

The right to unpaid Carer's Leave



Following the implementation of the Carer's Leave Act in April 2024, it is now compulsory for employers in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to offer people who have caring responsibilities up to one week of unpaid Carer's Leave each year.

Who are carers?

Carers are people who look after a family member or friend who needs help due to disability, long-term illness or frailty. The person they look after could not cope without their support and the support they provide is unpaid.

For example:

- Sandra cares for her partner who is being treated for cancer.
- Liam cares for his elderly father.
- Shilpa cares for her disabled daughter.
- Barry cares for a neighbour who has suffered a stroke.
- Emma cares for her brother who has depression and anxiety.
- Siân cares for her son who was injured in an industrial accident.

How many hours do they have to be caring for each week?

Whether a person cares for just a few hours a week, or many hours most days, they are still a carer. You do not have to care for a minimum number of hours a week to be eligible for Carer's Leave.

Does a carer have to have worked for an employer for a minimum period to be eligible?

No, carers are eligible for Carer's Leave from the first day of their employment.

Are parents classed as 'carers'?

No, the Carer's Leave Act does not cover parents unless their child is disabled or has a long-term illness. The rights of parents are covered under other legislation, e.g. unpaid parental leave.

Does a carer have to prove they are a carer to claim Carer's Leave?

No. However, it may be helpful for carers to discuss the needs of the person they are looking after with their employer in case other support is available.

I didn't ever see myself as a carer, I just thought everything I was doing for my mum was because, you know, it's just what you do for your parents.

Alison, who cares for her mum with Parkinson's disease



Why do carers need Carer's Leave?

A 2019 report¹ found that one in seven of all workers are also carers and almost half a million people had given up work to care over a two-year period. Every day 600 people are forced to give up work because of their caring responsibilities. Juggling work and caring simply becomes too much.

Many working carers use their annual leave or holiday to support the person they look after, for example, attending hospital appointments with them, organising medication, or resolving a crisis. This means they do not get a break.

The pressure can become too much and carers can feel forced to leave a job they enjoy and depend on financially. Employers lose out too, as experienced and valued staff feel they have to leave.

¹ Juggling work and unpaid care' by Carers UK



Does a carer have to take the Carer's Leave all at once?

No, they can take it flexibly as half-days, days or a week, e.g. half a day to take the person they care for to a doctor's appointment one month, half a day another month to receive a delivery of equipment for the person they support.

How much notice does the carer have to give?

If the request is for half a day or a day, the notice period must be at least three days.

If the request is for more than one day, the notice period must be at least twice as long as the requested leave. For example, if the request is for two days, the notice period must be at least four days.

How can I find out more about supporting staff who are carers?

Caring Together Charity has a free short film available to employers across Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and Norfolk.

Go to caringtogether.org/companies

or scan the QR code



We can support you to recognise and support carers in your business so you retain valued staff, are attractive to jobseekers, and demonstrate that you value diversity.

For more information please contact us
0345 241 0954
companies@caringtogether.org
caringtogether.org

 **Caring Together Charity**
No unpaid carer in crisis