

Your rights in work



If you are juggling work with caring, you are not alone – as many as three million people in the UK are balancing their unpaid caring responsibilities with paid employment. Balancing work and care can be very challenging, so it's important to find out about your rights. This factsheet provides a simple summary.

The following information applies to people living in England, Wales and Scotland. We have a separate [factsheet for Northern Ireland](#) as some of the legislation differs.

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Knowing your rights

Your rights in work come from two sources:

- the law gives you ‘statutory rights’ which everyone has
- your contract of employment gives you ‘contractual rights’ which can be more generous than statutory rights.

This information is about statutory rights. However, it is always worth checking your contract of employment, staff handbook, HR policies or letter of appointment to see if you have any contractual rights on top of your statutory rights. For example, some employers are willing to offer several days’ paid leave for caring on a discretionary or contractual basis.

Your right to request flexible working

All employees based in England, Wales or Scotland have a right to request a flexible working arrangement from the first day of employment. You can make two requests over a 12-month period (law from 6 April 2024).

Flexible working requests should be made in writing with details of the revised working pattern you are seeking. It is recommended that you state that it is a statutory request. This should include: the date of the request, the proposed change to your terms and conditions of employment, the time you would like to see the change(s) take effect, and whether you have requested flexible working previously. Employers must agree to a flexible working request unless there is a genuine business reason not to; they must consult the employee before making that decision.

Examples of flexible working:

- home or remote working
- hybrid working
- job sharing
- flexi-time
- part-time working
- working staggered hours
- shift working
- working compressed hours
- term-time working
- working annualised hours

Your right to carer's leave

If you're an employee based in England, Wales and Scotland, you now have the right to take a week's unpaid carer's leave per year. This is available to request from your first day of employment.

You will need to be providing care for a dependant. This could be a relative, partner, friend or child who depends on you for their care needs. Their needs could be physical or mental because of a disability, health condition, illness or old age and they will be expected to need care support for more than three months. The following page answers some common questions about what this means for you and how it applies in the workplace: [The Carer's Leave Act 2023 | Carers UK](#).

It may be reassuring to know that your [employment rights](#) (including holidays and returning to your job) won't be affected by carer's leave. The law came into effect in England, Wales and Scotland on 6 April 2024. You can find out more about this right at: [Unpaid carer's leave - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

Your right to time off in emergencies

All employees have the right to take a 'reasonable' amount of time off work to deal with an emergency or an unforeseen matter involving a dependant. This may be your partner, child or parent, or someone living with you as part of your family – others who rely on you for help in an emergency may also qualify. The time off is unpaid unless your employer is willing to give paid time off as a contractual right.

Examples of emergency situations:

- >> a disruption or breakdown in care arrangements
- >> the death of a dependant
- >> if a dependant falls ill or is in an accident
- >> to make longer-term arrangements for a dependant who is ill or injured (but not to provide long-term care yourself)
- >> an incident involving a child during school hours.

Protection from discrimination

If you are looking after someone who is elderly or disabled, the law – under the Equality Act 2010 – will protect you against direct discrimination or harassment because of your caring responsibilities. This is because you are counted as being ‘associated’ with someone who is protected because of their age or disability. This law applies in England, Wales and Scotland.

People can experience discrimination in the workplace or in other settings. To understand more about the different forms of discrimination, how to identify if you have been treated unfairly and what you can do to address it, see our website page: [Protection from discrimination](#).

Your right to parental leave

If you are responsible for a child or children aged under 18, you are entitled to 18 weeks’ leave per child. This right applies from your first day of employment (since April 2026). The leave must be taken by their 18th birthday and the time off is unpaid unless your employer is willing to give paid time off as a contractual right.

To qualify for this right, you would need to be legally classed as an employee and listed as a parent on the child’s birth certificate, have parental responsibility through adoption or have acquired legal responsibility for looking after the child. It is separate to maternity, paternity or adoption leave. There are some conditions that clarify how you can take this leave and the notice you need to give to your employer which are explained on our website page:

carersuk.org/help-and-advice/work-and-career/your-rights-in-work/your-right-to-parental-leave/

For more information about your rights in work in general, you can find lots of detail in the career and work section of our website: carersuk.org/work.

Further information

If you would like further information about the legislation for flexible working, carer's leave and time off for dependants, you may find the following links interesting and helpful to refer to:

- Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023 -
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/33/enacted>
- Carer's Leave Act 2023 -
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/18>
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/18/section/57A>
- Right to parental leave
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2026/15/made>

This factsheet is designed to provide helpful information and advice. It is not an authoritative statement of the law. We work to ensure that our factsheets are accurate and up to date, but information about benefits and community care is subject to change over time. We would recommend contacting the Carers UK Helpline or visiting our website for the latest information.

Give us your feedback on this factsheet by emailing your comments to info@carersuk.org
This factsheet was updated in April 2026. Next review due April 2027.

Carers UK Helpline

For expert information and advice about caring.



0808 808 7777
(Monday – Friday 9am-6pm)



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Carers Northern Ireland

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However caring affects you, we're here.

Caring will affect us all at some point in our lives.

With your help, we can be there for the 6,000 people who start looking after someone each day.

We're the UK's only national membership charity for carers: join us for free at carersuk.org/join

We're both a support network and a movement for change.

Visit us at our website to join us, help us or access more resources:

carersuk.org

**This information can be requested
in large print or as a text file.**