

Grannies are taught new parent skills as more pensioners become their children's sitters

By [Eleanor Harding](#)

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Grandmothers are to be trained in parenting as an increasing number are having to care for their children's babies.

A new course has been launched to provide updates to pensioners on the world of child development since they reared their own brood.

The five-week programme, one of the first of its kind, will cover topics such as resuscitation, weaning and community support, as well as modern equipment.



Granny graduates: the five week course will help refresh pensioner's memories on topics such as weaning and resuscitation (posed by models)
Midwife Sally Underdown is running the classes with Grannynet, a website set up to support the UK's seven million grandmothers, in Burham, Kent.

It comes as reports suggest more grandparents being called upon by their sons and daughters to look after their children.

Often it is to enable single parents to work – or, in the case of teenage pregnancies, the parents are simply not mature enough to take care of a baby.

Their instincts and their experience speaks volumes but what we did find is that sometimes mums would reject their advice because they would come out with something outdated and that would affect their confidence. Grannynet Founder Verity Gill

Experts have said the trend is a symptom of modern society, where the breakdown of the traditional family is passing the burden of childcare onto grandparents.

The classes, thought to be some of the first of their kind, offer 'granny graduates' the chance to refresh their parenting skills.

Midwife Sally Underdown is running the classes, along with Grannynet - a website set up to support the nation's seven million grandmothers.

Grannynet Founder Verity Gill said: 'Their instincts and their experience speaks volumes but what we did find is that sometimes mums would reject their advice because they would come out with something outdated and that would affect their confidence.

'They wouldn't want to be as involved with the baby in case they did something wrong.'

The course covers topics such as resuscitation, weaning and community support, as well as modern-day equipment.

Ms Gill added: 'It's things like lying a baby on their front or back, that's obviously changed a lot, breastfeeding versus bottle, everything's vaguely similar but there's been a lot of important

discoveries and research that's gone on in the last 30 years.'

Earlier this year, a survey revealed the free labour of grandparents saves parents more than £33billion a year.

Another study, by the Government's Economic and Social Research Council, uncovered an ever-youthful army of grandparents.

People in their 30s were finding themselves caring for a second batch of babies after their irresponsible teenage children became pregnant, researchers found.