At least six million people have been asked to become a Godparent at a Church of England christening since the millennium, according to a new analysis released in advance of special church services to celebrate the role of Godparents.

Godparents' Sunday will take place tomorrow, aimed at supporting the relationship between Godparents and their Godchildren.

Around 120,000 Church of England baptisms take place every year with an estimated six million people taking up the role of Godparent since the millennium alone.

Godparents' Sunday was launched by the Church of England following research with 1,000 parents conducted in 2013 showing that having Godparents was one of the key reasons for wanting to have a child christened, alongside wanting God's blessing and starting a child on the right path in life.

During a christening, Godparents will make important promises to pray for their Godchild and support them as they discover more about the Christian faith.

Godparents also spend time with their Godchildren and help them to make good choices in life for themselves and for others. They are there as a listening ear for their Godchild over the years and help children discover more about the Christian faith, through their church and in other ways.

Rev Canon Dr Sandra Millar, who leads research on christenings for the Church of England, said: “Our research shows that Godparents are really important to families. Parents put a lot of thought into choosing Godparents, often honouring existing friendships.

"Godparents are part of child's life for a long time and families really appreciate having an extra voice to bring wisdom, encouragement and love.

"It's a mutual relationship - Godchildren and Godparents bless and pray for each other. Godparents' Sunday is a great day to be in touch, to be supported and encouraged on the journey by the wider church and to discover more about the amazing journey of faith that starts at a christening."

ENDS

Notes to editors

There were more than two million baptisms of infants and children in the Church of England between 2000 and 2015. The figure of six million Godparents was calculated on the minimum requirement of three Godparents for each child baptised.