

Carers' employment rights today, tomorrow and in the future



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Carers and employment: key statistics

Millions of people in the UK are juggling paid employment with their caring responsibilities.

The recent ONS Census 2021 in England and Wales found that there are just under 2.5 million carers in employment (excluding full-time students)¹ – 9% of the total number of people in employment.

Of those, 2 million are employees, and 445,000 are self-employed. Many people are combining employment with high levels of care: over 400,000 people in paid employment are also providing over 50 hours of care per week.

Other research suggests that the number of carers in paid employment could be even higher. Carers UK research in 2019 found that there could be around 4.87 million people juggling work and care: 1 in 7 of all workers.²

As the population ages, more people will be combining caring with paid employment. Research by the Centre for Care found that every year between 2010-2020, more than 1.9 million people in paid employment become unpaid carers – over 5,000 people every day.³



9%



of people in employment are also unpaid carers, according to Carers UK analysis of ONS Census 2021 data in England and Wales

Table 1: Number of unpaid carers in paid employment, by hours of care (ONS Census 2021)

Hours of care	Number of carers in paid employment	
	England	Wales
0-19 hours of care a week	1,443,390	85,919
20-49 hours of care a week	482,654	30,491
50 or more hours of care a week	404,420	28,404
TOTAL	2,330,464	144,814

¹ ONS (2023) Economic activity status by provision of unpaid care by general health. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/RM022/editions/2021/versions/1>

² Carers UK (2019) Juggling work and care. <https://www.carersuk.org/media/no2lwyl/juggling-work-and-unpaid-care-report-final-web.pdf>

³ Petrillo, Bennett and Pryce (2022) Cycles of caring: transitions in and out of unpaid care. <https://www.carersuk.org/media/bgolg5u2/cuk-carers-rights-day-research-report-2022-web.pdf>

Impact of juggling work and care for carers

Caring is most likely to impact at a peak of a career, but can affect all ages

The peak age for caring can often coincide with the peak of an individual's career. The Census found that in England and Wales, the highest percentage of unpaid carers was in individuals aged between 55 and 59 years, with over half a million people aged 55-59 providing care.⁴ It also affects women differently to men. Women have a 50:50 chance of providing care by the time they are 46; men have the same chance by the time they are 57 – 11 years later.⁵

Caring can happen at all ages. There are just under 230,000 young adults aged between 18 and 24 providing care in England and Wales, and research shows that they are less likely to gain qualifications and less likely to enter the labour market.⁶



The table below gives a breakdown of the ages of unpaid carers in employment in England and Wales.

Table 2: Numbers of carers in paid employment by age (ONS Census 2021)

Age	Number of carers in paid employment			
	Employee		Self employed	
	England	Wales	England	Wales
16-24	92,347	5,987	7,698	438
25-34	256,452	15,176	35,538	1,762
35-49	615,876	38,294	123,663	6,160
50-64	866,086	56,677	212,369	12,248
65 and over	78,171	5,221	42,267	2,853

50:50

chance a woman will have provided care by the time they are 46



98,000

young adult employees (16-24) in England and Wales are also providing care



⁴ ONS (2022) Unpaid care by age, sex and deprivation, England and Wales: Census 2021. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/socialcare/articles/unpaidcarebyagesexanddeprivationenglandandwales/census2021>

⁵ Zhang and Bennett (2019) Will I Care? The likelihood of becoming a carer. <https://www.carersuk.org/media/warllcph/carersrightsdaynov19final-2.pdf>

⁶ UCL (2023) Young carers less likely to graduate from university. <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2023/may/young-carers-less-likely-graduate-university#:~:text=The%20research%20team%20found%20that,to%20have%20a%20degree%20qualification.>

Caring increases risks of poorer health and wellbeing

Juggling work and care can impact on carers' health and wellbeing. Research has found that that working women who provide high levels of care are more likely to have poorer mental health.⁷ Many carers in paid employment tell us they are tired, stressed and struggling to take a break. Issues with the availability or quality of social care services can also have an impact: without support from paid care workers or respite services, carers can struggle to balance their caring responsibilities with paid employment.



