



March 2026

Kia ora koutou,

Nau mai rā - a warm welcome to our March pānui. We have a new look and feel for our pānui to make it easier for you to read and engage with - please feel free to reply to this email with any feedback you may have.

A huge ngā mihi nui to our funders, donors, volunteers, members, and staff. Your support makes real change possible. Recently, our kaitaunaki advocates helped one carer navigate disability services - leading to their grandchild finally receiving a diagnosis and the right supports. Another carer told us that connecting with a local support group meant being understood for the first time.

These stories reflect the wider impact you help create. [ImpactLab's evaluation](#) shows that every \$1 invested in GRG generates \$4.10 in measurable good for Aotearoa.

This month we're pleased to share our Annual Report, highlighting the difference your support enables. If you're in a position to do so, we would be grateful for any donations to help us continue this important mahi. You can make one off donations or regular donations - even \$5 helps our mahi to support carers and tamariki.

[Click here to learn about supporting our mahi](#)

Ngā mihi nui for everything you do. Together, we can create a brighter future for all tamariki in Aotearoa.

Ngā manaakitanga,

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

In this Pānui

- **Our Impact:** Our 2024/25 Annual Report, how we've supported carers to have a break, and our 2026 member survey.
- **GRG Updates:** Introducing our new Interim GM, the Excellence in Foster Care Awards, and our new partnership with Oranga Tamariki to pilot neurodiversity support groups.
- **Advocacy and Support:** Learn about how we can support you through our Taunaki service, the Extraordinary Care Fund closing soon, and our advocacy for carers.
- **Support Groups:** Find out more about what to expect at a support group and opportunities to volunteer as a local Support Group Coordinator.
- **Technology and Parenting:** We share top tips for parenting with technology, research and resources into online harm, and a FREE parenting in the digital world e-learning course.

Our Impact

Our 2024/25 Annual Report

Our Annual Report for 2024/25 was published in December 2025. Here are some of the key highlights from last year:

- We continued to support our 6,214 whānau members with free access to our services, with 569 new families joining.
- 899 families (that's almost 4 every workday) received support through our advocacy support service.
- Our advocates supported carers to receive their financial entitlements for caring. Our work meant \$868,896 in income support arrears were paid to our member families.



Here's what one of our members said: "The Grandparents Raising Grandchildren group and emails has been a godsend of help and information over the last 5 years and so many of us would be lost without this wonderful organisation and all the people behind it. Thank you a million times over".

[Click here to read our annual report](#)

Supporting Carers to Have Breaks

Thanks to the generosity of MFS International, we were able to fund holiday programmes and activities for 81 whānau in the last six months. This funding provided carers a small amount of respite from caring during school holidays.

Here's what some of our carers who received this support said:

- *"I was extremely grateful for the funding as I have 3 grandchildren. 2 neurodiverse and this allowed me to spend extra time with them doing activities while their sibling was at camp. It was a first camp which also helped build confidence and friendships in a new environment."*
- *"I've had my moko solely in my care for just over two years now. I work full-time, and it's just the two of us. Paying for holiday programmes has been a big adjustment to our budget, but it's something I need to do so I can continue working. My moko absolutely loves her holiday programme — she feels safe there, knows the other tamariki and staff, and looks forward to going. I feel at ease knowing she's in a place where she's happy and well cared for."*

We will be offering this support again to our members in the July school holidays - please keep an eye out in your emails for more information.

Our 2026 Member Feedback Survey

We recently completed our 2026 Member Feedback Survey. We had our highest ever response rate! Thank you for participating in this

survey - your feedback and insights are invaluable to help us to understand your needs and how we can best support you.

We're still analysing what we heard, but here are some headline findings:

- **Our support and advocacy makes a real difference**
Many respondents highlighted the impact of having someone “in their corner”, particularly when navigating complex systems such as MSD, Oranga Tamariki, and schools.
- **Emotional support is as important as practical help**
Caregivers valued feeling heard, believed, and less alone, alongside receiving practical advice and advocacy. Our support groups were one way we achieved this.
- **Our support strengthens confidence and resilience**
Feedback showed that support helped caregivers feel more confident to advocate for themselves and their mokopuna over time.

We received some powerful feedback, which included:

"Having someone who understands and stands beside you makes all the difference. I finally felt heard and supported."

