welcoming new members
  - Using publicity to attract new members
  - How members can help with the group
- Do you need to register as a charity
- Opening times

What are the aims of the group?

It is a good idea to have a few ideas about your new group’s aims. For example, will there be a structure to the group’s activities? Will the group provide opportunities for play, which is suitable for the ages and stages of development of all the children?

You might want to consider the following:
- Have a variety of activities.
- Organising outings.
- Having speakers for example inviting someone to give a talk on healthy eating.

Naming the group

It’s up to you as to what to call your group, although please do not use the Grandparents’ Association’s name unless you are directly involved with the charity who has helped with the set up and have written permission to use their name. Some of the names that other toddler groups have used include ‘First steps’ and ‘Tiddlywinks’.

It is important to choose a ‘catchy’ name and include the name of the town where the group meets in the name.

What about members?

How many members do we need?
Some grandparent and toddler groups have as few as two or three members, whilst others may have twenty plus. However, it is important to consider that not all members will attend every week and some may not come for weeks at a time.

When advertising the group, it is important to make it clear that all grandparents and children are welcome from the whole community, regardless of their gender, age, race and cultural or ethnic origin.

Don’t worry if at first you can’t find new members to join. These groups often start with only a few members and don’t give up if nobody turns up to the first meeting.

Some organisers have had a few meetings on their own before word gets out. It may be a good idea to hold a set number of meetings to start with and then review how things have gone.
It might be a good idea to re-advertise for new members at the beginning of the school term, when older children have left the group to start nursery or school.

**Finding and welcoming new members**

*"The group was wonderful for us because when we came to this town we didn’t know anyone. You can go to a mothers’ group but you don’t fit in."

Joining a group can be an intimidating experience. People vary tremendously in the ease or difficulty they experience in meeting a new group of people. Whereas young mothers are often drawn to parent-toddler groups to socialise with the other adults, grandmothers frequently feel out of place there because of the generation gap. Finding out about your group will often be so welcome, but still nerve-racking.

If a group is in the habit of thinking about the needs of new members and taking steps to help them settle in and contribute, an open, accepting atmosphere will develop and communicate an almost unconscious acceptance of new people. This will then reap benefits for the developing life of the group.

It’s important to be aware, too, that groups do ‘gel’ into cohesive groups; and, whilst they’re wanting (and needing) new members, they may actually find it difficult initially (even secretly resent, if we could be totally honest) the ‘intrusion’ of new people. After all, it can disturb the level of safety that has so carefully been built up – and that safety is important. It can also disturb the friendships that have developed – we tend to be more protective of friendships when life is feeling tough.

All of this makes the initial welcome of paramount importance. If it’s not done well, people may go away feeling unwanted and not come back – this does happen!

**Practical suggestions:**

- Allocate a group member to look after the new person/couple for the first two or three weeks.
- Always do a group introduction – like a name round – when new people come. It can be scary, but it gets the initial “speaking in front of the group” over with quickly and gives the new people a brief introduction to everyone. Putting names to faces immediately makes people seem human somehow, as does hearing them introduce themselves.
- Use group warm-ups regularly – people don’t settle in immediately, so the welcome needs to be ongoing. This is another valuable reason for using group warm-ups as a regular beginning to a group meeting: they provide a way of encountering the whole group in a pleasant, enjoyable and sometimes fun way. They also act as a group’s welcome to itself each week.
- Structure and formality can be inhibiting and intimidating when taken to extremes, but just the right amount (as in the suggestions above) can be invaluable in that they give people permission and encouragement to take part when they might hold back out of lack of confidence. This can be just as important for well-established members too – again, people vary tremendously in the ease or difficulty they experience in contributing to a group.

**Using publicity to attract new members**

Word of mouth is your most important asset. You might find that you already know a grandparent childcaring for their grandchildren who are keen to attend a group. Then he or she might know others, and before you know it your group is full up!
However, there a number of ways you can reach out to other childcaring grandparents in your area. The first step is to print out a small poster or flier and get it round to key organisations or places where childcaring grandparents gather. This poster is also something for others to hand out to grandparents they know.

Once you have printed your poster or flier, here are several places to visit and ask that the poster goes up on their notice board. At the same time you can ask if they could distribute the poster and leave some with them:

- The nursery or school attended by your grandchildren
- Your local Children’s Centre
- Your local Health Centre
- Local library
- Community centres
- Citizen Advice Bureaux
- Local shops

You could also contact your Local Family Information Service (FIS) and ask if they can help you get the details out there. To find out where you’re local FIS is go to: www.daycaretrust.org.uk/findyourfis

Media
Local radio and newspapers (including the free ones) can be a very useful way of making your plans known. A letter to the editor of your local paper or a listing in the weekly ‘what’s on’ section of your local paper/radio programme can be just as effective as trying to get a feature or interview as a way to find new members.