Caring increases risk of leaving employment or reducing working hours

Caring is a significant reason for employees leaving the labour market. Many people cut back their working hours to care, while others feel they have to leave their employment altogether if flexible working or Carer's Leave isn't available or supported. Carers UK research in 2019, based on polling, found that 2.6 million people have given up work to care, and 2 million people have reduced their working hours to care.⁸ Those over the age of 45 were most likely to have given up work to care. Other research has found that women are twice as likely than men to leave their job due to caring.⁹



Caring increases the risk of poverty

If carers have to reduce their working hours, or give up work completely, this can lead to a reduction in income,¹⁰ reduced pension entitlement,¹¹ and increased risk of poverty later in life.¹²

Losing employees has an economic impact on businesses

When people give up paid employment to care, this can have a negative impact on the economy through increased spending on social security benefits for people who have left their jobs, as well as taxes forgone on lost earnings.¹³

2.6 million 
people have given up work to care

2 million 
people have reduced
their working hours to care

⁷ Harris et al. (2020) Relationship between informal care-giving health and work in the Health and Employment After Fifty Study, England. <https://academic.oup.com/eurpub/article/30/4/799/5851091?login=false>

⁸ Carers UK (2019) Juggling work and care. <https://www.carersuk.org/media/no2lwyxl/juggling-work-and-unpaid-care-report-final-web.pdf>

⁹ Vodafone (2021) Lost Connections: supporting carers in the workplace. <https://newscentre.vodafone.co.uk/app/uploads/2021/03/Lost-Connections-2021.pdf>

¹⁰ Heitmueller and Inglis (2007) The earnings of informal carers: wage differentials and opportunity costs. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/17276532/#:~:text=Previous%20research%20has%20shown%20that,further%20disadvantages%20even%20when%20participating.>

¹¹ Dow and Meyer (2010) Caring and retirement: crossroads and consequences. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21058536/>

¹² Centre for Care (2022) Juggling work and care: the impact of reducing work on financial wellbeing. <https://centreforcure.ac.uk/commentary/2022/11/juggling-work-and-care/>

¹³ Pickard et al. (2017) Public expenditure costs of carers leaving employment in England, 2015/2016. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/hsc.12486>

Carers' employment rights today

Summary of carers' rights in the workplace

Carers have several key rights which are important to being able to juggle work and care:

- time off to deal with emergencies for a 'dependant'
- a right to request flexible working
- protection from discrimination by being associated with a disabled person



Time off for emergencies

Employees have a legal right to take a reasonable amount of **time off work** to deal with an emergency involving someone who relies on them for help, as a dependant (eg a spouse or partner, child, or parent). Whether or not this time off is paid or unpaid is at the discretion of the employer. An emergency might include the death of a dependant, breakdown of usual care arrangements, the dependant falling ill, experiencing an assault or having an accident, or dealing with an incident involving a child at school.

If the employer doesn't handle the request in a reasonable manner, the employee can take them to an employment tribunal.

Employees can also ask for flexible working through an informal non-statutory route – for example a discussion with their manager. This can be made at any time, and there is no timeframe within which the employer must make a decision.

Right to request flexible working

Employees also have a legal right to request **flexible working** if they have been an employee with 26 weeks (6 months) of continuous employment, and as long as they haven't already made a flexible working request in the last 12 months. Flexible working might be working flexi-time (e.g. working outside of 'core hours'), working from home, job sharing, part-time working, term-time working, staggered hours (where employees have various start and finish times), compressed hours (where employees work their total hours over fewer working days), mealtime flex (where employees take their lunch break when it suits them), and annualised hours (where employees work their total hours over a year but have some flexibility when they work).

Employees must deal with statutory requests for flexible in a 'reasonable manner' by, for example, assessing the advantages and disadvantages of the application, holding a meeting to discuss the request with the employee, and offering an appeal process.

Protection from discrimination by association with a disabled person

In addition, in England, Wales and Scotland, people who are looking after someone who is older or disabled are protected under the Equality Act 2010 against **direct discrimination** or harassment, including within the workplace, because of their caring responsibilities. This is framed in law as discrimination by association with a disabled or older person.



Carers' experiences of juggling work and care – today

In our State of Caring 2023 survey¹⁴ (a UK-wide survey with unpaid carers), 18% of carers said they were a full-time employee, and 16% said they were a part-time employee. Female carers were more likely to be working part-time than male carers (18% compared with 5%).

