Christine Walker is one of a growing number of “grandparent carers” in North Yorkshire – yet it is a role she had little time to prepare for.

She received a text from her daughter one Friday evening asking for help—and by the Monday morning her eight-year-old grandson, Scott, was living full-time with her and her 14-year-old son, Robert, at the family home.

Christine felt completely alone. Scott’s teachers labelled him a ‘problem kid’ and the villagers where they lived ostracised the whole family, that’s when she discovered Carers’ Resource.

The charity’s Catherine Thompson became a close link and helped Christine emotionally, financially and practically as she struggled to come to terms with the unrelenting pressures of being a full-time carer.

“I am not sure what I would have done without her,” admitted Christine. “I was going around in circles trying to get support. I went to bed at night not wanting to wake up. I kept thinking about what tomorrow would bring. Would it be better? Or would it be worse?

“It felt like walking up a huge mountain – and in your sandals.”

Christine (right) and Catherine

As well as a caring organisation, The Carers’ Resource is also a listening one. And it was this attribute that marked the initial step in Christine’s day-to-day life being transformed.

“For the first time, somebody sat down and listened to me and what I had to say.” She said. “The charity is not judgemental and understands how your life can be like. It’s like having a friend with whom you can discuss any problem – and it will always help.

“It lifted my spirits and restored my confidence. You knew it was on your side and batting for you.”

The charity has held Christine’s hand and guided her through the complex benefits maze, filling in forms which have enabled her to claim Disability Living Allowance for her grandson, as well as Carers’ Allowance, income support and an uplift in tax credits for herself.

It has applied to the Family Fund for a grant to pay for a short break to Butlins for Christine, a friend to help, and the two boys; and secured her a cinema pass which enables her to go for free when she takes Scott. Catherine has also put Christine in touch with the Grandparents’ Association, where she can share her experiences with other ‘grandparent carers’ – something which will help her in the role.

And she has also paved the way for Robert to join a Young Carers’ Youth Club in Harrogate, which gives him the opportunity to discuss and share his own experiences with his peers, all of whom live in a ‘caring’ household themselves.

“There must be 100s of people in a similar position to the one I was in, not knowing who to turn to or what to do for support.

The Carers’ Resource do not do things for you – they do things with you. But they have made such a big difference in such a short space of time that when I look back to the dark days in the beginning, I cannot believe how far I have come – and now the future looks bright.”

“It felt like walking up a huge mountain – and in your sandals.”