It’s worthwhile bearing in mind that the media is in the business of selling papers and raising viewing/listening figures so information you give out could sometimes be sensationalised and reported in an irresponsible or inaccurate way. Be careful not to give out any details of people’s experiences without their express permission.

What grandparents say
Here as some quotes we have compiled from grandparents childcaring for small children and members of groups. You are welcome to use these in any media or publicity you might use as they may well attract new members as they are completely anonymous.

‘What I like is that it’s grandparents – mutual support, empathy, understanding, companionship, similar experiences.’

‘It’s taken [my granddaughter] a while for her to play with other children in the group, but now (aged almost 3) she does. She is an only child.’

‘At first she didn’t meet young children often because it was her dad who looked after her, he was excluded to some extent from the circle of mums and that meant it was more difficult to find playmates for.’
'The children in the group get on well, they interact. That’s especially important for the first child in any family; my two grandchildren are both first children.’

‘When the children were first at the group they didn’t interact much, then they began to do so. And they began to relate to different adults as well. They connect with each other in different contexts now.’

**How members can help with the group**

Everyone in the group should be given an opportunity to help run and organise the group and there are a few ways in which a grandparent & toddler group can be managed. One way is to organise some volunteers, usually the grandparents who attend the group, who are willing to take on the responsibility of running and managing the group. Some groups set up an official volunteer committee in which committee members are elected to be responsible for the overall running and management of the group.

During the early stages of setting up the group, those responsible for running the group will have set out the aims of the group. It is a good idea to have some basic policies on admissions and health and safety and a registration form for grandparents/carers to sign when they first come to the group. For information on how to create a policy contact the Pre-school Learning Alliance for their publications ‘Policies for Early Years Settings’ and ‘Parent & Toddler Groups - self assessment for good practice’.

**Registration**

Grandparent and toddler groups are not required to register with Ofsted as they only usually meet for less than 2 hours a week and are set up as informal groups, rather than a registered childcare facility where it is the grandparent(s) who attend the group who are responsible for the child or children they bring at all times.

If the group is run by volunteers or a committee they may consider registering as a charity. Voluntary groups with an annual turnover of over £1,000 are eligible to register with the Charity Commission. You can contact the Charity Commission for information and advice about becoming a registered charity (see useful contacts).

**Opening times**

Groups should check with grandparents about the suitability of their opening times and day and if necessary, change the day and or times to suit. If there are other toddler groups in the area, the group could consider running on different days to extend the range of choice available to grandparents. The group should also consider if they wish to stay open during school holidays and, if they are, to decide whether they are able to welcome children of school age and make this arrangement clear to grandparents.

The session itself can be run for up to two hours, which include time to setting up and clearing up and for refreshments. However, do make sure that your starting and finishing times consider the fact that some grandparents have to drop off and collect elder children from school or nursery.
SECTION 3: What about the grandchildren?

- How children learn
- Ideas for toys and fun for all ages
- Talking, listening and sharing stories
- Information on the Early Years Foundation Scheme

Many grandparent and toddler group members have asked for material to share with the group on child development in the early years. Here is just a snap shot on this and is very general. Every child develops at different times.

Why not have a special Early Years meeting with a guest speaker? The key person in your local pre-school, nursery, reception class and Children’s Centre could be approached and invited to talk to your group. These professionals know all about how to advise you on how to help your grandchild to develop and learn through playing, as well as keeping them safe, and what helps in developing their personal, social and emotional skills.

How children learn

O to 5 years old
The quickest development of your grandchild’s brain takes place between their birth and the age of two. A child continues to learn and develop rapidly during the important early years of their life. By building a few simple learning games into your grandchild’s daily routines and helping them investigate their environment, you can give them the best possible start to their education.

You help your baby and toddler grandchildren to learn by giving them opportunities to:
- look at interesting things, in the garden or in the home
- touch a variety of objects
- listen to a range of sounds like songs, rhymes, stories, music
- taste a range of flavours
- investigate things that open, close, float, sink, twist, turn
- explore objects like large boxes, things that make noises and things that move
- play for uninterrupted periods, alone or with others, with help from adults, and in their own way
- talk to other children and adults

Talking and listening
Children learn language by interacting with other people. Grandparents can play an important part in supporting the development of speech and language skills and for many children are the first adult outside the family home with whom they can practice their speech and language.

There is a wide variation in the rate at which children develop communication (including speech and language). Some children develop quickly while others may take a little more time. Often, children who are slow to develop these skills initially soon catch up with other children. But, for some children, developing communication can be a very difficult process and they may need extra help to develop their speech, language and communication skills.