Carers who were providing more hours of care were less likely to be working full-time: 10% of people caring for over 50 hours per week were working full-time compared to 32% of people caring for less than 50 hours. Carers who had been caring for longer were also less likely to be working full-time: 16% of people caring for over 5 years were working full-time compared to 26% of people caring for less than 5 years. This suggests that caring can have an impact on people's capacity to work in full-time paid employment.

The survey results also show that support from employers can have a significant impact on carers who are employees' ability to balance work and care. 38% of carers who are employees said that recognition from their employer of their caring role helps them balance work and care, and 57% said that an understanding line manager is helpful. 53% of carers said that flexible working helps them balance work and care.

“My employer has recently drawn up a carers policy which really helps with my son's medical appointments as I don't have to make my time back.”

57%

of carers who are employees said an understanding line manager is helpful



“if it wasn't for flexible working and the ability to work at home I wouldn't be able to work.”

“My current employer is supportive. This is so important. It's difficult juggling work and care, it can be expensive and stressful. In previous years (2010) when caring for a different family member I had an unsympathetic line manager and the difference this makes is highly significant.”

Table 3: What helps carers who are employees to juggle work and care (Carers UK State of Caring survey 2023)

Workplace support	% of carers who said this helps them (as a proportion of those who answered the question)	% of carers who said this helps them (as a proportion of those who felt this support was relevant)
Understanding line manager	57%	70%
Flexible working	53%	71%
Working from home some of the time	36%	72%
Working from home most/all of the time	40%	73%
Recognition from my employer of my caring role	38%	47%
Reducing my working hours	22%	48%

¹⁴ Unless stated otherwise, all statistics quoted from the survey are UK-wide.

Without support from employers, carers are at risk of giving up work to care. **40% of all carers told us that they had given up work to provide unpaid care, and 22% said they had reduced their working hours because of their caring role.** People caring for over 35 hours a week were more likely to have given up work to care (48%) than those caring for less than 35 hours a week (14%).

Over half (57%) of people who had stopped working or reduced their hours at work to care said they had done so because of the stress of juggling work and care. 15% had done so because of a lack of support from their employer. Many carers said it was the lack of support from their employer that had caused them stress and anxiety.

- “I had a good job in retail management but could no longer juggle 15hr days with my husband's regressing health...I had a nervous breakdown and attended NHS mental health facilities.”
- “In my NHS role I was unable to adjust my working hours to meet my caring commitments so I retired early.”
- “I needed time off for appointments and for caring role and was not supported in this making it impossible to work. I was not allowed to work part time and needed to attend appointments and make calls in work hours.”
- “I loved working, but I was unable to progress my career due to needing part time work. There is still a definite dislike of people who need time off for caring. You are seen as troublesome and difficult and no one wants you in their department despite the fact you work extra hard and give your all when you are there. Whilst my immediate line manager was supportive, beyond that there was no support.”

40%



of carers told us that they had given up work to provide unpaid care



22%



of carers had reduced their working hours because of their caring role

Carers' employment rights tomorrow



New legislation affecting carers in employment

There are two new key pieces of legislation which will make a difference to unpaid carers juggling work and care: the Carer's Leave Act 2023 and the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023.

Both Acts could make a key difference for unpaid carers benefitting:

- 2 million carers who are employees across England and Wales
 - » 1.9m carers who are employees in England
 - » 121,000 carers who are employees in Wales.

Carer's Leave Act 2023

The new Carer's Leave Act 2023 has gone through UK Parliament and could be made law as early as April 2024, although a date has not yet been set.

This new Act will give employees who are unpaid carers in England, Scotland and Wales the legal right to take up to five days of unpaid Carer's Leave.

This entitlement will be available to employees from the first day of their employment and allow employees to take time off for caring commitments. It will ensure that unpaid carers have the same employment protections as employees taking other forms of family related leave. This means carers will be protected from dismissal or any detrimental outcomes because of taking time off.

The details of how these new rights will work in practice will be confirmed next year. The Act, which Carers UK has campaigned on for decades, will make a huge difference to carers who can find it difficult or stressful to juggle work and care.

Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023

The new Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act has also recently been passed¹⁵ which will give employees the right to ask their employer for flexible working from day one of their employment, in England, Scotland or Wales. This Act will provide millions of workers with more flexibility over where and when they work. The expectation is that this will be implemented in 2024 as well.