"GRG gave me the confidence and strength to keep going when things felt overwhelming. I don't feel alone anymore."

Congratulations also to the winners of the five \$50 Prezzy Cards.

GRG Updates

Introducing Dr Braden Clark - our new Interim General Manager

Kia ora koutou,

I am so excited to be leading the team at GRG and to make a difference in the lives of the tamariki and whānau we serve.

I am a registered social worker with significant practice and leadership experience



in working with children and families.

Last year, I was privileged to lead the [Strengthening Kinship Care in Aotearoa New Zealand](#) research project. This research and my social work experience have provided me with a strong understanding of the strengths, challenges, and needs of grandparent and whānau carers.

Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with my friends and family, drinking coffee and eating good food, baking, spending time at the beach, and playing board games.

I look forward to continuing to amplify the legacy and impact GRG has made over the last 25 years!

Please feel free to reach out to me if there is anything I can do to support. You can reach me via email: braden@grg.org.nz or by phoning 0800 GRANDS (0800 472 637).

Mauri ora,

Braden

2026 Excellence in Foster Care Awards

We were honoured to attend the 2026 Excellence in Foster Care Awards, hosted by Caring Families Aotearoa.

Congratulations to all of the winners. We want to specifically acknowledge the two whānau carers who were recipients of awards this year: Lena and Phil Stirrup, and Kaea Flight and James Nansen.



Lena and Phil are GRG members and are active in the Rotorua community supporting other whānau carers through Kids in Need Waikato and Caring Families Aotearoa. Lena and Phil have raised their 13-year old moko (grandchild) since she was just 12 months old. They took her into their loving care without hesitation as it was clear

to them both from the outset that they would do whatever it takes to ensure the best possible outcome for their granddaughter.

Daily life changed radically for Lena and Phil at the ages of 52 and 59 respectively with a baby in the house full-time. Little Sarah* arrived with a condition called vacant stares, where she would withdraw for short periods due to the trauma and neglect she had suffered. With perseverance, love, patience and empathy, Sarah adjusted well to her new environment and the couple set out to learn as much as they possibly could about raising a child impacted by trauma.

Local schoolteacher Wendy says Lena and Phil are “the silent heroes, like many grandparents, who are filling in the gap for a generation that struggles. [Sarah] is thriving and loved and quirky and happy and allowed to be truly who she is.”

Coming Soon: Neurodiversity Support Groups

We're proud to announce we've partnered with Oranga Tamariki to pilot support groups for carers of neurodivergent tamariki.

Our recent membership survey found almost 50% of carers are caring for tamariki with a disability, chronic health condition or learning difficulties. Over 60% of these reported tamariki are neurodivergent and support focused on caring for these tamariki would be useful.

We'll be sharing more details about how you can be involved with this pilot in coming weeks - keep an eye on your inbox for more information.

Support and Advocacy

We provide specialist support to grandparent and whānau carers. We support you to focus on providing high-quality care to tamariki by providing support and advocacy for you. We are a listening ear for you and we seek to understand your whānau needs. Our Kaitaunaki can support you in a number of ways, including:

- Navigating systems and services, helping to connect you to local services and supports.

- Providing you with advice about financial entitlements and advocating for you where these are not in place.
- Helping you navigate Oranga Tamariki, the Family Court, or education systems.
- Providing advice or guidance around caring for tamariki who have experienced trauma or adversity or have additional needs.

To find out more about how we might be able to support you and your whānau, contact our kaitaunaki on 0800 GRANDS (0800 472 637) or email advocates@grg.org.nz

NEED HELP?



GRANDPARENTS
RAISING
GRANDCHILDREN

Contact Us

advocates@grg.org.nz
0800 GRANDS (0800 472 637)
www.grg.org.nz

Extraordinary Care Fund Closes Soon

The Extraordinary Care Fund (ECF) helps pay for extra costs you have because a child you care for:

- shows promise in an ability, skill, or talent, for example in school, sports, dance, or music
- is experiencing difficulties that impact their development, for example learning or behavioural difficulties

You can apply if you get the Orphan's Benefit or Unsupported Child's Benefit. You can only receive one ECF grant of up to \$2,000 per year.

