

Policy briefing Paper

Statistics

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We champion the wider
family who care for children

Demographics

- There are 14 million grandparents in the UK¹
- 1.5 million are aged under 50²
- 7 million are under 65³
- Overall grandparents are getting older but there are two very different experiences of grandparenting in Britain today. This is determined by income and socio-economic circumstances. Working class women are 4 times more likely to become a grandparent before their 50th birthday (21.5% compared to 5.3%) and more than twice as likely before their 60th birthday (56% compared to 26.4%) than middle class women.⁴
- Working class grandparents are more likely than middle class grandparents to belong to four generation families. These families are also amongst the poorest with higher levels of great-grandchild poverty.⁵

Poverty⁶

- Grandparents are getting poorer – the proportion of all grandparents with grandchildren aged under 16 who are living on low incomes increased by a third between 1998-2007 (from 18% to 26%)
- The proportion of single grandparents has doubled from 8% to 15% between 1998-2007. This does not include widows. 36% of single grandmothers are aged under 55.
- Single parenthood is intensifying for some families. A growing proportion of single grandparents have children who are single parents themselves (31% in 1998 rising to 38% in 2007). These families are particularly at risk of financial hardship.
- Working age grandmothers on low incomes are most likely to be providing the childcare. They are also more likely to report that they have given up work or reduced their working hours in order to do so and are under the greatest pressure to combine work and care. Additionally, although they are not the poorest grandparents (the poorest are those who are dependent on pension income), they are also the group most likely to report that they are finding it difficult to cope financially, suggesting that it may be the struggle to combine work and care which is significant here.

Childcare

- 1 in 3 families depend on grandparents for childcare.⁷
- There is a direct correlation between a mother's employment and whether her own mother is alive. This evident without even knowing what kind of support the grandparent is providing.⁸
- Half (47%) of single parents depend on grandparents for childcare.⁹

- The value of the grandparental childcare contribution has been calculated at £3.9billion.¹⁰
- 4 out of 10 parents say they are more likely to turn to grandparents for extra help with childcare during the recession.¹¹
- Over 6 out of 10 (64%) mothers working in professional and managerial roles use formal childcare compared to just 1 in 20 (6%) mothers unskilled and semi-skilled jobs. Half of mothers in low paid work rely on grandparents for childcare.¹²
- Almost half (45%) of grandparents aged under 54 are providing childcare 'often' compared to 1 in 4 (25%) of those aged 65-74.¹³
- Children cared for by grandparents are thought to be less 'school ready' than those in formal childcare settings.¹⁴

Financial Support

- 3 out of 10 (31%) grandparents put money aside to help their grandchildren get onto the property ladder.¹⁵
- 16% of grandparents in their 60s and one third of grandparents in their 70s provide financial support to grandchildren.¹⁶
- grandparents contribute £470 million to child trust funds each year.¹⁷
- 3 out of 10 parents say in the current financial situation they are likely to turn to their own mum or dad for financial help.¹⁸
- £4 billion per year is already inherited by 2nd generations, (ie skipping parents).¹⁹

Advice and practical support²⁰

- When asked who they would go to for advice about their child's health one third (32%) of parents said their own mum or dad ahead of friends, the internet or media.
- In the recession parents are increasingly likely to turn to grandparents for advice and support with almost 6 out of 10 (57%) saying they are either likely or very likely to do so.
- Over 6 out of 10 (63%) parents said that their own mum or dad was important in supporting them or their immediate family when they had a baby.

Family and Friends (kinship) Care

- 200,000 grandparents are raising their grandchildren ('kinship carers'), most in difficult family circumstances and with little or no support.²¹
- Children brought up in kinship care have similar multiple adversity experiences to those in stranger foster care.
- 3 out of 4 kinship carers experience financial hardship.²²
- Only 16% of children placed by local authorities into foster care are placed with family and friends carers.²³
- When parents were asked who they would want to care for their child if they were unable to do so they listed their own mum or dad (65%), other family (56%) or friends (27%). Only 1% opted for care by children's services.²⁴

Contact and family separation

- 1 million children lose touch with their grandparents as a result of separation or divorce.²⁵
- Before separation 6 out of 10 paternal grandparents report feeling very close to their grandchildren but this drops to 3 out of 10 after separation.²⁶
- A recent Grandparents Association survey found that before parental separation over half (55%) of grandparents said they were directly involved in their grandchild's care but after parental separation 4 out of 10 (42%) grandparents lost all face-to-face contact with their grandchildren.²⁷

¹ Broad, B. *Being a Grandparent: research evidence, key themes and policy recommendations*, Grandparents Association, 2007

² Op cit Broad, 2007.

³ Op cit Broad, 2007.

⁴ Griggs, J *The Poor Relation? Grandparental care: where older people's poverty and child poverty meet*. Grandparents Plus, Equality and Human Rights Commission 2009

⁵ Op cit, Griggs, 2009.

⁶ All statistics in this section are from Op cit, Griggs, 2009

⁷ Office for National Statistics, *Social Trends*, April 2009

⁸ Op cit, Griggs, J 2009.

⁹ Bell, A et al *A question of balance, lone parents, childcare and work*. Department for Work and Pensions Research Report 230, 2005.

¹⁰ *The Economy of Older People*, Age Concern, 2004.

¹¹ Grandparents Plus, YouGov survey Feb 2009.

¹² Dex, S and Ward K. *Parental care and employment in early childhood*. Analysis of the Millennium Cohort Study, 2007.

¹³ Op cit, Griggs J 2009.

¹⁴ Hanson, K and Hawkes, D. *Journal of Social Policy*, Cambridge University Press, 38 p211-239, Feb 2009

¹⁵ *The future of retirement: the new old age*, HSBC, 2007.

¹⁶ Op cit, HSBC 2007.

¹⁷ Children's Mutual, Press Release, 29.09.2008.

¹⁸ Op cit, Grandparents Plus/You Gov Feb 2009.

¹⁹ Huber, J and Skidmore, P. *The new old: why baby boomers won't be pensioned off*, Demos, 2003.

²⁰ All findings in this section, op cit, Grandparents Plus, YouGov Feb 2009.

²¹ *Forgotten Families*, Adfam and Grandparents Plus, 2006.

²² *Rethinking Family Life: exploring the role of grandparents and the wider family*, Grandparents Plus, 2009.

²³ *Children Looked After in England (including adoption and care leavers). Year ending 31st March 2008*. Department for Children Schools and Families, 2008.

²⁴ Op cit Grandparents Plus YouGov Feb 2009.

²⁵ Grandparents Association estimate, 2009.

²⁶ *Families in Britain Evidence Paper*, Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008.

²⁷ *Beyond the nuclear: including the wider family*, Grandparents Association, Families Need Fathers, 2009.