

Exodus of workers to care for relatives costs £3bn

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More than 112,000 people “had no choice but to leave their jobs” to care for relatives, researchers found **TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER JAMES GLOSSOP**

More than 100,000 Britons quit their jobs last year to care for relatives with [dementia](#), research shows.

This workforce exodus cost businesses about £3.2 billion — a figure predicted to almost double by 2040 if the social care system is not overhauled, the [Alzheimer's Society](#) warned.

“From the devoted daughter making a 200-mile trip to make sure her mum gets a hot meal, to the person with dementia walking out in the middle of the road because their family can’t afford expensive round-the-clock care, carers are put in impossible situations, day-in, day-out,” the charity said.

The Centre for Economics and Business Research, an economics consultancy, used NHS and Office for National Statistics data to estimate how many people cut down their hours or left their jobs to care for [relatives with dementia](#) over the past year. It then calculated the costs to companies, from lost productivity to loss of skills and knowledge.

The centre found that more than 112,000 people “had no choice but to leave their jobs”, up from the 50,000 thought to be in the same position five years ago. Another 147,000 reduced their hours or struggled to balance work with caring. It also found that the cost to businesses had doubled since 2014, and predicted it would hit £6.3 billion by 2040 as the population ages.

Jeremy Hughes, chief executive of the Alzheimer's Society, said: “Over 100,000 people have had no choice but to leave their jobs and try to care for their loved ones themselves. The knock-on cost to businesses is only going to get bigger, with more and more people set to develop dementia, and no solution put in place to sort out social care. It's devastating for people with dementia, for their families and carers, a drain on the NHS and now we see how badly it's affecting our economy.”

With quality of care depending on region, he said the government should overhaul the social care system to ensure that people get equal access to help with meals, getting washed and dressed, and taking medicine no matter where people live.

Budgets are set to be cut by another £700 million in the next year as local authorities try to balance their books.

Caroline Abrahams, of Age UK, said: “More and more workers, some at the peak of their careers and earning power, are dropping out of paid employment to care for a partner or ageing parent who has dementia, undermining their own financial futures as well as hurting the economy. Many provide care willingly but we also increasingly hear from people who feel forced to stop work because paid care is unavailable. Sometimes people tell us that the quality of care is questionable, so they have to step in, even at the cost of their jobs.”

Boris Johnson has pledged to “fix the crisis in social care once and for all”.

A government spokesman said last night: “Carers make an invaluable contribution to society and this must not come at the expense of their careers. We have given local authorities an additional £1.5 billion for adult and children's social care next year . . . The government will set out plans to fix the social care system in due course.”