Developing communication is a gradual process. Children begin to understand words before they can say them. They then learn how to say these words and how to put them together to make
sentences. Children will learn a whole range of different sounds and use these and all their other skills to communicate with others.

Just by chatting away to your grandchild and encouraging them to join in, you are showing the value of talking and listening. Everyday activities - such as preparing meals, tidying up, putting shopping away and getting ready to go out, offer you the chance to talk to your grandchild, explaining what you are doing. They hear the way language is put together into sentences for a purpose.

Reading
Research shows that reading is the single most important thing you can do to help your grandchild's education. It's best to read little and often, so try to put aside some time for it every day. Everywhere you go with your grandchild you have a chance to read together. Whether it's on the bus, in shops or at the post office, you can point out the words around you and that's the beginning of reading. Reading stories with your grandchild, even if for just 10 minutes a day, will help to build important skills, as well as capture your child's interest in books.

Learning about numbers and shapes
Counting things and noticing shapes come naturally to children, so you can use your grandchild's interest in these activities to help with maths. Maths skills can be developed through stories, songs, games and imaginative play. Once again everyday tasks offer learning opportunities - such as telling time or measuring ingredients for cooking which gives children the chance to learn new maths skills.

Learning through play
Play is one of the main ways in which children learn. It helps to build self worth by giving a child a sense of his or her own abilities and to feel good about themselves. Because it's fun, children often become very absorbed in what they are doing. In turn, this helps them develop the ability to concentrate. Providing your grandchildren with a range of playthings will help them learn in a number of ways:

- Sand and water play can be an early introduction to science and maths, eg learning that water is fluid, not solid, and that it can be measured in different sized containers.
- Playing with dough, drawing and painting pictures, dressing up, playing with dolls can encourage creativity, imagination and expression of feelings.
- Building blocks, jigsaws and shape sorters can help with recognising different shapes and sizes, putting things in order and developing logical thought.
- Playing ball games, dancing, running and climbing all help to develop body movement, strength, flexibility and co-ordination.
- Games help with turn taking, sharing and mixing with others.
- Singing, playing simple music instruments help to develop rhythm, listening and hearing.

Ideas for toys and fun for all ages
Here are some tips on selecting toys for the children in the group. When choosing toys and play activities it is important to consider the ages of the children attending the group to ensure that the types of activities and toys available are suitable for their stage of development.

New babies
A basic range of toys and play materials can be provided for babies that can be explored with fingers or mouths such as toys with rattles, soft toys in different fabrics and objects to help babies become more aware of their surroundings such as mobiles, bright posters, and music tapes or CDs to listen to.
Babies from 3 months
Babies from about 3 months of age will be more active and will need the opportunity to strengthen their muscles and increase control over their head, eyes, hands and feet. Groups can provide objects and toys such as soft balls or toys, rattles, teethers and household objects such as wooden spoons or plastic bowls.

Crawling babies
Crawling babies will need space to explore and try out their new mobility skills. Groups can provide equipment for babies at this stage such as activity centre and mats; buckets, boxes and baskets to fill; bricks to build and knock down; simple posting boxes; pop-up toys; cars to push about and simple books and an adult to share them with.

Toddlers
Children that are just beginning to walk will need space to move around in without getting knocked over and large equipment that will help them to get their balance.

At this stage, children will enjoy equipment that they can push and pull such as baby walkers to push (not the ‘sit in’ type as they are considered dangerous) and push-along toys such as prams, animals and ‘pretend’ machines such as toy vacuum cleaners.

Pre-school Children
From around 18 months, children can enjoy a very wide range of play experiences that can help their development. Some of these play activities will require more planning and adult supervision, particularly in the case of ‘messy play’ and water play; however, these activities that can be great fun for children.

The following types of toys and activities can be provided for children at this age:

- Drawing and painting; dressing up clothes; toys prams and dolls; toy animals; toy telephones; a home play area with cooker, sink etc; dough with rollers and cutters; simple train sets. A book corner with a bookcase; bright, attractive picture books; stories about familiar events and situations; listening to and re-telling stories helps to develop children’s language.
- Bought or homemade play dough, sand in a sand tray or washing-up bowl; water in washing up bowl; assortment of plastic containers.
- Toddler size slide and/or small climbing frame both with safety mat under and around it; large cardboard boxes; rocking horse or rocking chair; sit and ride toys; play barrel/tunnel.
- Bricks, blocks and shapes; lacing and threading; Peg board with pegs; shape sorters; toys to screw and turn.

Talking, listening and sharing stories

The development of each child is different so here we have looked at the main communication milestones and developed communication tips around them. You probably remember many of these milestones from being parents, but this may be a useful catch-up!

