

Why inheritance is dirty secret of the middle class- harder to talk about than sex

Warm-up

Look at the definition

inheritance- the money, property or assets that someone receives from a person who has died (Cambridge Dictionary)

e.g. She **inverted her inheritance** in setting up her own consultancy business.

In pairs, discuss the questions.

1. What might someone do with his/her inheritance?
2. What would you do if inherited a large amount of money?

Vocabulary

life changing	a typical, done in an usual way
to be upfront with	b limited, reduced to
awkward	c open about something
landmark	d having an impact on other similar situations
conventional	e making our life different
to be confined to	f not being comfortable about something

Discussion

1. Can you think of **life-changing** events that had an impact on the economic situation in your country?
2. Is there something that you find difficult **to upfront with** either in your private or professional life?
3. What would you do in order to deal with an **awkward** situation so as to not to offend anyone?
4. What was a **landmark** case that changed the way you approach things?
5. When faced with a tough question would you rather followed a **conventional** or alternative form of a dispute resolution?

Reading for general understanding

Read the extract and tick the points that the author made.

getting pregnant

paying for infertility treatment oneself

help to buy a house by parents

exact amount of money inherited by someone in their 20s

Why inheritance is the dirty secret of the middle classes – harder to talk about than sex

Forget boomers v millennials: is the real divide between people who inherit from their parents – and those who don't?

Isobel had a hard time getting pregnant. After several heartbreaking miscarriages and three gruelling rounds of IVF, she had begun to worry that, at 34, she was running out of time. But, miraculously, the fourth round worked, and when we speak she is weeks from giving birth. Her parents are “amazingly excited” about meeting their first grandchild, not least because they funded Isobel’s fertility treatment – as is the case for an estimated one in eight British couples needing IVF – meaning she and her partner could throw everything into trying to conceive, undergoing several treatment cycles in quick succession.

“I’m so grateful to have been able to rattle through it at the speed we did, when I know friends have taken big gaps between IVF rounds because they had to save up,” says Isobel, who works for a London-based charity. “I didn’t have to think about how much it cost, which really took the pressure off.” The pandemic had also made her acutely aware of her parents’ mortality, worrying they might not live to see any grandchildren. So she and her partner gratefully accepted their offer.

It’s not the first time family money has helped her out. Isobel’s parents inherited legacies from their own parents in their 50s, which helped them pass on “living gifts” to her. They helped her buy a house in London when she was 27, and paid off her student loan when she was 22, so she could start saving for a pension. “When I think of the money that’s gone into that pension, it just starts a whole cycle of privilege over again,” Isobel says. Although she couldn’t be more grateful for her parents’ life-changing generosity, like many recipients of family money, she isn’t comfortable discussing it publicly; Isobel isn’t her real name and she hasn’t been upfront with colleagues about how she came to buy a house so young. It was awkward, she admits, when they started holding Zoom meetings from home during the pandemic and everyone could see where she lived. “It doesn’t feel fair – and it makes you feel guilty.”

Britain is entering a golden age of inheritance, as the trillions accumulated by the postwar baby-boom generation begin trickling down to their children and grandchildren in what's been dubbed the great wealth transfer. By 2025, £100bn – more than half the annual budget of the NHS – could be changing hands every year, according to a landmark analysis commissioned by estate administrators the Kings Court Trust. By 2047, they estimate that number could more than treble. Around £5.5tn in total could flow down through families over the next 30 years, both in conventional legacies and increasingly in living gifts like Isobel's, which don't attract inheritance tax if the donor survives for seven years after handing them over. In wealthy families, these can be part of a carefully crafted strategy to reduce death duties, often funnelled into property or school fees. "As a grandparent, have you considered investing in your grandchild's education instead of paying 40% inheritance tax?" asks the website of fee-paying Bolton school, suggesting brightly that it's one way to "leave a worthy bequest whilst avoiding giving away lifetime earnings to the taxman!"

But wealth transfers aren't confined to the rich. Research into lifetime gifting by HMRC found nearly a quarter of over-70s had helped their children out financially in the last two years alone, with the instinct to help so strong that some were getting into debt to do it. Half of first-time buyers have financial help from family, according to the annual Bank of Mum and Dad report from financial services company Legal & General, while roughly a third of grandparents plan to help grandchildren with university costs. A generation who enjoyed free education, and could become homeowners even on relatively modest incomes, are watching in alarm as their children struggle to reach the same milestones, and stepping in if they can.

Adapted from *the Guardian* (access: 24/01/2023)

Reading for details

Read the extract again and answer the questions.

1. The number of people needing IVF is estimated at:
 - a) one in eight
 - b) one in ten
2. The fact that Isobel did not have to save up for the treatment made her feel:
 - a) awkward
 - b) relieved
3. Being offered the money, she:
 - a) firmly but politely said no
 - b) gratefully accepted
4. Giving someone money as a gift:
 - a) does not require paying tax
 - b) requires paying tax
5. Handing the assets over is considered:
 - a) a way to put someone in the red
 - b) a loophole which helps to avoid paying off the debts
6. The older generation steps in when it comes to providing financial aid as:
 - a) they enjoyed free education themselves so it was easier for them
 - b) they would like the young to know how to manage on their own

Talking point

In pairs, discuss the questions.

1. Do you or someone that you know was offered financial aid from his/her parents or grandparents? If so, what was it for?
2. Would you agree with the statement that those who come from a wealthy family have an easy start? Why/why not?

Writing point.

Write a for and against essay (200-250 words) in which you will present the pros and cons of receiving inheritance during someone's lifetime. In your essay, you need to analyse a question using different points of view. It is a semi-formal/formal text and should be made impartial until the conclusion.



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