

JUSTICE COMMITTEE

CHILDREN (SCOTLAND) BILL

ANONYMOUS SUBMISSION 1

As I start to write this, I am not sure exactly what I am going to say as I have gone over various scenarios but I can assure you that this is written from my heart.

I would like grandchildren's rights to be incorporated in the Bill including, in particular, minority cases where there is an ongoing marriage but one parent is subject to abusive, coercive and emotional control so that grandchildren can have access to both sets of grandparents under these circumstances.

The abused parent, as often as not, has no contact either with the grandparents and cannot speak to the grandchild about them. What effect does this have?

Fear is an interesting aspect to humanity. If people can manipulate fear, then they can get anything they want.

The pain my husband and I are suffering with not being able to be grandparents is indescribable. A counsellor described it as 'a living bereavement' and that is exactly how it feels. Our grandchild is alive (we hope but do not know for certain) but where?.....

My pain never leaves me. Some days are better than others but celebrations are extremely bad. As I write this, we have just passed our grandchild's birthday. We have never been to one of our grandchild's birthday parties. We last saw our grandchild as a baby. Our grandchild does not know us and now we do not know our grandchild or what our grandchild looks like.

As our grandchild gets older will our grandchild wish we were at birthday/Christmas celebrations? Would our grandchild like us to be at nativity plays and sports days etc. Does our grandchild know the truth or think we do not care and therefore would never want to see us?

Our grandchild's at school now but where? Does our grandchild enjoy school? Etc. etc. The questions are endless but the answers are very important.

When children are working on school projects which involve asking grandparents or older neighbours.....they would only have one side to ask now. Is that fair to our grandchild?

What is said about us? Are we alive or dead? Is it the truth or lies? My family were brought up with the saying 'the truth always comes out'. I hope that is the case here. I certainly would never encourage any young child to tell lies. They should be brought up to tell the truth and be honest. They should respect other people.

Love from a very early age is important and not just by parents but by grandparents and other family members. Each person has their individual love for a child. Love

comes from the heart as does their relationship, influence, help and support. Money does not buy love.

One of the parents or one set of grandparents should not use their financial capacity to intimidate the other parent or grandparents. A grandchild deserves love and respect too as they are being influenced from the minute that they are born into what type of person they will grow up to be and no matter how poor people are love and respect costs nothing but is worth its weight in gold.

A child has feelings no matter how old and should never under any circumstances be treated as an object to be shown off.

Where one parent has no family photos from their childhood but the grandparents do, this means that the grandchild is unable to learn so much about that parent's upbringing or more importantly what they looked like when younger. We too are unable to show our grandchild photos of holidays etc where we could narrate lots of stories relating to the photos. Once more our grandchild can only see and hear from one side of the family.

Part of a child's 'growing up' is learning about who they are. This can be done by everyday life when something occurs and a parent/grandparent can tell a story from the past connected to the present situation. Grandparents would have different stories to tell from the parents about a photo etc. Also, when the parent was a child, they will not always remember situations or stories but the grandparents remember them vividly! They could be for good or bad reasons!

Genealogy is very important. Everyone is entitled to know their roots good or bad on both sides of the parents.

We as grandparents would be willing to be organ donors if our grandchild needed a transplant etc (hopefully this will never arise as I would prefer to have a healthy grandchild). But would we be contacted if the situation arose?

This 'submission' is due just before Christmas. A very important time of the year for children: an extremely sad time for us as we have no other grandchildren and to see the shops full of toys and Santa grottoes it is impossible to pass by without thinking the frequently used words.....if only..... We try and avoid these situations as much as possible.

Again, at our grandchild's birthdays and Christmases as we cannot buy presents, we send a donation to a children's charity so that we can help in a very small way children who deserve help, support, treats etc at Christmas and throughout the year.

In the short experience we had with our grandchild we were concerned about welfare. I will not give examples as that could make our grandchild identifiable in this submission.... But, believe me there are many.

How much love does the other side of the family have.....condoning keeping a grandchild away from his other grandparents? What is the environment like in which our grandchild is living? What influences are being brought to bear? Does our

grandchild know the difference between right and wrong, good and bad, truth and lies, etc?

As the Bill is all about children, I hope that you can understand after reading this that I am extremely concerned about the health, welfare and upbringing of my grandchild. At the moment I cannot be there for my grandchild.

I only know what it is to be brought up in a loving family and I thought we were about to welcome our grandchild into our loving family.

Why does the law prevent us from being loving grandparents?

My love for my grandchild has never diminished and if anything grows stronger as I so want to help. Our grandchild perhaps needs help but who is there to help and support or tell the truth about how our grandchild is being brought up?

Please can you help me, my family and others like us so that grandchildren can see their grandparents who through no fault of theirs have been denied that right. Every child deserves to be loved and know who they are and where they come from. There are different kinds of love and I and my husband wish we could give our grandchild the love we have in our hearts.

Sometimes it is simple everyday things which can be hard to deal with....when the phone rings I always hope that it's my "child" calling to say they want to bring our grandchild to meet us and let us be the grandparents they know we really would love to be. It would also mean our grandchild would have the right (it should really just be normal family life) to spend time with us.

It can be very hard being with friends and listening to them talking with pride and quite rightly about their grandchildren. It is even harder when photos are produced. Fortunately, some of my friends do it very sympathetically and I can deal with it better. However, I have had to stop seeing some as they upset me so much I went home after meeting them and cried my eyes out. An example is in the middle of a story saying "you know what it's like being a granny" or "you must see this school photo"

Can a child be affected when friends speak about both sets of grandparents? In our grandchild's case might a question be "why do I not have other grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins?.....but what is the answer given?

To sum up there are three very simple words I wish to say to my grandchild 'I LOVE YOU'.

Such a simple request and one most grandparents would never think about but for a minority of grandparents who find themselves in a similar situation to ourselves through no fault of their own and are unable to utter these emotional words but with your help and understanding of our individual situations perhaps you could make these wishes come true. I can say them every day in my head but that is not the same.

Think how often you want to say something to a young loved one in person but cannot at that precise moment do it and instead send a message or a text; please remember grandparents like us who cannot even do that. You are the lucky ones. Equally you can receive messages or texts from your young people.....they are in contact with you whenever they want. Our grandchild is not and perhaps never will be.

From one very heartbroken grandmother: please help children to be allowed to see all their relations starting with grandparents before it's too late for grandparents to see them.

This Bill may be too late for us as I understand the time it takes to become law and it means the older our grandchild will be and the longer our grandchild has never known us but if you listen to our plea and our plea means that other grandparents do not suffer the pain, heartbreak and sadness then writing this has been worthwhile. Equally grandchildren are suffering pain too if they know that they have grandparents who they are not allowed to see.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.