The Act will enable employees to make two statutory requests in any 12-month period (rather than one request, which is the case under the current legislation). It will remove the existing requirement for the employee to explain what effect the change would have on the employer and how that effect might be dealt with. It also introduces new requirements for employers to consult with the employee before a request is rejected, and for employers to make a decision on a request within two months (rather than three months which is the case under the current legislation).

¹⁵ Gov.uk (2023) Millions to benefit from new flexible working measures. [gov.uk/government/news/millions-to-benefit-from-new-flexible-working-measures](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/millions-to-benefit-from-new-flexible-working-measures)

What difference will this legislation make to carers? Evidence from unpaid carers in 2023

The evidence from carers suggests that the implementation of Carer's Leave could bring a number of benefits:

- Help to retain carers in paid employment
- Promote improved health and wellbeing
- Improve consistency of support
- Empower unpaid carers
- Promote the development of new and further workplace policies.

The new Act will also have a beneficial outcome for employers in a tight employment market where there are increased recruitment costs.

Carers who don't have unpaid Carer's Leave say it would benefit them

Our research with carers provides evidence that this new legislation around Carer's Leave and flexible working would be beneficial for carers. **Nearly a fifth of carers (18%) who are employees said they would like unpaid Carer's Leave.** It was clear from carers' comments that it would make a difference to them:

“An agreed amount of Carer's Leave per year would be ideal too, maybe 3-5 days. It would allow for appointments for my daughter and maybe an opportunity for me to have a day off work that isn't consumed by meetings, reviews, etc. for her caring needs.”



“Unpaid Carer's Leave might mean I could increase care for a limited time without leaving my job, which I keep thinking I might need to do, if my father in law declines. This would also give time to sort out alternative care if it's necessary and we can't cope at home.”

Some carers told us that they were currently using their annual leave or taking time off sick to provide care.

“I had to take sick leave which has hugely affected my previously clean absence record.”

“I usually use my holiday hours to take my husband to doctors or hospital.”

“I have resorted to pretending to be sick myself. All impact on my mental wellbeing and I can't speak to friends about why I was actually away when they say nice to see you back.”

Table 4: Carers who are employees' views on unpaid Carer's Leave (Carers UK State of Caring survey 2023)

Statement	Percentage of carers who agreed (as a proportion of those who answered the whole question)
I would like unpaid Carer's Leave	18%
I don't know if unpaid Carer's Leave is available	40%
I have already taken unpaid Carer's Leave	19%

Carers who have taken unpaid Carer's Leave or flexible working had found it beneficial

19% of carers who are employees had taken unpaid Carer's Leave. Our survey respondents are more likely to take leave because they tend to provide higher levels of care. Carers told us that unpaid Carer's Leave or flexible working had been beneficial to them.

- “...my employer allows me to work flexibly eg in evenings so I can attend daytime hospital appointments as I always more than make up the time.”
- “I haven't needed to take substantial time off yet but my manager does not mind me working more flexibly if there is a carer need I need to prioritise.”



The new law would improve consistency

Some carers said their employer did not have a clear or consistent policy on Carer's Leave.

- “It is variable in terms of whether the team allow you to take it. Seems that it is more acceptable to take time off if you have young children than if you are a carer.”
- “...there are no clear instructions about what the time could be used for....”

19% 

of carers who are employees in our survey had taken unpaid Carer's Leave



- “The company I worked for made it very difficult for me. Other employees got flexible/unpaid leave but being in a management role I was forced to take annual leave to take my mother or spouse to hospital appointments or when they needed looking after if sick at home. Ended up finding another job to help with this.”

- “I'm still not clear about when I can take Carer's Leave although it is available...”

The new law should empower carers to take leave if they need it

Other carers said their employer could currently be reluctant to allow them to take Carer's Leave, or that other employees were unsupportive of requests to take leave.

- “I am sometimes made to feel embarrassed to take this leave by my manager.”
- “My supervisor is very good but a previous one wanted to know why I needed the Carer's Leave. I had to explain why I need to take it. If they decide it is 'not what Carer's Leave is for' then I have had to take annual leave instead.”
- “My employer made it very difficult for me and I felt uneasy even asking for the time. One comment was made that it was an inconvenience.”
- “My manager is very understanding but I do feel like my peers are a bit resentful if I am getting time off to care as they see it as a perk that they don't get.”

