

Grandparents 'need rules over childcare'

By Jessica Salter

GRANDPARENTS are calling for guidelines to be set over thorny issues such as being asked to provide free childcare, and how to discipline their grandchildren.

The "Grandparents' Charter" is being created by the support network grannynet.co.uk as increasing numbers of elderly people are being called upon to look after their children's children.

Lorna Edwards, who co-founded the website with her daughter Verity Gill, said they hoped to build a picture of what grandparents think is acceptable regarding childcare.

She said: "Childcare expectations are the most difficult issue for grandparents to refuse, because the issue is bound up with a sense of desire, duty, guilt and responsibility.

Children can end up pushing it, asking for the sacrifice of increasingly more commitment and time until grandparents end up feeling abused."

Mrs Edwards herself leaves her home in Suffolk every Sunday night to care for two of her grandchildren in Essex on Monday, before driving to London to care for another on Tuesdays.

She said: "I have a friend who travels from Birmingham to London once, and sometimes twice, every week. But not all grandparents are willing to make such a sacrifice of time and money. So it's vital to establish the rules to which you will all adhere."

Research last year showed that four out of five children are cared for by a grandparent on a regular basis, and that one in four grandparents look after their grandchildren while the parents go out to work.