



EVERYBODY BENEFITS: EMPLOYEE GUIDE

# When caring isn't working

The struggle of the sandwich generation squeeze



Feel stuck in the middle?  
Need to be in three places at once?

Juggling too many plates?

Meeting yourself coming backwards?

Suffering from the signs of burnout?

Career progression put on hold?

No me-time?

Feeling guilty?

Or even resentment?

But also blessed?





# You're not alone

This is the daily reality for the UK's **1.4 million sandwich carers** – those who have caring responsibility for both elderly relatives and young children. Many also still have their older Gen-Z kids at home who are either studying or cannot afford to leave home to get on the housing ladder.

Like all carers, the **sandwich generation** face emotional, practical and financial challenges.

Struggling to balance the demands of elderly parents and a young family is a job in itself. Add a job into the mix then you have another level of stress, responsibility and time-drought to manage.

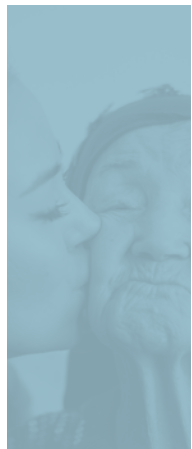
## When caring isn't sharing

There are around 3 million carers in the UK who are also employed.

But caring for relatives who are older, disabled or seriously ill is having a significant impact on people's capacity to work full-time or to their full potential.

Managing the mayhem and even the minutiae of daily life can take its toll on carers' mental wellbeing, causing burnout and breakdowns.

# Carers UK research has found



**40%**

had given up  
work to provide  
unpaid care



**22%**

reduced their  
working hours  
to care



**79%**

feel stressed  
or anxious



**49%**

feel depressed



**50%**

feel lonely



**69%**

find it difficult  
to get a good  
night's sleep



**49%**

who had given up  
work or reduced  
their working hours  
saw their income  
reduce by over  
£1,000 per month

**If any of the above feel familiar, please take it as a warning sign to seek help.**



## The home - work - childcare - parent juggle

Things may need to change in your life before you burnout. But two things can never change. There is only one of you - and there are only 24 hours in a day.

It's how you take care of number one and manage number two that will make the world of difference to your wellbeing.

**If you find yourself being 'squashed' in the sandwich, here are some tips and techniques to help you cope.**

# 9 ways to manage sandwich carer stress

1

## Fill your cup first

You can't take care of everyone else if you're running on empty. Ensure you're getting plenty of sleep, eating nutritious meals and exercising or spending time in the fresh air. Fill your cup with activities you enjoy - don't give up on the interests that bring you joy or hobbies that help you de-stress.

Caring for your own physical and mental health will make you much more capable of caring for both of the generations you love.

2

## A problem shared...

It may not be halved but personal and professional ears can be a great source of support. Talk to family, friends and other carers who understand your challenges.

Don't hesitate to get counselling if you're struggling with anxiety, burnout or depression. There is no shame in admitting you need help coping with your dual or treble caring responsibilities.

Don't bottle up your battles - sometimes just venting your frustration or a tearful release can help.

3

## Join a local support group

Online or in-person support groups can provide a safe space to share experiences and be a source of emotional and practical support.



## 4

### Stop stressing and start delegating!

Don't feel that you have to do everything yourself. Talk to other family members and friends about what you're dealing with, as they may not be aware about your silent struggles.

Could they help with school wraparound care for example? Could you afford a cleaner or gardener to tick one job off your to-do list? Switch to online food shopping if you are time-poor. Give older children jobs to help around the home – it's always good to learn basic life skills like cooking and ironing!

Make a list of all of the things that need to be done, then prioritise and delegate them. Ticking off a to-do list can be very satisfying and de-stressing!

## 5

### Consider professional respite care

Temporary relief from caregiving responsibilities can help you avoid burnout. Explore options like home care agencies or assisted living aids for elderly parents that give them more independence.

## 6

### No is ok

Recognise that you can't do everything and learn to say 'no' – without feeling guilty. Establish clear expectations regarding caregiving responsibilities - to both slices of the generational sandwich!



## 7

### Talk to the boss

Talk to HR or your boss about switching to a more flexible schedule or role that fits around your caring responsibilities.

The Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act gives employees the right to ask their employer for flexible working from day one of their employment.

Hybrid working to avoid daily commutes or condensed hours could be a time-saving life saver!

## 8

### Family updates

As the main carer, other family members may 'mither' you with well-intentioned questions that can add even more stress to your over-loaded headspace.

Set up a WhatsApp group to give health updates, share photos or appointment reminders to keep everyone in the loop - in one go. Or coordinate diaries using a family planner app or Google Drive to create a document that everyone can access.

## 9

### Know your rights

Ensure you're claiming the right benefits or carers allowance - you may be entitled to £83.30 a week if you care for someone at least 35 hours a week and they receive certain benefits. Visit [www.gov.uk/carers-allowance](https://www.gov.uk/carers-allowance) to find out more.

The Carer's Leave Act gives carers the right to take up to five days of unpaid carer's leave every 12 months to care for a 'dependant' who has a physical or mental illness or an injury that means they need care for more than 3 months. It also applies to caring for those with a disability or care needs because of old age.

Eligible employees can also take unpaid parental leave to look after their child's welfare to spend more time with family, looking at new schools or settling children into new childcare arrangements.



# Care is out there

## Do you see yourself as a carer?

You may be a parent, a daughter, a son, a niece or a partner. You might be an accountant, a teacher, a barrister or a barista. But you are also a carer. And being a carer means you need to be taken care of too.

We hope that some of these coping strategies help. For more support visit **Carers UK** for a wealth of information, advice and support services.





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### Sources

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