Preparing for the new Acts

Our research shows that there is relatively low awareness of current entitlements and the new rights amongst employees. **40% of carers who are employees said they didn't know if unpaid Carer's Leave was available from their employer.**

40% 

of carers who are employees said they didn't know if unpaid Carer's Leave was available from their employer

Over a quarter (28%) said they didn't know anything about unpaid Carer's Leave. Many of the carers completing our survey are Carers UK members and may therefore be more likely to have heard about Carer's Leave.

It is likely that the proportion of carers who are unaware of Carer's Leave may be even higher. This shows that there is more work to be done to ensure that carers are aware of the new rights.

“ I didn't know taking paid/unpaid Carer's Leave was a thing and I don't know if my employer offers this.”

Many carers don't identify themselves as unpaid carers and can miss out on support as a result. Carers UK research found that just under half of all carers took over one year to identify themselves as an unpaid carer.¹⁶ Carers UK business forum, Employers for Carers, has developed good practice materials which look at how best to identify unpaid carers within the workplace, drawing on both Carers UK's experience and that of leading employers within the forum.

There is an opportunity with these new Acts – and with the Carer's Leave Act particularly – to raise awareness of caring amongst all employees within a business or organisation. Caring is often seen as invisible in the workplace, and changing the culture around this will have a positive impact.

With the new Acts due to come into force potentially within the next year, we asked unpaid carers whether they knew if their employer had started to prepare for these new rights. **Over two thirds of carers who are employees (67%) said they didn't know what their employer is doing.** This suggests that there is an opportunity for employers to start preparing early and communicating changes to unpaid carers that new rights are coming shortly. Carers UK is encouraging early adoption of the new law, given the benefits to unpaid carers in ensuring they have a choice about taking time off.

Some employers without unpaid Carer's Leave already in place are taking action. 8% of respondents to the survey said that their employer was planning to bring in a new policy on unpaid Carer's Leave.

Good practice employers already have unpaid Carer's Leave in place and the best employers have paid Carer's Leave.

It is vital that employers are aware of current and future legislation, so they are able to ensure their flexible working and Carer's Leave policies are clear and consistent. Supporting carers to juggle paid employment with caring is beneficial not only in reducing the likelihood of employees with caring responsibilities leaving work or reducing their hours, but in ensuring that carers are able to focus on work without experiencing stress or anxiety.

Unpaid Carer's Leave enables a return to work, or increased work, for some carers

New legislation on Carer's Leave and flexible working may also help some carers return to paid employment or take on increased working hours.

A fifth of carers (19%) who had given up work or reduced their working hours to care said that having the ability to take time off through unpaid Carer's Leave would help them return to paid employment or increase their working hours.

A quarter (25%) said that having a supportive employer that understands caring would help them return to work or increase their hours.

These are very encouraging results and it is clear that the new legislation will support some carers. However, rights within the workplace are not a panacea for carers' return to work where they have left the labour market and wish to resume paid employment. There are several other critical factors which also influence this decision: the availability of good quality social care, a better organised and responsive NHS, and a benefits system that works better for unpaid carers. Delivering a combination of this support could enable more carers to return to paid employment.

Young adult carers could find it easier to discuss their needs at work with the new laws

Carer's Leave could also help young adults to enter the labour market by providing them with better rights and an understanding of the changes to the law.

¹⁶ Carers UK (2022) State of Caring 2022. https://www.carersuk.org/media/ew5e4swg/cuk_state_of_caring_2022_report.pdf

Carers' employment rights in the future

There is not only a strong moral imperative to support unpaid carers, but also a strong economic imperative too. The UK economy depends on businesses and employers retaining their skilled and knowledgeable staff, including those who are juggling paid employment with caring. As a society we must adapt in order to support our growing and changing population of unpaid carers.



The UK lags behind other countries in terms of workplace rights for carers. Many other countries have some form of Carer's Leave in place, including Japan, Canada, Germany, France, Poland, the Netherlands and Sweden to name a few. In Japan, which has a super aged society, the government introduced additional funding for social care as well as stronger workplace rights for unpaid carers, many of whom are women, in order to bolster the labour market, keep women in the labour market and manage care for the older population.