Babies and toddlers
Here are the key speech and language milestones for babies and toddlers

- 12 months: capable of single words accompanied by tone and gestures, able to use non-verbal gestures (such as raising their arms when wanting to be picked up), but have not yet
mastered basic language functions (such as naming, questioning, requesting and demanding).

- 18 months: most are capable of 8-10 words. Around this time, a vocabulary spurt may also occur when a toddler suddenly masters 30-50 words.
- 18-24 months: capable of combining two words or more to form a simple sentence.
- 24 months: capable of approximately 186 words.
- 36 months: able to participate in a give-and-take conversation with another person, capable of sentences that are much longer and more grammatically complex, although still make many errors. Although they use and understand many words, only about 75% of what they say will be understandable to others.

Tips:
- Talk to your toddler grandchild about what he or she did during the day or plans to do tomorrow.
- Encourage them to tell their parents about their day.
- Play make-believe games.
- Read favourite books over and over and encourage your grandchild to join in with words he or she knows. Encourage ‘pretend’ reading (letting your grandchild ‘read’ a book to you).
- Listening to music – and even dancing! - is a way of developing listening skills.

Preschool children

Children aged four to five years:
- Are generally able to make comments and requests and give directions.
- Should know the names and gender of family members and other personal information.
- Often play with words and make up silly words and stories.
- Can follow complex directions and enthusiastically talk about things they do.
- Listen attentively to stories, and retell stories.
- Sentence structures now incorporate up to eight words, and vocabulary is between 1,000 and 2,000 words.

Tips
- This age group really love stories but often cannot concentrate on more than one thing at a time. It is a time to be structured in your story telling.
- Talk to your grandchildren about the TV programmes and DVDs you watch together.
- Encourage them to pick out reading books and make as much time as you can to read with them.
- Understand that this is the time when young children want to spend more time with their peer group and to play independently with others or on their own.
- Understanding and using humour develops quickly now. Stories of your past that make them laugh will go down well.
- Encourage them to ask questions about family and everyday life and to consider more complex issues. Chat while you are in the car or in the queue at the supermarket.

Information on the Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is part of the Government’s wider scheme, laid out in the Children's Plan and Every Child Matters, to give all children the best possible start in life.

Introducing statutory standards for childcare for 0- to 5-year-olds gives every child the right, regardless of their background, to play, have fun and develop safely when they are looked after.
outside of their home. It means that parents can relax, safe in the knowledge that their children will get the same excellent standards of learning and care, regardless of the type of setting they attend.

At the heart of the EYFS is the principle that young children need to play in order to have fun, make friends and to begin to learn and understand about the world around them. The EYFS is a play-based framework that acknowledges that every child is unique and they learn and develop at different rates and in different ways.

This framework sets out:

The legal welfare requirements that everyone registered to look after children must follow to keep a child **safe** and promote their welfare
The 7 areas of **learning and development** which guide professionals’ engagement with a child’s play and activities as they learn new skills and knowledge
Assessments that demonstrate a **child’s progress** through the EYFS
Expected levels that a child should reach at age 5, usually the end of the reception year; these expectations are called the **“Early Learning Goals (ELGs)”**

There is also guidance for the professionals supporting children on planning the learning activities, and observing and assessing what and how your child is learning and developing.

For more information on EYFS go the Department of Education’s website: [http://www.education.gov.uk/](http://www.education.gov.uk/) and search for Early Years Foundation Stage

There is also a special website on EYFS for parents and professionals: [http://www.foundationyears.org.uk/](http://www.foundationyears.org.uk/)
SECTION 4: Practical Matters

- Administration
- Insurance
- Financial tasks
- CRB checks and child protection
- Equipment

Administration

Those running the group need to establish a set of administrative tasks to be completed at each session or each week and, ideally, to give responsibility for these tasks to certain individuals.

All documents and information concerning the group should be kept in a safe place and that documents such as the insurance policy are displayed on a notice board or other visible place.

Essential Information which must be retained includes:
• Minutes of meetings.
• Contact details for members/grandparents who attend the group.
• Contact details of those responsible for the group.
• Set of rules for the group.
• Welcome letter or leaflet for the group, outlining the aims of the group, opening times, etc.
• Policy documents such as health and safety.
• Insurance policy or cover note.
• Equipment inventory, including details of items on loan.
• Licence/tenancy agreement.
• Certificate of charitable status and charity number (if registered).
• Pre-school Learning Alliance membership number and membership card (if applicable).