If you **apply by 24 April 2026**, you will hear back by 23 June 2026. If you require more guidance or advice around the ECF, get in touch with our Taunaki: Support and Advocacy service on 0800 GRANDS (0800 472 637) or email advocates@grg.org.nz

[Click here to learn more about the ECF](#)

Advocating for Carers

The Ministry for Social Development (MSD) released a draft Carers Strategy and Action Plan for consultation. We have advocated for kinship and whānau carers by completing a submission alongside our key partners (VOYCE Whakarongo Mai, Family for Every Child, Children's Rights Alliance, and the Foundation for Equity and Research NZ).

Some of our key messages to MSD were:

- **See Every Carer:** We need to broaden the definition to explicitly include informal kinship, whānau, and matua whāngai carers.
- **Empower Māori-Led Solutions:** We're calling for a Māori-led review of the Care of Children Act to ensure it truly aligns with Te Ao Māori.
- **Bridge the Funding Gap:** A diagnosis for a child shouldn't just be a label - it must be a guaranteed gateway to funded support. No more waiting in limbo.
- **Fix the Inequity:** We must end the unfair divide between "statutory" and "non-statutory" carers. A child's needs don't change based on their legal status.

[Click here to learn read our submission](#)

Support Groups

Our support groups meet monthly or fortnightly across the country to ensure that every caregiver is supported. Led by experienced coordinators who often have lived experience raising their own grandchildren, these groups focus on building connection, reducing isolation, and providing vital information.

What to Expect from a GRG Support Group

- **Lived Experience & Connection:** You will meet others walking a similar path. Because groups are led by those with first-hand experience in kinship care, they provide a safe, non-judgmental space to share challenges and successes.

- **Referrals to our Taunaki: Support and Advocacy Service:** While the groups focus on peer support, your coordinator can provide a direct referral to our national Taunaki support and advocacy team for specialised assistance with more complex cases.
- **Information & Training:** Support groups often have guest speakers and training sessions that provide you with information. Examples of this include speakers from WINZ, Family Court Navigators, First Aid training courses and parenting courses such as the Triple P course.
- **Social Opportunities:** Groups often organise coffee mornings and whānau outings, giving both caregivers and children a chance to relax, have fun, and recharge in a supportive community.

Learn more about your local support group

To learn more about your local support group, get in touch with us by emailing office@grg.org.nz or phoning 0800 GRANDS (0800 472 637).

Are you our next Support Group Coordinator?

With over 6,000 members across the country, we rely on volunteer Support Group Coordinators to run regular support groups for members. Our support groups provide grandparent and whānau carers peer support that is so valuable when sharing their experiences and accumulated knowledge.

We're currently looking for volunteer Support Group Coordinators in the following areas:

- Te Kuiti
- Taupō
- Whanganui
- Taumarunui
- Waihi/Coromandel
- West Coast
- Ashburton
- Timaru
- Otago

To learn more about becoming a volunteer with us, please email office@grg.org.nz to arrange a time for a no obligation chat.

Volunteering with us is about a 10 hour per month commitment and we provide full support, training, and the resources you need to run an effective support group.

Technology and Parenting

In each pānui, we will have a special section focused on a topic relating to caring. We'll share information, resources, and ideas. In this first special section, we explore technology and parenting.

Raising children today may look very different from when you raised your own. Technology is a big part of children's lives – used at school, to socialise and for entertainment. While the world of online gaming and social media can feel overwhelming, it can also be an opportunity to connect and support your grandchild in new ways.

It's important we help our kids find the right balance. Too much screen time can result in sleep disturbances, challenging behaviour and a lack of physical activity. There are some things that we can do, starting today, to support a balance – here are our top five tips:

5 Technology and Parenting Tips

- 1** Role model good technology habits
- 2** Have a family technology plan and rules
- 3** Offer choices to encourage safe technology use
- 4** Develop technology routines
- 5** Use transitions out of screen time

1. Role model good technology habits

Kids learn a lot about technology just by watching us. If we're constantly on our phones, they notice - so it helps to model the kind of habits we want them to develop. Simple things like having screen free time during meals or putting devices down to spend time together can make a big difference. Using technology in positive ways, like staying connected with others or learning something new, also shows them it's not just about mindless scrolling or gaming. Most

importantly, being present and giving them your full attention reminds them that people always come before screens

2. Develop a family technology plan and rules

Having clear, agreed upon rules around technology can make a big difference for everyone. A family technology plan is really just a shared set of expectations including when screens can be used, where they're allowed, and what's ok to watch or play. The key is to create these rules together so children feel involved and are more likely to stick to them. Keep rules simple and realistic (for example, no screens at the dinner table or no accessing certain websites), and revisit them as your child grows or new devices come into the home. One approach that has worked for some families is having teenagers hand in their phones at 8.30pm each night, which can support better sleep and a healthier routine. When everyone knows the boundaries, it helps reduce arguments and supports a healthier, more balanced approach to screen time. You might like to [watch this short video on a family technology plan by clicking here](#).

