



Carers

About 1,500 Britons a day quitting their jobs to become unpaid carers

More than a million people have left work to look after loved ones in the past two years, Carers UK says

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About 1,500 Britons a day are quitting their jobs to become unpaid carers, as they try to balance their vulnerable relatives' growing care needs with declining access to state-funded social care services.

Research estimates that more than a million people have left the workplace to look after ageing, ill and disabled loved ones in the past two years, highlighting the social challenges caused by UK's rapidly changing demographic profile.

Unpaid caring is now a "widespread social and economic reality" for UK households, it says, with one in five employees - equivalent to 6.7 million people - facing career

and financial sacrifices as they juggle paid work and care for family or friends.

Over a fifth of those surveyed (22%) had reduced their job hours to juggle work and care, with over a third (34%) working less than eight hours a week. Around one in 10 carers said they had turned down promotions or taken on lower-paid roles to stay in work.

Emily Holzhausen, the director of policy at **Carers UK**, said: “These figures represent real people who have had to make difficult decisions about their careers, their financial security and their futures due to the pressures of balancing work and care.”

Carers UK, which published the report, called on government to strengthen employment rights for unpaid carers, including introducing a statutory entitlement to 10 days’ annual paid carer’s leave for employees.

It urged Louise Casey’s independent **review of adult social care**, expected to report in the next few months, to recommend policy changes putting carers at the centre of a reformed system, by making it easier for carers to combine work and unpaid care.

Midwife Jacqui Hylton, aged 58, gave up her 30-year NHS career to become a full-time carer two years ago when her then 86-year-old mother Winnie’s health took a serious turn for the worse.

Hylton moved from Hertfordshire to Leeds to live with Winnie and become her full-time carer. But she is frustrated that her professional skills are going to waste when the NHS faces a midwife shortage.

Caring will make it harder for her to return to midwifery as she is unable to work the required number of hours a year to maintain her professional accreditation. Enhanced respite allowance would potentially enable her to keep her hand in at work.

“I don’t regret caring for my mum. But financially I’m worse off, my pension will be less than it should have been. It’s lonely at times and it’s extremely hard work – harder than working in the NHS,” she said.

The surge in unpaid carers reflects both an ageing population and a rise in children and working age adults with disabilities or long-term health conditions. Around one in five (20%) of UK adults, equivalent to 11 million people, report unpaid care duties.

As well as affecting carers’ finances, careers and wellbeing, the report estimates the doubling in the number of people quitting paid work to care over the past seven years comes at an annual £37bn economic cost to the UK.

A government spokesperson said: “Unpaid carers make an extraordinary contribution to families, our communities and the economy, and I would like to personally thank Carers UK for their invaluable work in supporting unpaid carers and championing the issues they face every day.

“We want to ensure there are good jobs for carers who want to work alongside managing their caring responsibilities. This is why we are exploring how best to support unpaid carers through our review of employment rights.”

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