Insurance

It is essential for grandparent and toddler groups to have a valid comprehensive insurance policy that provides the right amount of cover. Any insurance scheme chosen by the group should contain the following types of cover:

- Public liability insurance: this covers the group against any liability arising from injury, death or illness to a third party including parents, children and visitors, plus damage to their property. This also covers damage to rented premises used by the group.
- Personal accident insurance.
- Equipment and contents insurance.
- Group’s cash insurance.
- Personal belongings of the group’s members.

The Preschool Learning Alliance offers competitive insurance cover and is used by the Grandparents’ Association. Go to: https://insurance.preschool.org.uk/ or contact the Alliance to discuss insurance needs: 020 7697 2585 which includes membership to the organisation.

It is key that when you are approaching an insurer you are up to date on:
• CRB and child protection issues

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• *Up to date risk assessments*
• Have a procedure for petty cash – with a cash book and ideally having two people to oversee the use of cash.

If the group is covered by the landlord’s insurance policy, you should ask for a copy of the policy in order to see if the group is covered on this policy. Do make sure that your valid insurance policy is on display in a visible place such as a notice board and make sure that it is renewed on time!

**Financial tasks**

It is a good idea to keep simple accounts in a cash book for the amount of money you spend and what it’s spent on, for example weekly refreshment money. Make sure that each “pot” of money is kept separately and used only for that purpose, for example that refreshment money is only used for refreshments rather than for other expenses.

**Finance Task Checklist**
• All fees should be collected at the start of the session.
• Money must be kept in a safe place, for example, a lockable cash box during the session and in between sessions in a post office or bank account.
• Two named individuals need to be responsible for overseeing this ‘kitty’.
• Rent or hire of the premises must be paid regularly and on time.
• Refreshments must be kept well stocked and receipts kept.
• Pre-school Learning Alliance membership (if applicable) and Insurance costs paid on time.
• Keep an accounts record book showing income, expenditure and petty cash.
• If monies held for trips or parties are over £50, you might decide to open a bank or building society account for the group.
• If you decide to open a bank/building society account details, make sure they are kept up to date, including up to date list of signatories authorised to access the account.

**CRB Checks and Child Protection**

To deal appropriately with safeguarding children, it is strongly recommended that those responsible for running the group attend child protection courses. These are run by local authorities for volunteers and also by voluntary organisations. As those running the group and any volunteers will be in contact with children, they will need to be willing to undergo an Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check, which, as a matter of good practice, should be renewed every three years.

If you do need a CRB check, this is free if you are a volunteer. The CRB defines a volunteer as: 'A person who spends their time doing something that aims to benefit either an individual or group (other than, or in addition to, close relatives), and is not paid (except for travelling and other approved out-of-pocket expenses).’ If you use an external agency to undertake the checks, you may still be charged an administration fee.

Gov UK has guidance on how to apply for a CRB Check. Go to [https://www.gov.uk/](https://www.gov.uk/) and search for CRB. There is also a CRB helpline 0870 9090 811.

Where information is disclosed or circumstances arise in which has reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, then the group leader should immediately
make clear to the party involved that they must inform Children’s Services about their child protection concern. The issue, if possible, should be discussed in private and the party should be given the opportunity to agree that they will personally inform Children’s Services about their concerns. The group leader should offer to support the party to inform Children’s Services but must make clear that if they do not then the group leader has a duty to contact them.

**Equipment**

It is important to remember that all equipment in the group is checked regularly. In particular:

- Rubbish bins should not be accessible to children and emptied regularly.
- All toys should be washed or sterilised regularly and broken or damaged toys should be removed immediately.
- Groups that have borrowed their toys or equipment from another group should ensure that it is suitable for their own group.
- All equipment must hold a CE mark which shows it has been made in conformity with essential safety requirements.
- Toys should hold the Lion Mark, which shows that it indicates safety and quality.
- Ensure that any products with age warnings e.g. not suitable for under 3 are not given to these age groups.
SECTION 5: Sustainability

- Fees
- Where to go for financial or practical support
- Internet fundraising tips
- Putting on a fundraising event

Fees

From the start, you may have to tackle the issue of asking for a small fee for each session. If you do not have any other income, or have to pay for the hire of the room, buy toys and so on, a fee must be a reality. Groups have told us that this is Ok, and that group members understand the need – especially if you explain what costs you have to cover.

The amount needed to be charged to grandparents can be worked out by adding up all the group’s outgoing expenses, such as rent, insurance, food/drink, toys/equipment and out of pocket expenses for volunteers.

If the start-up costs are high due to equipment expenses, rent and insurance fees, the group may want to consider fundraising within the group or local community.

