

Grannies log on to keep the family strong

The recent budget has again highlighted financial pressure on middle and low income families and with this brings the prospect of rising childcare costs as childcare voucher cuts are due next month. Independent grandparenting website, Grannynet.co.uk was launched nearly four years ago to support the growing community of internet-savvy grandparent carers who more often than not, step in to help lower those costs¹. Grannynet's members are about to be rewarded this month with the launch of an updated and improved website, based on the ideas they themselves have come up with.

A recent report found that grandparents save the economy £33bn per year² in childcare costs, yet they have been driven to march in protest against cuts being made to the systems they are already doing so much to support.

Grandparents are not only giving more time to their grandchildren than ever before, but also more money³. It is therefore vital, that grandparents are given the support they need to continue that care. The role Grannynet.co.uk plays is crucial for the already fragile economy to remain in tact, especially as funding of the government website for grandparents, BeGrand.net has now come to an end.

Verity Gill, founder of Grannynet.co.uk believes that the over fifties are frustrated by the lack of effort put into understanding their needs on the internet. If ever evidence of their embrace of the medium were required, it has been the over fifties leading the charge on completing this month's census online.

“More and more grandparents are getting online and asking for help. They are also understandably very fussy about where they go for that help. We are very lucky in that we have a community of really interactive members. Our Grannynetters have told us what they need from our website, we have listened and now we feel we have a fantastic new site for our members to enjoy.

“It's a real shame that the government haven't found a way to continue their direct support of granny carers; our members love the fact that they have somewhere to meet and chat... the most important part of our job is to listen.”

1 7.5 million of them are looking after their grandchildren on a regular basis, dedicating on average over 9 hours every week. The amount of time they spend giving care has almost doubled from an average of 5 hours a week in 2009.

(Study commissioned by RIAS and carried out by Opinium in June 2010)

2 The survey by insurance company Aviva was based on interviews with more than 1,000 grandparents.

3 The average grandparent in the UK provides £6,165 for their grandchildren from when they are born until they are 18 years old.

(M&S Money research, December 2010)

Grannynet members testimonials...

"The Grannies on here helped me through it all - they're a wonderful lot. And very wise." GrannyJules

"It is a good place to have a moan or ask advice or share things and have a debate." Ivy

"I only joined the site in Feb and I love it as I live in a quiet part of the world and don't have many neighbours ...so I do find this site very supportive and good fun, (better than the telly!)" Kaylinda

"Love the friendship here, and also enjoy the differences of opinion that we all express in different ways." Jack

The new Grannynet site launches mid-April.

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Note to Editors:

About grannynet.co.uk: Founded in 2007 by Verity Gill, Grannynet provides online support for grandparents. Offering advice, refresher courses for new grandparents on how to care for newborns and babies, a shop and a forum to chat to other grandparents.

Commenting on Grannynet.co.uk Dr Miriam Stoppard, OBE: *"All grandparents need support and I can't think of a better way of finding that support than by logging on to Grannynet, where grandparents will find lots of useful information and will automatically join a friendly family network of other grandparents. It's a way of making being a grandparent more joyful and fulfilling than ever before."*