

Policy briefing Paper 01

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We champion the wider family who care for children

Statistics

Demographics

- There are 14¹ million grandparents in the UK, of whom around half are under the age of 65.
- 1 in 10 grandparents is aged under 50.²
- 80% of 20 year olds have at least one living grandparent.³
- The average 10 year old has 3 grandparents living, compared with 1950 when they had 2.⁴
- Overall grandparents are getting older but working class women are 4 times more likely to become a grandparent before their 50th birthday than middle class women (22% compared to 5%). They are more than twice as likely to become a grandmother before their 60th birthday (56% for working class women compared to 26% for middle class).⁵
- Working class grandparents are more likely than middle class grandparents to belong to four generation families⁶.
- The majority of grandparents (62%) are no longer the senior generation in the family⁷.

Poverty

- The proportion of single grandparents (not including widows) doubled from 8% to 15% between 1998 and 2007. 36% of single grandmothers are aged under 55.⁸
- 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.⁹
- Grandparents in four generation families are at greater risk of poverty than those in three generation families.¹⁰
- Grandmothers under the age of 55 are the most likely to report that they are providing childcare "often" and are also the group most likely to report that they are finding it difficult to cope financially.¹¹

Childcare

- One in three working mothers rely on grandparents for childcare, and one in four of all working families¹².
- 43% of children aged under five whose mother is working are looked after by grandparents, 42% of children aged between five and ten, and 18% of 11 to 16 year olds¹³.
- Mothers are more likely to be in employment if their own mother is alive.¹⁴
- The value of the grandparental childcare contribution has been estimated at £3.9billion.¹⁵

- 4 out of 10 parents say they are more likely to turn to grandparents for extra help with childcare during the recession.¹⁶
- Almost half (45%) of grandparents aged under 54 are providing childcare 'often' compared to 1 in 4 (25%) of those aged 65-74.¹⁷
- Children who were looked after by grandparents are less school ready and have more difficulties getting on with other children than pre-schoolers who attended formal childcare, but those cared for by grandparents have better vocabularies¹⁸.

Financial Support

- It is only when grandparents reach 75 or older that they are more likely to receive than give financial and practical help¹⁹.
- 3 in 10 (31%) grandparents put money aside to help their grandchildren get onto the property ladder.²⁰
- 16% of grandparents in their 60s and one third of grandparents in their 70s provide financial support to grandchildren.²¹
- 3 in 10 parents say in the recession they are likely to turn to their own mum or dad for financial help.²²
- £4 billion per year is inherited by second generations (i.e. skipping parents).²³

Advice and practical support

- 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 media²⁴.
- In the recession parents said they were increasingly likely to turn to grandparents for advice and support with almost 6 out of 10 (57%) saying they were either likely or very likely to do so²⁵.
- 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 baby²⁶.
- 4 out of 10 grandparents with a preschool aged grandchild see them weekly, and 25% of grandparents with a teenage grandchild²⁷.
- Grandparents often play an important role in families with a disabled child or parent, providing emotional, practical and financial support especially at times of crisis.²⁸
- Children who have a grandparent involved in their care are less likely to be taken to accident and emergency departments with minor conditions not needing treatment.²⁹

Family and Friends (kinship) Care

- 200,000 grandparents and other family and friends carers are raising their grandchildren often in difficult family circumstances and with little or no support.³⁰
- 48% of family and friends carers are looking after at least one child with a disability or special educational needs.³¹
- 47% are looking after the child/children because of parental drug or alcohol abuse. Other common reasons include abuse or neglect (28%) and parental illness or disability (16%)³².

- Most family and friends carers are on low incomes in comparison with the average income of £500 a week.³³ 65% report an income of below £300 per week. 57% of family and friends carers gave up work or reduced their hours when they took on care of a child³⁴.
- 6 out of 10 family and friends carers have a chronic health condition or a disability³⁵.
- 30% are also a carer for an elderly or disabled relative, partner or friend³⁶.
- 77% were involved in legal proceedings when taking on care of a child³⁷.
- 59% of family and friends carers report that they feel isolated. Most of those (68%) who had contact with children's social services were dissatisfied with their experience and two thirds of those who said they received no help from social services said they had asked for help.³⁸
- Children brought up in kinship foster care have experienced similar multiple adversities to those in stranger foster care prior to placement.^{39,40}
- 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.⁴¹
- Only 15% of children placed by local authorities in foster care are with family and friends foster carers.⁴²

Contact and family separation

- 1 million children lose touch with their grandparents as a result of separation or divorce.⁴³
- 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.⁴⁴

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

² Broad, B. Being a Grandparent: research evidence, key themes and policy recommendations, Grandparents Association, 2007

³ Grundy, Murphy and Shelton, Looking Beyond the Household: intergenerational perspectives on living kins and contacts with kin in Great Britain." Population Trends vol no 97, pp19-27, 1999.

