



When caring becomes a second job: unpaid carers spending four working days a week supporting elderly relatives

- Around 10 hours a week is spent on bureaucratic tasks like form-filling or dealing with the NHS and local authority
- 38% of carers say they are on-call 24/7, with an equal proportion on-call 'most of the time' to deal with caring duties
- Personal cost exposed as carers give up or reduce social time spent with friends and family

Unpaid carers aged 45-75 are spending an average of 30 hours a week – equivalent to a four-day working week – supporting elderly relatives or relatives-in-law.

The new research from Just Group's **Taking Care of Mum & Dad** research series¹ uncovers the time burden, and lost economic output, that people in this age group are shouldering as a result of providing care.

Unpaid carers said that they are spending around 10 hours a week wrestling with bureaucratic tasks such as dealing with the NHS or local authority, arranging medical appointments and completing forms as part of their care responsibilities.

Aside from the time spent actually providing care, nearly four in 10 (38%) unpaid carers said that they are 'on-call' 24/7. A further fifth (20%) said they feel 'on-call' more than four or five days a week and 18% feel 'on-call' around half of the time. Only 2% never feel 'on-call.'

This responsibility inevitably has an impact on carers' personal lives. The majority (55%) agreed that they turn down social opportunities to provide care and 46% said that they had either given up or reduced the time they spent with friends and other family members as a result of their caring duties. Significant proportions had also cut back on holidays (40%), eating out (35%) or other recreational activities like going to the cinema or theatre (31%).

The analysis follows earlier research from Just Group's **Taking Care of Mum & Dad** series which showed that four in 10 adults aged 45-75 with caring responsibilities have either stopped working (9%) or reduced hours (28%) to provide this care, making a £522 a month dent in their income.

Emma Walker, director at the retirement specialist Just Group, commented: "This research highlights how taking care of elderly relatives can quietly and quickly become a second job in all but name.

"Spending an average of 30 hours a week providing support – often while juggling work and family commitments – is a huge time commitment that doesn't even take into account the knock-on effect for carers' social and financial circumstances.

"What is particularly striking is the amount of time carers spend navigating bureaucracy. Around a third of that weekly commitment is taken up by arranging appointments, filling in forms and dealing

with different parts of the health and care system. This can add significant stress and frustration to an already demanding role.

“Families are naturally stepping in to support loved ones and while these caring responsibilities often start as a little bit of help here and there, they can quickly grow. The level of commitment shown by carers and the personal sacrifices they make are remarkable.

“Our own research from our long-running Care Report² series among people who have helped find care for a family member tells a tale of confusion and difficulty – more than seven in ten said the care system is very complex and difficult to navigate.

“Just Group has outlined seven practical solutions to help build a fairer care system – including the development of a “Care Wise” guidance service. Modelled on the free and impartial Pension Wise guidance service it could provide a central and reliable source of the practical information that is missing and so badly needed.”

ENDS

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Notes to Editors

1 – Just Group, a survey of 1,000 UK adults aged 45-75 taking care of an elderly relative, conducted 2-16 September 2025 by Opinionium.

2 – The Just Group Care Report 2025: Social Care Reform - Stuck in the Waiting Room is the 13th edition of the UK's longest running study tracking the knowledge and attitudes of social care, canvassing the opinion of around 30,000 people over the past 14 years.

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