Many countries are looking at the challenges of supporting an ageing population and managing a shrinking labour market. The direction of travel across the world is to look at a workplace rights solutions to support working carers. A recent European Directive on Work Life Balance means that all European Union countries must address this, taking Carer's Leave further ahead.

Carers UK's research with members of our Employers for Carers forum has found that employers lose out when carers struggle to manage work and caring responsibilities, and can incur substantial costs in employee absence and workplace stress. When valued employees have to give up work to care, businesses bear the costs of recruitment and lost productivity. Employers are losing talented people in whom they have invested considerable time and money.

Research by Centrica estimates that UK companies could save up to £4.8 billion a year in unplanned absences and a further £3.4 billion in improved employee retention by adopting flexible working policies to support people with caring responsibilities.¹⁷ Carers UK's analysis of other countries' policies found that paid leave of at least five days a year could save the UK economy around £3.5 billion a year.¹⁸

¹⁷ Centrica (2018) Carers UK and Centrica announce new partnership to improve the lives of carers. <https://www.centrica.com/news/carers-uk-and-centrica-announce-new-partnership-improve-lives-carers#:~:text=Centrica%20estimates%20that%20UK%20companies,support%20those%20with%20caring%20responsibilities>.

¹⁸ Centrica Supporting carers in the workplace. https://www.centrica.com/media/3247/centrica_carers_guide.pdf

Paid Carer's Leave

The new Carer's Leave Act will give carers the opportunity to take up to five days of unpaid leave a year, and we have set out some of the benefits of this approach. However, Carers UK would like to see a future where paid Carer's Leave is enshrined in legislation.

The best employers, who recognise the benefits of supporting carers within the workplace, provide paid Carer's Leave.

Paying Carer's Leave has an important social impact, enabling lower income employees to be able to afford to take the leave they need to provide care. It also benefits part-time workers and women in particular, who are more likely to have lower incomes from work and pensions in retirement.

There is evidence that paid Carer's Leave would have a significant impact on productivity, worker satisfaction, and employee wellbeing as we set out above.

The evidence from employers monitoring of take-up of paid Carer's Leave suggests that there is an average of around 3 days taken per year,¹⁹ only being used when employees consider it to be really necessary.



33%



of carers who had given up work or reduced working hours to care said paid Carer's Leave would help them return to work or increase their hours

The benefits of paid Carer's Leave

In this year's survey, we asked carers whether they had taken paid Carer's Leave and whether this was of benefit. Many commented that it was and that it made a significant difference.

“I have a good employer who allows me paid Carer's Leave for appointments and other emergencies.”

“My employer offers this. When I was very distressed because of my daughter's illness I was able to take paid Carer's Leave. There was no problem and I was very grateful to be able to do this.”

“My employer has paid Carer's Leave and it's an absolute game changer. I used to have to take sick leave or use annual leave for my caring responsibilities at previous jobs.”

“My boss told me about paid Carer's Leave when I mentioned my situation which gave me a sense of relief and it was 1 thing less to worry about.”

However, 41% of carers who are employees said they didn't know if paid Carer's Leave was available to them within the workplace. This is a similar proportion to those who were unaware whether unpaid Carer's Leave was available. Again, this demonstrates a real need for employers to publicise relevant policies to their employees to make sure that they are able to take advantage of them, as well as train and support managers to support their colleagues.

53% of carers who are employees' said they would like paid Carer's Leave. This shows that a clear majority of carers would like this in the workplace.

The evidence from carers also suggests that paid Carer's Leave would be even more effective in supporting carers to increase hours or return to work. A third of carers (33%) who had given up work or reduced their working hours to care said that the ability to take time off through paid Carer's Leave would help them return to work or increase their working hours. This is higher compared with unpaid Carer's Leave which was at 19% for the same question.

“If I had paid Carer's Leave it is likely that I would be able to work longer paid hours.”

¹⁹ Ibid

Other future employment legislative policy and practice measures

Carers UK is interested in exploring policies which would support carers for longer in the workplace, including:

- Exploring whether flexible working rights could be further enhanced.
- Introducing two weeks of paid Carer's Leave
- Considering whether employees could take a longer period of leave of up to 6 months. Some companies already enable this by providing opportunities for employees to take a career break or a sabbatical. In the shorter term we would see this leave as unpaid, with carers able to claim Carer's Allowance for the majority of the leave, but in the future, this should be paid leave.
- Considering whether there could be a greater emphasis on flexibility within jobs particularly in job adverts and job design.
- Introducing clearer rights and recognition for carers by making caring a protected characteristic. This would ensure that the rights that carers have to protection from discrimination are better understood, clearer and more tailored to need.

