

Grandparent issues

There are an [estimated 14 million](#) grandparents in the UK and [75% of adults](#) will likely become grandparents.

Grandparents, great grandparents, great aunts and uncles can play a positive part in young people's lives. They can be a great role model and bring extra love, experience and learning to a child's life. In return grandchildren can bring much joy to grandparents.

Providing childcare for your grandchildren

In the past two generations, the number of children being cared for by their grandparents has increased substantially from [33% to 82%](#). Almost two-thirds of all grandparents regularly look after their grandchildren. This doesn't mean that every grandparent wants or feels able to look after a young child.

The cost of nurseries and childminders can be very expensive, meaning that many parents often turn to grandparents for help with childcare. Grandparents providing childcare for their grandchildren save working parents approximately £6.8 billion nationally in childcare costs.

Of course, many grandparents look after their grandchildren for enjoyment and the opportunity to see their grandchildren regularly, as well as because their parents are unable to afford the childcare costs. It is a big decision though as the commitment you make enables parents to return to work and the employer then relies upon them to contribute to their workforce.

Grandparents who are looking after their grandchildren can now claim up to £2,300 extra towards their state pension from 1st October 2020.

Discuss the arrangements with your family

If you are going to be involved in looking after your grandchildren on a regular basis,

talking things through with your family is vital to avoid any misunderstandings about how and when you are going to look after them. You need to be honest about your views, your time, your priorities, so your family has the opportunity to respect your needs as well.

It is a good idea to check in an review the arrangement every so often. Your family may have more children and hope that you'll be able to look after more than one grandchild. You may be happy to do some housework at the same time as looking after your grandchild, but this may change as you get older.

Things to think about when planning to help with childcare

- 1. Where and when:** What are the hours involved? Will they be the same each week? Will I look after my grandchild (or grandchildren) at my house or at theirs? Can I take a day off, and, if so, how much notice is needed? Is there someone else who can provide cover, especially at short notice, for example if I'm ill?
- 2. Trial period:** Many people say that the best thing to do is to have a trial period and then to review things. You may feel that you don't get enough free time to pursue other interests, or that you get too tired.
- 3. Extras:** Will you be expected to feed the pets, help out with laundry or other housework, or cook meals? You may be put off, not by looking after your grandchildren, but because you feel overloaded with other expectations.
- 4. Family time:** Talk through how you'll still be a family. Some grandparents feel that they miss out on 'family time' once they're helping with childcare, as they only get to see their grandchildren and children as part of the childcare arrangement.
- 5. Safety:** If you're going to be looking after your grandchild (or grandchildren) in your own home, you'll need to think about safety issues. Ponds, glass tables, and low unlocked cupboards with household products in can all be potential hazards.
- 6. Childcare style:** Parenting styles come and go, so you may not see eye to eye with your children on how to look after your grandchildren. You all need to be honest on what you feel is important, respecting your children's views on discipline, sweet-eating, watching television and playing.
- 7. Costs:** Who will pay for treats, meals and outings?

8. Work and pension: Do you need to reduce your working hours or give up paid work to make time to look after your grandchildren? or you may struggle to raise your grandchildren on a [pension](#).

9. Retirement: What are your plans? Make sure you still have time to socialise, travel or try something new.

10. Technology and digital skills: It can be useful to learn digital skills so you can go online with your grandchildren. [Computer classes and support is available](#) if you need help.

Activities to do with your grandchildren

There are lots of activities that you can join in with your grandchildren, many are free.

Parent and Toddler Groups

These groups offer play opportunities for children under the age of five years old, as well as the opportunity to mix with others. There are approximately one hundred toddler groups in Newcastle.

[Newcastle Support Directory](#) is the local website where you can find activities and groups for babies, children's and young people

[North East Action for Children Parents and Inclusion \(NAPI\)](#) list all the local groups in the City.

Toy Libraries

There are also a number of Toy Libraries in Newcastle, which loan out toys, books and games for children to play with at home. Contact [North East Action for Children Parents and Inclusion \(NAPI\)](#) to find out if there is a toy library near you.

Libraries

Many of the [libraries in Newcastle](#) have activities for children and story time

sessions for younger children.

Other ideas

For many other ideas, see our section on [Children's activities](#)

[Proud Grandparents](#) website offers more information on helping to look after your grandchildren, including topics such as dealing with a grandchild's misbehaviour, gift ideas and instilling self-esteem in grandchildren.

If your grandchildren live with you

Many grandparents in the UK look after their grandchildren full time. Grandchildren may live with you because your son or daughter is unable to do so. This is known as [family or friend caring, or 'Kinship caring'](#).

The care arrangements may be very informal or in some cases the carer can formally foster or become the legal guardian of the child or young person.

If your grandchild is living with you on a permanent basis, you may be able to claim [Child Benefit](#) and Child Tax Credit to help you out financially. You can talk to someone about all of the benefits you may be entitled to at an [independent advice service](#).