⁴ Chief Medical Officer's Report, 2010.

⁵ Griggs, J. The Poor Relation? Grandparental care: where older people's poverty and child poverty meet. Grandparents Plus, Equality and Human Rights Commission 2009

⁶ Dench, G and Ogg J, Grandparenting in Britain, a baseline study Institute of Community Studies, 2002.

⁷ Dench, G and Ogg J, Grandparenting in Britain, a baseline study Institute of Community Studies, 2002.

⁸ All statistics in this section are from Griggs, J. The Poor Relation? Grandparental care: where older people's poverty and child poverty meet. Grandparents Plus, Equality and Human Rights Commission 2009

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¹¹ All statistics in this section are from Griggs, J. The Poor Relation? Grandparental care: where older people's poverty and child poverty meet. Grandparents Plus, Equality and Human Rights Commission 2009

¹² Speight, S et al, Childcare and Early Years, Survey of Parents 2008 Research Report no DCSF-RR136, DCSF, 2009 Svetlana

¹³ Social Trends, 2010,

¹⁴ Griggs, J. The Poor Relation? Grandparental care: where older people's poverty and child poverty meet. Grandparents Plus, Equality and Human Rights Commission 2009

¹⁵ The Economy of Older People, Age Concern, 2004.

¹⁶ Grandparents Plus, YouGov survey Feb 2009.

¹⁷ Griggs, J. The Poor Relation? Grandparental care: where older people's poverty and child poverty meet. Grandparents Plus, Equality and Human Rights Commission 2009

¹⁸ Hansen K and Hawkes, D, Early Childcare and Child Development, Journal of Social Policy Vol 38 Issue 2, pp 211-239, 2009.

¹⁹ Glaser K et al, Grandparenting in Europe, Grandparents Plus, 2010.

²⁰ The future of retirement: the new old age, HSBC, 2007.

²¹ The future of retirement: the new old age, HSBC, 2007.

²² Grandparents Plus, YouGov Feb 2009.

²³ Huber, J and Skidmore, P. The new old: why baby boomers won't be pensioned off, Demos, 2003.

²⁴ Grandparents Plus, YouGov Feb 2009.

²⁵ Grandparents Plus, YouGov Feb 2009.

²⁶ Grandparents Plus, YouGov Feb 2009.

²⁷ Dench G and Ogg J, Grandparenting in Britain, Institute of Community Studies, 2002, pp 70-76.

²⁸ Hastings, R. Grandparents of children with severe disabilities, International Journal of Disability, Development and Education, 44(4);329-340, 1997.

²⁹ Fergusson, E, Li J and Taylor B, Grandmothers' Role in preventing unnecessary accident and emergency attendances: cohort study, BMJ, Vol317 19-29 Dec 1998.

³⁰ Forgotten Families, Adfam and Grandparents Plus, 2006.

³¹ Wellard, S and Wheatley, B, Family and Friends Care *What if we said no?* Grandparents Plus, October 2010.

³² Wellard, S and Wheatley, B, Family and Friends Care *What if we said no?* Grandparents Plus, October 2010.

³³ ONS Data for 2008/2009 places the middle quintile of the population on an average final household income of around £26k, or £500 a week. Source: Andrew Barnard, Office for National Statistics, The effects of taxes and benefits on household income, 2008/09, p. 4. http://www.statistics.gov.uk/articles/nojournal/Taxes_Benefits0809.pdf

³⁴ Wellard, S and Wheatley, B, Family and Friends Care *What if we said no?* Grandparents Plus, October 2010.

³⁵ Wellard, S and Wheatley, B, Family and Friends Care *What if we said no?* Grandparents Plus, October 2010.

³⁶ Wellard, S and Wheatley, B, Family and Friends Care *What if we said no?* Grandparents Plus, October 2010.

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⁴³ Grandparents Association estimate, 2009.

⁴⁴ Families in Britain Evidence Paper, Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008.