Where to go for financial or practical support

- Contact your local Children’s Centre!
- Companies sometimes prefer to give ‘gifts in kind’ rather than money – for example, some have in-house print facilities you may be able to use or they might be able to donate stationery or refreshments. It might be worth trying a local supermarket, as they sometimes award vouchers to good causes
- Members’ contacts
- Local organisations that support charities and community groups. Groups to contact include Rotary, Round Table, Women’s Institute, Scouts groups, Girl Guide groups, local slimming groups, local dance groups, local choirs, sports groups (including the local sports teams), church groups and any other groups that meet to share common interests. Forming your own “friends groups” from these groups or interested individuals can provide a regular ongoing source of support and funding as the purpose of these groups is to commit to doing fundraising events on a regular basis for your charity each year.
- Mayors usually have a charitable fund
- Local community and charitable trusts. Charitable Trusts. Voluntary groups with an annual turnover of over £1,000 must register with the Charity Commission. If your group is a registered charity you can apply for funding from a national or local Charitable Trust. A guide to grants from Charitable Trusts is available from the Directory of Social Change, which you can find in your local library.
  If you are not a registered charity some charitable trusts may help you if you can find a local charity that would be willing to accept the money on behalf of your group.
- The Big Lottery. There may be funding available from lottery money for your project.
- Funderfinder is a computer programme, which may help you find local sources of funding.
N.B. Do check whether there are any conditions attached to grant funding. For example you may need to have written aims and objectives, an equal opportunities statement, and a bank account. It is also a good idea to keep simple accounts in a cash book for the amount of money you raise and the source of funding (see section 16. finance tasks).

Internet fundraising tips

- You can create your own fundraising pages on site like www.justgiving.org.uk – and then update your Facebook status with a link to this. For an extra push, post your link on their walls.
- You can also ask friends to “donate” or give up their Facebook status update space for you to provide details of your work/event.
- Get on www.youtube.com and make a video! – perhaps a funny parody of your training, or just you telling the camera what you’re doing and why people should donate.
- Don’t forget to link to your page.
- Create a presentation and upload it to sites like www.prezi.com or www.slideshare.net. There are many examples of such presentations on these sites for inspiration.
- Use Twitter to share your page, or just write what you’re doing and why people should sponsor your group - in the shortest sentence possible. Ask your followers to ‘retweet’ your link – so it reaches their followers too (remember: the shorter your tweet, the more retweet-able it is).
- If you’ve got a great story, start a blog about it. Blogs are a great way to share your photos, videos and tweets in one place, keeping your supporters up-to-date.

Putting on a fundraising event

The planning: What? Where? When?

1. Decide what you’d like to do: coffee morning, golf day, gala ball, sports dinner, open garden),-some kind of sponsored activity (e.g. walk, cycle, or something different like shaving your hair)
2. Consider your skills and interests and what resources you have available
3. What is involved in organising the fundraising event and what will you need to make it successful?
4. How many volunteers and helpers will you need on the day or evening? What equipment is needed?
5. Will you be working to a budget?
6. Do you need tickets, posters, flyers produced?
7. Set yourself a timetable to ensure all tasks are completed in time.
8. If you are organising an event select the venue carefully – and ask whether it is available free of charge or at a reduced rate for a charity event.

The venue – a vital checklist

- Is there disabled access?
- Are there sufficient lighting and toilet facilities?
- Is there adequate parking and will you need car parking stewards?
• Is there a safety capacity at the venue? If so do not exceed it.
• Ensure the venue is vacated at the agreed time and any residents nearby are not disturbed.

Be safe
• Ensure there are no trip hazards, if cables need to go across the room
• Take care when lifting heavy objects.
• Make sure there is suitable access for emergency vehicles.
• Make sure there is a first aid box.
• Designate a member of the team to call the emergency services if needed
• Make sure there is a telephone available.
• Consider whether you will need to bring in outside first aid cover, for example, St John’s Ambulance, depending on numbers attending the event.

Food
• It is important for anyone selling or handling food to do it safely and hygienically. Ideally, at least one helper should have a Foundation Level Food Hygiene certificate.
• If you are unable to find someone who has this certificate, make sure all food handlers have read the Food Standards Agency leaflet “Guide to Food Hygiene” which can be found and downloaded free of charge from their website (http://cleanup.food.gov.uk/data/guide-food-hygiene.htm).
• Many events may benefit from buying in fish and chips from a local chip shop, etc.
• You can ask stores to donate food. E.g. at a sponsored Christmas event a local supermarket may donate mince pies

Publicise your work/event
It works best to use a range of different methods to publicise your work/event - for example: posters, leaflets, emails, church magazines, local ‘what’s on’ websites, mailings, word of mouth, internet/social media websites, local radio stations and press releases to local papers

It may seem obvious but if it is an event make sure people know:
- WHERE it is taking place with directions and ticket details (prices and where to get them)
- WHEN is it taking place, including date and time

On the day / during the fundraising
1. Make sure you have enough help. If you are running an event approach local organisations to help e.g. local Rotary or Lions clubs.
2. Take photos! You can use them to publicise your success and for your next event. If you are taking photos of children however you will need to get parental permission slips signed for all children, and to keep note of who’s on each photo.

