



New research by IBB Solicitors reveals three in ten London grandparents and more than a third of grandparents in the North-East have been restricted access to their grandchildren (UK average is 15%)

*Grandparental alienation also markedly higher in Northern Ireland, Yorkshire and the South East of UK
Nearly two thirds UK grandparents want UK Government to pass law to change current restrictions over application to access*

New research published today reveals a breakdown in the extended UK family unit with more than a third of grandparents (34%) based in the North East and three in ten grandparents living in London admitting they have been restricted access to seeing their grandchildren. The UK average for restricted access was 15%.

The research which was commissioned by IBB Solicitors¹ and conducted by independent research agency Atomik Research in July 2019, surveyed 2002 grandparents across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Two thirds of respondents cited the reasons for restricted access were their sons, daughters or spouses were intentionally difficult. Nearly a quarter (22%) believed divorce or separation was the precipitating factor and a further 7% stated they had been victims of grandparental alienation by their own daughters, sons and/or spouses.

More than a fifth of all grandparents in the UK (21%) also admitted that restricted grandparent access has occurred amongst their friends or social circle. Again, the statistic was even higher in London (36%) and North East (26%), although grandparental alienation is also high in Yorkshire (18%), Northern Ireland (17%) and the South East (14%).

Nearly two thirds of UK grandparents (62%) are now calling for the UK Government to make changes to the current family law, which states that only people with parental responsibility, for example parents, step-parents or guardians can make an automatic application for a Child Arrangements Order to gain access to seeing their children. Nearly a third (31%) believe a law should be passed in special cases where the parent's mental or physical health is an issue and could pose a risk to the child/children to allow Grandparents to apply automatically for a Child Arrangements Order.

Nearly a quarter of all grandparents (23%) also admitted that they only see their grandchildren every few months, once or every other year or never at all. Although distance was cited as the main reason for not seeing their grandchildren, a quarter overall said family relations breaking down and restricted access, along with their sons, daughters and spouses not making the effort were the reasons for infrequent contact with their grandchildren.

Vicky Preece, a Senior Solicitor with IBB Solicitor's family practice, comments:

"The research clearly highlights that behind the scenes, family relations have or are breaking down across the UK. In many parts of the world, grandparents are seen as an integral part of the family unit and yet in certain regions of the UK, the research shows a stark contrast with a significant percentage of the grandparents being restricted from spending any time with their grandchildren, or are aware of their friends and social circle that have been also affected.

¹ IBB Solicitors is a full services law firm based in West London with clients across the Capital, Thames Valley and the Western Home Counties

“We hear or read about parental alienation on the rise, but there should be greater scrutiny and ensuing support for those who are victims of grandparental alienation.

“Whilst there has been previous activity in Parliament to address the current legal restrictions over grandparental application regarding contact with their grandchildren, activity seems to have reached a stagnant stage. I would urge those in Government to make this a top priority to support the pressing family needs for workable child arrangements across the UK.”

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Notes to Editor

IBB Solicitors is a full services law firm based in West London, with clients across the Capital, Thames Valley and the western Home Counties.

Its family law practice (familylaw@ibblaw.co.uk) provide expert advice for high-net-worth individuals in divorce cases involving assets ranging from £2m to £10m; pre-nuptial and post-nuptial agreements, co-habitation agreements and pre-civil partnership agreements; and representing children in private law cases in disputes involving contact and residence arrangements following the breakdown of parental relationships”.

About Vicky Preece

Vicky Preece is a senior family lawyer and a specialist in Children Law at IBB solicitors. Recognised to be one of the best UK lawyers in her field, Vicky was awarded the prestigious Solicitor Advocate of the Year in the 11th Law Society Excellence Awards 2017.

Vicky, who has been practicing as a family lawyer for 17 years, has specialised in Children Law since she became a member of the Law Society’s Children Panel in 2007.

Respected by the Judiciary for the quality of her advocacy in all levels of the Family Court and Court of Appeal, Vicky has worked on numerous cases representing vulnerable clients and children. Vicky and the team at IBB solicitors have particular expertise handling cases around public and private law childcare, domestic abuse, care and adoption as well as disagreements which arise over where children live and how much time they spend with each parent.