

As Harry and Meghan are about to appoint Archie's godparents, what's the difference between a godparent and a guardian?



Marie Claire Dorking

Yahoo Style UK 5 July 2019

Follow



Parents are confused about the difference between godparents and guardians [Photo: Getty]

The Duke and [Duchess of Sussex](#)'s son, Archie, [will be christened](#) in a Private Chapel at Windsor Castle, tomorrow and there has been much [speculation about who the couple have chosen to be godparents](#).

But amid the touting of potential candidates ([Serena Williams](#) and George and [Amal Clooney](#) are some of the famous names being suggested), there is confusion among parents about the actual role of a godparent and how it differs from being a legal guardian.

A new study of 1000 UK parents by [Hedges Law](#) revealed that a third of parents confuse the role of godparent and guardian, with two thirds (63%) admitting to not knowing what a legal guardian actually is.

But the distinction is an important one.

"There's a concerning level of misunderstanding that godparents carry the same legal rights and responsibilities as a legal guardian," explains Rachel Carrington- Matthews Private Client Solicitor at [Hedges Law](#).

So what *is* the difference between a godparent and a guardian?

While a legal guardian has responsibility for taking all parental decisions and sometimes, for managing a child's property and inheritance, a godparent is often chosen to support the child's upbringing and personal development, but the role has no legal standing.

"With royal baby Archie Harrison fever in full swing, there is much discussion and speculation in the media on who will be appointed Archie's godparents," Carrington-Matthews continues.

"But whoever they are, they will play a very different role to his legally appointed guardian, who in Archie's case, as decreed by UK law, will be the Queen."

READ MORE: [Public divided over Harry and Meghan's decision to 'keep Archie's christening private'](#)

While no parent wants to think about the possibility of someone else raising their children, if they're not longer around, it is important to consider.

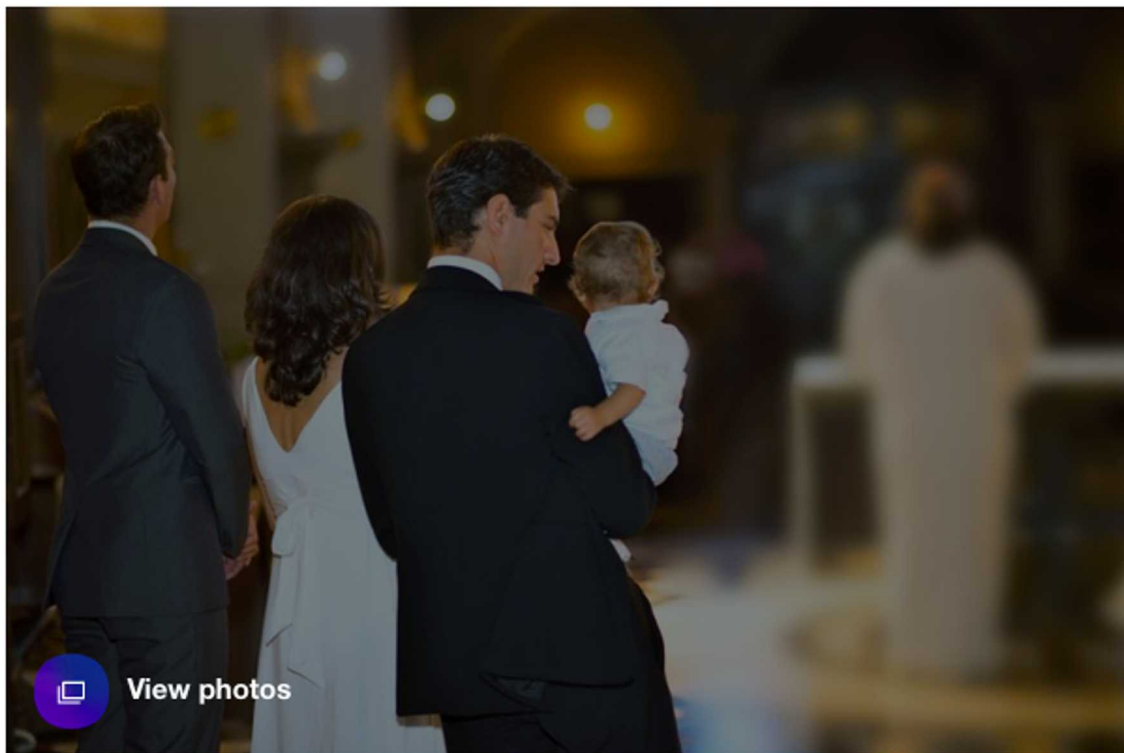
But as the new research reveals many parents are incorrectly assuming that their child's godparents will be able legally able to fulfill the role of bringing up children.


The poll reveals 62% of parents incorrectly assume that legal custody will automatically fall with either a family member or godparent, with a third (34%) believing they do not need to appoint a legal guardian as they already have godparents.

"While the rest of us don't have the convention of UK law to choose our children's legal guardians, most parents are still not appointing one and there's a concerning level of misunderstanding that godparents carry the same legal rights and responsibilities as a legal guardian," Carrington-Matthews explains.

"The study shows that the majority of parents incorrectly assume that in the event of the parents' death, the legal authority to care for the child will automatically fall to the godparents or a family member so there's no need to appoint a guardian but this couldn't be further from the truth," she continues.

"While appointing a guardian is one of the most important decisions a parent or parents can make, it is still, in my experience the least considered," she adds.



 [View photos](#)

Parents mistakenly believe they don't need to appoint a guardian for their children if they have godparents [Photo: Getty]

READ MORE: [Details of Archie's christening revealed](#)

And not understanding the difference between the two can have some pretty serious consequences.

Carrington-Matthews says that with no legal guardian stipulated in a parents' will, then it will fall to the Family Court to decide upon who will have long term legal custody over the care of the child and that may not be the person the parents would have wanted.

"We always advise parents to not only appoint a guardian in their will but to include a letter defining the reasons for their choice so should the matter still go to the Family Courts, the Judge is clear on the reasons for the parents' choice of carer," she adds.

[Story continues](#)