3. Offer choices

Giving kids some choice around screen time can make a big difference to how well they respond to limits. Instead of it feeling like everything is being decided for them, offering simple options like when they use their screen time or what they choose to watch within agreed boundaries, helps them feel more in control. You can still keep clear limits, but within those, children get a say. This not only reduces power struggles but also helps them learn to make good decisions about their own screen use over time.

4. Develop technology routines

Having a simple daily routine around screen time can make life a lot easier for both kids and us. Routines help children know what to expect, like when screens are ok and when they're not, which cuts down on constant asking (and arguments). For example, you might have screens only after homework or limit them to a set time in the evening. When screen use is just part of the normal routine, rather than something that's always up for negotiation, it creates a more balanced and predictable approach for everyone. The key here is to be consistent and try not to allow exceptions.

5. Screen time transitions

Switching off screens can be tricky, especially when kids are really engaged, so a bit of preparation goes a long way. Giving a clear heads up before screen time ends and letting children know what's coming next (like dinner or playtime) can make it feel less abrupt and reduce pushback. It also helps to have something positive ready to move onto, so it's not just "turn it off" but "now we're doing this instead." Using simple cues like timers or finishing at a natural stopping point (like the end of a show or game) can make transitions smoother too. Over time, being consistent with these expectations helps kids learn what to expect and makes switching off screens much less of a battle.

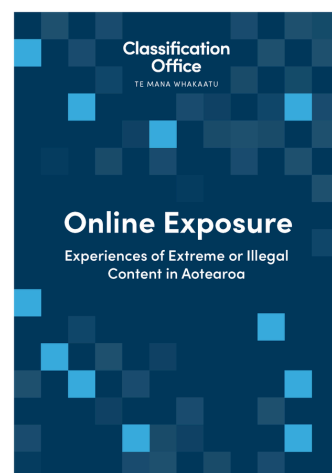
Technology will keep changing, but the most important thing for children is having supportive adults who are willing to learn alongside them. If you'd like to build your confidence further, there are helpful resources, training opportunities and digital courses available that explore online safety – see more about these below.

- [Police Managers' Guild Trust. Online safety – Mobile phones, cyberbullying, social media](#)
- [Raising Children Network. Managing screen time for children 3–11 years](#)

Online Exposure: Experiences of Extreme or Illegal Content in Aotearoa

The Classifications Office recently released research into online exposure and experiences of extreme or illegal content in Aotearoa. The research highlighted grandparents worried about their grandchildren being exposed to harmful online, with some grandparents not being sure of how to support their grandchildren.

The Classifications Office shared some useful tips for supporting your grandchildren to be safe with online content.



[Click here to read report](#)

Check in with your grandchildren

- Let them know that sometimes harmful content shows up **without warning**.
- If they've seen something upsetting, it's **not their fault** - and they **don't have to deal with it alone**.
- Make space for **open conversations, questions, and feelings**.



The Classifications Office have some excellent resources to support parents, carers, and whānau to support tamariki navigating the online world. Some of our favourites are:

- [Conversation starts about harmful online content](#)
- [How do we talk with kids about seeing harmful content online?](#)
- [How to talk to young people about pornography](#)
- [Talking with young people about what they're watching](#)

[Click here to view resources](#)

FREE e-Learning: Parenting in the Digital World

[Safeguarding Children](#) have a **free** e-learning course, **Parenting in the Digital World**. This course supports parents and caregivers to

feel more confident in guiding their children and young people to stay safe, well and connected in the digital world.

You'll learn how to navigate the opportunities and challenges of parenting in the online environment. It will help you build knowledge, start conversations and put protective strategies in place to reduce risk and promote digital wellbeing.

You don't need to be tech-savvy to benefit from this course, just curious, open to learning and wanting to protect and empower the young people in your life.

Click here to start e-learning



GRANDPARENTS
RAISING
GRANDCHILDREN

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