Keeping things legal

Risk Assessment
It is important that a risk assessment form is completed for all events. We will provide you with one. It will take you through important safety checks - for example: fire exits, trip hazards, insurance etc.

Licences
It may be necessary to organise a licence or Temporary Event Notice:
• When selling alcohol
• When collecting money on the streets
• Some raffles such as when tickets are sold before or after an actual event.

Insurance
Make sure you have adequate insurance in place before holding an event.
You may like to check that your household insurance covers you and your guests. If in doubt, get in touch with your insurance broker.

Other legalities
• Remember to get parental permission if children under 16 are helping you at your event.
• If your event is on private property, ensure you have permission from the owner/manager.
• However, if the event is on council owned land a permit must be applied for at the local authority.
SECTION 6: Other useful information

- Sample Posters and fliers
- Checklist
- Useful organisations

Sample Posters and fliers

We suggest that you include your first name, rather than your full name, and an e-mail address or a mobile phone number, rather than your home address or telephone number on any publicity materials or posters. It is a good idea not to put in specific dates for meetings as the information can quickly become out of date. You could perhaps refer to a regular meeting time, for example, the first Wednesday of every month, or suggest that people contact you for further information and to discuss what day and time would be suitable for them.

NEED A PAPER COPY OF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING SAMPLES?
CALL 01279 428040
or email toolkit@grandparents-association.org.uk
Are you a grandparent who provides pre-school childcare for your grandchildren?

Would you like to meet up with others in a similar situation?

You can call me (insert name)

On my mobile (insert mobile)

to talk and share ideas or email me (insert email)
Step two – publicising your group

SAMPLE OUTREACH POSTER

Are you a grandparent looking after young grandchildren during the week?

❖ Want to meet up with grandparents in a similar situation?

❖ Want to give your grandchildren the chance to play with lots of other children?

❖ Join our grandparents group!
  We meet on xxxxxxx at xx am/pm

TO FIND OUT MORE
RING: 00000 000000
Are you a grandparent looking after young grandchildren aged 0 – 5 during the week?

❖ Want to meet up with grandparents in a similar situation?

❖ Want to give your grandchildren the chance to play with lots of other children?

❖ Join our new weekly grandparents and grandchildren group Wednesday’s 10 -12 *
Coram’s Fields, 93 Guilford Street, London WC1N 1DN

TO FIND OUT MORE
RING: 020 3384 2205

Coram’s Fields Children’s Centre
is a Hub Member promoting good practice by working with grandparents providing childcare for their grandchildren
*Starting | Wednesday 10th October 2012
First Steps Checklist

Here we have gathered together all the essential information you need to set up a grandparent and toddler group including advice from grandparents on what works.

- Check that there is a need first. Research your local area and contact the local press to gauge the response.

- Speak to relevant professionals such as health visitors, social workers, and outreach workers and so on to get their views.

- If you decide there may be a need, still be cautious. At the start have a drop-in session, to ask opinions about what the grandparents would want from a group. Leave out a sheet asking if they would like to be contacted when a decision is made.

- At the drop-in session, actively canvas for volunteers to run the group.

- Discuss if you intend to charge a nominal amount.

- Contact your local volunteer office and advertise on their website for volunteers to run the group. Make sure they are aware they will need a CRB check to do this as children are going to be part of the group. Try to get several volunteers so the group is always covered if someone goes on holiday. Volunteers can be recruited over a long period of time.

- If you decide to go ahead, choose your time and day carefully, making sure it is a time that suits the group. Mornings historically appear to be best as toddlers are often tired by the afternoon.

- Initially, decide on a neutral venue, until you get to know people. Be careful not to exclude people through your choice of venue.

- Check all the activities going on locally and DO NOT clash with popular playgroups and activities.

- Check out that the room and facilities you are intending to use are safe and appropriate for your group.

- Ensure you have your paperwork in order, (policies, rules and aims, registration sheets, signing-in book, etc) for the first session and insurance in place.

- Produce flyers and posters and distribute them everywhere!! Get them to doctors, health visitors, midwives, social workers, - anyone who comes into contact with families. Ask schools, libraries, local churches and others who produce newsletters to mention the group as often as possible.
First Steps Checklist continued...

- Publicise via other groups orientated to possible grandparents such gardening clubs, halls used by a range of people, W.I. meetings, churches and other religious faiths, estate agents, chip shops, newsagents – why not a local pub where families go for Sunday lunch?