[Read more about local help and support if you are a carer for a young relative on InformationNOW.](#)

Family problems

You may be looking after your grandchildren more because your child is not able to. This could be because they are unwell or having some problems. Help is available for you and your loved one to support with:

- [mental health](#)
- [addictions](#)
- [bereavement and grief](#)

- [looking after someone](#)

[Read more about family and relationship problems on InformationNOW.](#)

If your son or daughter has died

In the UK it is estimated that at least 250,000 children and young people are growing up after the death of their parents. For some of these children, both parents have died. In many of these cases, the children go to live with their grandparents. This can bring real emotional, practical and financial pressures.

[Winston's Wish](#) is a child bereavement charity which supports families when a parent or sibling has died. They offer a range of services, such as a residential group work for bereaved families, individual work with grieving children, and support for grandparents who are caring for bereaved grandchildren.

Parental responsibility

The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of 'parental responsibility', which is defined as 'all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which, by law, a parent has in relation to a child and his property'. This Act sets out how adults other than parents, such as grandparents, can obtain parental responsibility and how they can become guardians.

When professionals, such as teachers or health staff, are working with your grandchild they will usually want to know who has parental responsibility, as it is that person who can make decisions regarding your grandchild's welfare.

For more information, see:

- [Family Lives](#) website section on [Kinship care](#)
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If you are a step grandparent

When relationships within your family change, one of the hardest aspects to manage may be accepting children into your family who have other parents.

You may find that your son or daughter becomes involved with a new partner who has

their own children, meaning that you become a step-grandparent. This can be really difficult. Hopefully, the following tips may help:

- **be welcoming** making new family is a difficult and stressful task. Everyone needs as much support and confidence-boosting as they can get.
 - **be fair** this means that if you're giving presents, time or attention, you need to share it out equally. Ignoring a child who you see as 'not yours' hurts not only the child, but your son or daughter too, and can hurt the other children who are involved.
 - **give the new members of your family a chance** you may find that you enjoy spending time with them too.
 - **give yourself time** don't be too hard on yourself if you don't like them immediately.
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If you are denied access to your grandchildren

[Family breakdown](#) can limit or prevent access between you and your grandchild (or grandchildren). It is estimated that over one million children are denied contact with their grandparents, often due to [divorce](#) or similar breakdown of family relationships.

Many grandparents lose contact with their grandchildren because they are not advised properly and because the legal system can be complicated and expensive.

The current law means that grandparents don't have an automatic right to apply for contact or residence of their grandchildren following divorce, separation or care proceedings. However, you do have the right to be made a party to the proceedings.

[Families Need Fathers](#) is a charity which works to keep children and all parents in contact after separation. It has many grandparents amongst its members and offers advice and support to anyone who needs help with these issues.

[Read more about family and relationship problems on InformationNOW.](#)

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Useful Organisations

Citizens Advice Newcastle (CAN)

Email: citycab@newcastlecab.org.uk

Website: <http://citizensadvice-newcastle.org.uk>

Telephone: 0808 278 7823

Address: 4th Floor, City Library, NE1 8AX

Child Benefit Office

Website: <https://www.gov.uk/contact-child-benefit-office>

Telephone: 0300 200 3100

Address: Child Benefit Office, NE88 1AA

Family Mediation Council

Website: <http://www.familymediationcouncil.org.uk/>

Telephone: 01707 594 055

Families Need Fathers

Email: admin@fnf.org.uk

Website: www.fnf.org.uk

Telephone: 01707 594 055

Kinship - formerly Grandparents Plus

Email: info@kinship.org.uk

Website: www.kinship.org.uk

Telephone: 03300 167 235

Address: The Foundry , SE11 5RR

North East Action for Children Parents and Inclusion (NAPI)

Email: admin@napi.org.uk

Website: www.napi.org.uk

Telephone: 0191 265 6158

Address: Heaton Community Centre, NE6 5DY

Winston's Wish

Email: info@winstonswish.org.uk

Website: www.winstonswish.org.uk

Telephone: 01242 515 157

Address: 3rd Floor Cheltenham House, GL50 3JR

Family Lives

Email: askus@familylives.org.uk

Website: www.familylives.org.uk

Telephone: 0191 284 4060

Address: Space Works, NE7 7LX

Grandparents Apart UK

Email: grandparentskk@btinternet.com

Website: www.grandparentsapart.co.uk

Telephone: 0141 882 5658

Grandparents As Parents (GAP)

Email: careandshare@hotmail.co.uk

Telephone: 0141 882 5658

Gransnet

Email: contactus@gransnet.com

Website: www.gransnet.com

Telephone: 0141 882 5658

Proud Grandparents

Website: www.proudgrandparents.co.uk

Telephone: 0141 882 5658

LaterLife

Email: laterlifeenquiries@laterlife.com

Website: <http://www.laterlife.com>

Telephone: 0141 882 5658

Separating better

Website: www.oneplusone.org.uk/separating-better

Telephone: 0141 882 5658

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