

**Theme:** Families and households

**Title:** Grandparental involvement in child-rearing and childcare

**Authors:** Kirstine Hansen\*, Denise Hawkes, Heather Joshi and Kelly Ward

**Contact Details\*:**

**Address:** Centre for Longitudinal Studies, Bedford Group, Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL.

**Tel:** 0207 6126697

**Email:** [k.hansen@ioe.ac.uk](mailto:k.hansen@ioe.ac.uk)

**Research issues:** In Britain, the last fifty years have seen large increases in the number of women in the labour market, particularly mothers of dependent children. For most mothers with young children below school age, employment requires finding an alternative source of childcare. Using evidence from the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) the most popular form of non-maternal childcare is provided by grandparents. 49 percent of working mothers of 9 to 10 month old children in the MCS rely on care provided by the children's grandparents (in most cases the grandmother). A few children live in the same household as a grandparent, mostly either from some ethnic minorities or with very young mothers. There is a largely unresolved debate about the effect that non-maternal childcare has on child outcomes, but in a number of recent studies it was in the families who relied on care provided by grandmothers where adverse outcomes were observed. This research aims to examine the important role that grandmothers play in providing childcare, and helping with child-rearing more generally, to try to unpick what it is about grandparent care that is associated with child outcomes, and to understand the social and demographic circumstances in which active grandparenting is more likely.

**Methodology and data:** This research will use multivariate regression analyse to address key hypotheses concerning grandparent care and child outcomes. The data used comes from the first two sweeps of the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS). These data provide information on 18,819 babies born in the UK over a 12-month period and living in selected UK wards at age 9 months. These families were interviewed again in 2004/2005 when the children were three years old. These data provide a rich source of information about these children, their parents and grandparents which will allow us to elaborate on the relationship between grandparent care and child outcomes.

**Indication of envisaged outcomes:** This research will provide a detailed examination of the role grandmothers play in child-rearing and the provision of childcare.

Among others this paper will address the following questions:

- What role do grandmothers play in childcare and child-rearing?
- What are the characteristics of families who use grandmother care?
- What are the intergenerational similarities in age at childbearing and lone motherhood?

- What are the characteristics of grandmothers who are most active in caring for, and the rearing of, their grandchildren?
- Which of these characteristics are associated with child outcomes as measured by the cognitive and behavioural development of the child?