Employers for Carers and Employers for Carers Wales lead the development of knowledge and practical resources to support employers. Further information about the support available is included later in the report.



Recommendations

Carers' rights today

- We encourage all employers to raise awareness of unpaid caring within the workplace and promote a positive culture of understanding and support.
- All managers should be trained on carer recognition and how to support employees within their workplace who are unpaid carers, including young workers entering the labour market for the first time.
- Employers should consider joining Employers for Carers and Employers for Carers Wales to make the most of leading knowledge and expertise in the sector.
- Employers should consider being “early adopters” of the new legislation and to go one step further and introduce the leave as paid Carer’s Leave, making it even more accessible to employees.
- Employers should adopt Carers UK’s Carer Confident benchmark, run by Employers for Carers, to move towards becoming a carer friendly employer.
- Employers should recognise the range of skills that carers gain through their caring role, to support carers return to work and supporting young adults entering the labour market for the first time.
- Governments across the UK could raise awareness of carers’ existing rights within the workplace, as well as the benefits of flexibility for unpaid carers.

Carers' rights tomorrow

Implementation of Carer’s Leave Act 2023 and Employment Relations (Flexible Working Act) 2023

- UK Government should seek to implement the legislation at the earliest opportunity I.e. from April 2024.
- The UK Government should work with business organisations including Employers for Carers to encourage positive take-up and implementation of the new rights.
- The Welsh Government should continue to support the roll-out and benefits of the new legislation.
- The benefits of this legislation could be further enhanced by measures to help carers juggle work and care within the benefits system. UK Government should be increasing the earnings limit on Carer’s Allowance to 21 times the National Living Wage and should introduce a dedicated Work Allowance for carers in receipt of Universal Credit.
- Governments across the UK need to ensure funding in the short term of sufficient social care services and accessible health services to ensure carers’ ability to juggle work and care.

Carers' rights in the future

With a Westminster election on the horizon, Carers UK believes that support for unpaid carers must be a core part of all parties policies.

Based on our evidence from carers, an ageing population, people living longer with disabilities and a shrinking workforce relative to the age balance of the population, Carers UK believes that there is a need for substantial change.

- Carers UK wants to see a future UK Government develop a longer-term vision about carers juggling work and care, including the introduction of two weeks paid Carer's Leave and a longer period of unpaid leave.
- There should be a commitment to continue to strengthen flexible working as this also has a key benefit for unpaid carers, including a review of the legislation once implemented.
- There should be a cross-UK Government National Carers Strategy with a 10 year delivery period.
- In order to increase carers' recognition and make current discrimination rights much easier to understand with better consistency, we believe that caring should be made a protected characteristic in the Equality Act 2010.
- There must be a commitment to place social care on a sustainable funded basis, understanding that this is critical, just as childcare is fundamental, to engagement in work.
- There must be a substantial review of Carer's Allowance and associated benefits which make it more fit for purpose.



Further resources

Employers for Carers

Employers for Carers is a business forum and service established by Carers UK in 2009. It now has around 230 member organisations with a reach of 3million employees. Member services including a dedicated web platform with a range of practical resources including e-learning, toolkits, model policies and case studies, access to expert training and consultancy and employer networking events.

Employers for Carers also works in partnership with employers to gather evidence and test new and emerging practice.

employersforcarers.org

The Wales Hub of Employers for Carers has been established to support organisations based in Wales to be more carer confident. More information can be found at employersforcarers.org/about-us/wales-hub/



Carer Confident

Carer Confident is Employers for Carers UK wide employer benchmarking scheme. Launched in 2019, the scheme has over 60 accredited employers who are building a supportive and inclusive workplace for staff who are or will become carers.