- Try to distribute the leaflets personally - people seem to be more willing to promote it for you this way.

- Advertise well in advance of the opening, and keep re-advertising. Groups are soon forgotten, so you need to keep reminding people.

- Use local papers free sections and ‘what’s on’ sections to promote.

- If the response is poor initially try introducing and publicising special sessions, such as Christmas crafts, coffee and cakes, and so on.

- Attend partnership meetings or go to the other local schools and centres to let everyone know about the group.

- Attend local fetes and open days to promote the group. Have a display of information if you can’t stay.

- Once you have one or two regular grandparents, encourage them to decide on the format of the group, in the hope that they will take ownership.

- Plan a ‘formal’ launch. See if you can get an article and picture in the local press. Further press releases about any events are great publicity.

- REMEMBER: these groups are very slow burn and can take a year plus to take off.

- Word of mouth is key. However much publicity you send out, it’s usually one grandparent who introduces another.

- STAY POSITIVE!
ARE YOU A GRANDPARENT LOOKING AFTER A GRANDCHILD?

LEAFLET SIDE ONE

DID YOU KNOW?

- Nearly 5.5 million people provide childcare for their grandchildren.
- The average age of grandparent childcare is 62–65 years.
- Grandparents provide between 6 and 8 hours a week on average.

ARE YOU A GRANDPARENT CHILDCARE?

- Want to find out tips on everything from fitting car seats to discipline?
- Get tips on helping your grandchild learn and find out the latest on education?
- Interested in meeting up with grandparents in a similar situation and giving your grandchildren the chance to play with lots of other children?
- Find out more about holiday childcare, days out, and much more?

"I'm a grandad and have been looking after my little grandchild ever since he was a tiny baby. Looking after children is like riding a bike. Once you get on it, it comes flooding back." Grandparent Carer

LEAFLET SIDE TWO

FAMILY CHILDCARE CHECKLIST

The most popular advice and information we have devised are our Family Childcare Checklists.

- To find a group near you go to the Help and Support section on www.grandparents-association.org.uk or phone 01279 428040 for further details.
- If you want to set up a group in your area, we have a special toolkit which gives you all the information and advice you need. Go to "Being a grandparent" then the section on "Starting up a grandparent and toddler group" on www.grandparents-association.org.uk or phone 01279 428040 quoting "Grandparent and toddler group Toolkit."

TIP

- If you don't have a computer or want to download one of the articles on the site, why not ask for help at your local Children's Centre?

ARE YOU A GRANDPARENT looking after young grandchildren during the week?

The Grandparents' Association is committed to giving help and support to grandparents providing childcare for their grandchildren whilst the parents are working or studying.

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NEED A PAPER COPY OF THIS LEAFLET?
CALL 01279 428040
or email toolkit@grandparents-association.org.uk

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Useful Organisations – online

The Grandparents’ Association has a very comprehensive list of useful organisations on its website. You can access this by going to http://www.grandparents-association.org.uk/gen/help-a-information.html

The information can also be sourced by ringing 01279 428040 quoting ‘Childcare Help and Information’.

About The Grandparents’ Association

The Grandparents’ Association has been working for and with grandparents for many years. 2012 is the charity’s 25th anniversary. It is the views and concerns of grandparents that have shaped and developed our unique and confidential services. Many of these services are run by volunteers – most of whom are grandparents.

Services

HELPLINE: The Grandparents’ Association is a member of the Telephone Helplines Association. Our helpline operates five days a week. At busy times and after hours you can leave your details and we will contact you. Confidential support is offered by fully trained staff and volunteers. Phone us whatever your problem. Phone: 0845 4349585. Opening Times: Monday – Friday 10am-4pm Email: info@grandparents-association.org.uk

WELFARE BENEFITS SERVICE: We run a dedicated welfare benefits services for grandparents and are the only organisation that gives holistic support and advice to grandparents based on individual need and includes accessing small grants and holidays. Phone: 0844 3571033. Opening Times: Tuesday-Thursday various times – see website for details. Email: wb@grandparents-association.org.uk

WEBSITE: Our website: http://www.grandparents-association.org.uk contains a wealth of information on grandparents’ rights – including advice on contact, kinship care, childcare, finances and much more. Many thousands of grandparents access the site every month

Membership: available online at a reduced rate!

Membership of the Association offers you discounts on our entire range of publications, FREE regular ezines, a FREE invitation to our national conferences, REDUCED rates on publications and the chance to take a greater role in The Grandparents Association. You can also get FREE legal advice from one of our supporting solicitors - for up to a maximum of 20 minutes and subject to availability.

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