

Who are they? They're the children who just CAN'T or WON'T leave home. Or, to put it another way, they are 'kidults', in their 20s or 30s, who 'boomerang' back home, having previously fled the nest. In the UK, more than 3 million 20-somethings still live in the family home. It is a trend echoed throughout the world.

The Kids

Julian Hanlon, (25)

back living with parents,
Alan and Barbara.

“I didn't expect to return home. I studied music at Cambridge and after graduating, I went travelling with some guys – round Europe, singing in bars to pay our way – it was great! But it had to end. I'd got a place to do Opera Studies at the *Guildhall School of Music*, but I came back with a load more debt – so here I am, back in my old bedroom. It feels weird, but thanks to mum and dad, I'm rent free. We get on well most of the time – but my elder brother, Tim, has joined us now. He's just separated from his wife. I think it's tough on mum and dad – both their big sons back. My brother's depressed, but he's going to try and put things right with Annie. My girlfriend calls us 'mummy's boys' because mum still cooks and washes for us! That's a real bonus – I'll miss that when I move out. Anyway, I'm singing in *Don Giovanni* next month. I hope my family will be proud of me in the end.”



The Parents

Alan Hanlon, (61)

“In some ways it's nice having the boys back. Family is important to us and we're happy to help Julian while he's training, and, of course, we're sorry for poor Tim. But we had got over the 'empty nest' syndrome, or at least I had. We'll both be retiring soon, and I was looking forward to having the freedom that brings. Now it's like we've gone back in time – the mess and the noise. But Barbara seems to love it! I think she does far too much for them and I take issue with that. The boys seem to take it for granted that they live rent free, and their mum will cook and clean for them.

One thing I do like is having their friends round again – we have some good times together. Julian's girlfriend is great fun and this takes Tim's mind off his problems for a while. We're all hoping he'll get back with his wife. And, of course Barbara and I take great pride in Julian's singing. I suppose we'll put up with it for the time being.”

Amy Butcher, (22)

left home at 18 but now back
with mum, Faye.

“I loved my independence. I work in the make-up section in a city department store, and I was sharing a flat with two girlfriends. But then the landlord put up the rent and that was that. So, I'm back with mum. It's not easy. It's not that I don't get on with her – I do. And I know the bit of rent I pay her, helps. But she gets on my nerves sometimes – she's obsessively tidy. She's always tidying away my things and I can't find them. Also she worries when I'm out late with friends. But I worry about her, too. The thing is, I'm not sure about her new boyfriend. I know he doesn't like me.

I love when it's just mum and me and we stretch out on the sofa and watch a film together. We'll be doing that tonight. I'm saving like mad – but the store is going to close. I don't know what I'll do then. I think I'll look for work in a beauty parlour.”



Faye Butcher, (57)

“I missed Amy a lot when she moved out. You see, I've been a single mum since Amy's dad left when she was ten, so we're very close and I love having her around again. She helps me with my make-up and keeps me in touch with the world of music, films and phone apps. But it's not all fun. Amy's as untidy today as she was as a teenager. The house is littered with her stuff. It's my house and I like it tidy – I'm always putting her things away. I'm going to make her a list of house rules. I know she'll take offence and say I'm treating her like a kid. She's right. But a bigger problem is Rob – he's an old friend. He helps me with household chores from time to time. Amy won't speak to him – she thinks he's my boyfriend. He's not – well, not yet. Anyway, it's an awkward situation for me. I'm going to have to say something to her. I'm always kind to her boyfriends.”