

Grandparents give parents £5,000 worth of unpaid help each year

by Tricia Phillips, Daily Mirror [29/06/2011](#)

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Marian O'Regan with children Hannah and Sean (pic: Frank Doran)

FORGET the bank of mum and dad, it's grandparents that are keeping many families afloat – with up to £5,000 worth of unpaid help each year.

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As household incomes fall and soaring prices stretch purse strings to the limit, more and more parents have to work full time to make ends meet.

Already trying to juggle childcare for the forthcoming six-week summer holidays, parents will face another nightmare as public sector strikes planned from tomorrow will mean school closures.

This will see many grandparents being called on to step in and help, as families simply cannot afford to shell out for extra childcare or take days off work.

Research from Post Office Financial Services found about a third of parents already rely on

grandparents to spend at least a couple of hours looking after their children each week. The Nan Estate study cast new light on the crucial, yet indirect, help grandparents give to younger generations, showing that parents can save an average £86 every single week thanks to these unpaid efforts.

Almost half (47%) of parents aged from 18 to 34 will require a whole day's help – equivalent to almost £420 during the summer holidays.

Grandparents contribute about £405 a year by doing typical household chores, and more than £600 helping children with homework.

They spend around £71.43 annually on food and drink, £71.27 on holiday help, £70.13 contributing towards long-term savings and money on toys and games for their grandchildren. From helping out with baby-sitting and taking children on trips out to DIY around the house, these simple and often overlooked tasks equate to an indirect - contribution worth up to £4,500 per year to the average family's budget

Add another £500 given in direct financial assistance, and it adds up to a hefty £5,000.

Grandmas are the most likely to give up their time, with 57% helping with cooking, shopping and looking after the kids compared with 43% of the country's grandads.

Verity Gill is a working mum and founder of www.grannynet.co.uk, which helps support older people who look after grandchildren.

She says: "Grandparents deserve tremendous respect for the help they give us in raising our children and in managing everyday difficulties.

"You can't buy the kind of help my mum gives me with my daughters Eveny and Lizzy – and she doesn't even ask to be paid.

"She's always willing to help out, even occasions when we need more than just a babysitter.

"Nannies can be expensive but I do use one sometimes, as it would be unfair to ask Mum to be there all the time."

Grandparents have become the unsung heroes of many UK homes, always putting family first and doing whatever is necessary to help their children and grandchildren survive in today's tough climate.

CALCULATIONS BASED ON:

Childcare – £8 per hour

Tutoring/homework – £20 per hour

Household chores – £8 per hour

Grocery shopping – £5 per hour

Chauffering – £28.25 per hour

Pet care – £6 per hour

DIY – £10 per hour

Trips – £8 per hour

Case study



MUM-of-two Marian O'Regan says her parents are her safety net and allow her to have a decent job, rather than just some part-time earner.

She works in criminal justice for the Metropolitan Police, a role requiring her to be flexible which can mean she needs extra childcare help at the last minute for Hannah, 14, and Sean, 11.

“Without my parents’ help my career options would have been a lot more limited,” says Marian, 43, from Ilford, Essex.

“Their support with topping up my childcare arrangements is priceless. I do employ and pay out for some professional childcare but last-minute changes at work can mean I often get stuck.

“Without my parents’ support I reckon I’d be paying out around £100 a week extra.

“They probably help me for around two to three hours a day and the rate I pay for childcare is around £7.50 an hour.

“When I first decided to return to work, I was worried I’d be restricted to jobs that provided basic and set hours of work. By stepping in to support me, my parents have given me the chance to get on the ladder and pursue a challenging and rewarding career.”

Marian says her children are precious and she feels secure and comfortable knowing her children are safe as her parents are the next best thing to her.

She added: "I just couldn't have the life I do without my parents. I don't know where I'd be without them."

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