Carer Confident also seeks to recognise employers who achieve these benchmarks, and to inspire others to follow suit. A certificate of achievement is presented to employers with a UK presence who have demonstrated that they have built an inclusive workplace where carers are recognised, respected and supported.

employersforcarers.org/carers-confident



Preparing for the new Carer's Leave Act 2023

More information about the Carer's Leave Act 2023 is available at carersuk.org/for-professionals/support-for-employers/carers-leave-act-support-package

A guide for employers about how to prepare for the Carer's Leave Act 2023 is available at carersuk.org/media/5btnaenj/prepare-for-the-act.pdf

Further information for employers

Information about carer's rights in the workplace is available at carersuk.org/help-and-advice/work-and-career/your-rights-in-work/

A guide for employers about how to prepare for the Carer's Leave Act 2023 is available at carersuk.org/media/5btnaenj/prepare-for-the-act.pdf

More information about how to become a member of Employer for Carers is available at employersforcarers.org/membership/member-benefits/

Appendix

Table 5: Carers UK analysis of the number of carers who are employees by country, region and local authority in England and Wales (ONS Census 2021)²⁰

By country, region and local authority	Number of carers in employment (excluding full-time students)	Number of carers who are employees (excluding full-time students)
England and Wales	2,475,000	2,030,000
England	2,330,000	1,909,000
Wales	145,000	121,000
North East of England	114,359	98,995
Darlington	4,707	4,062
County Durham	23,434	20,226
Gateshead	8,577	7,544
Hartlepool	3,952	3,446
Middlesbrough	5,333	4,681
Newcastle	10,593	9,121
North Tyneside	9,699	8,416
Northumberland	14,765	12,210
Redcar and Cleveland	5,697	4,896
South Tyneside	6,598	5,853
Stockton-on-Tees	8,268	7,226
Sunderland	12,736	11,314
North West	326,312	275,668
Blackburn with Darwen	6,115	5,244
Blackpool	6,541	5,397
Bolton	12,492	10,605
Bury	8,669	7,254
Cheshire East	17,698	14,201
Cheshire West and Chester	16,142	13,406

²⁰ ONS 2023 Upper Tier local authorities.

By country, region and local authority	Number of carers in employment (excluding full-time students)	Number of carers who are employees (excluding full-time students)
Cumberland	12,114	10,103
Halton	6,401	5,677
Knowsley	7,802	6,910
Lancashire	55,468	46,323
Liverpool	20,559	17,921
Manchester	17,628	14,928
Oldham	9,702	8,288
Rochdale	9,217	7,862
Salford	10,118	8,831
Sefton	14,243	12,110
St Helens	9,683	8,574
Stockport	13,636	11,292
Tameside	10,318	8,930
Trafford	10,077	8,296
Warrington	9,961	8,539
Westmorland and Furness	10,029	7,814
Wigan	15,456	13,300
Wirral	16,243	13,863
Yorkshire and The Humber	225,738	189,571
Barnsley	11,503	9,835
Bradford	21,187	17,727
Calderdale	8,949	7,338
Doncaster	12,917	11,072
East Riding of Yorkshire	14,507	11,866
Kingston upon Hull	9,393	8,384
Kirklees	18,147	15,252
Leeds	30,943	26,377
North East Lincolnshire	6,146	5,274

By country, region and local authority	Number of carers in employment (excluding full-time students)	Number of carers who are employees (excluding full-time students)
North Lincolnshire	6,908	5,870
North Yorkshire	27,036	20,915
Rotherham	11,976	10,351
Sheffield	23,207	19,714
Wakefield	15,194	13,222
York	7,725	6,374
East Midlands	212,565	177,661
Derby	10,570	9,111
Derbyshire	38,354	31,954
Leicester	12,740	11,118
Leicestershire	32,421	26,748
Lincolnshire	31,707	25,799
North Northamptonshire	15,161	12,802
Nottingham	11,319	9,719
Nottinghamshire	41,353	34,817
Rutland	1,649	1,274
West Northamptonshire	17,291	14,319
West Midlands	251,739	210,946
Birmingham	40,822	34,569
Coventry	13,505	11,778
Dudley	15,247	13,057
Herefordshire	8,263	6,118
Sandwell	13,688	12,104
Shropshire	14,800	11,421
Solihull	9,943	8,427
Staffordshire	40,758	34,099
Stoke-on-Trent	10,826	9,438
Telford and Wrekin	8,734	7,469

By country, region and local authority	Number of carers in employment (excluding full-time students)	Number of carers who are employees (excluding full-time students)
Walsall	12,029	10,371
Warwickshire	25,961	21,329
Wolverhampton	10,618	9,293
Worcestershire	26,545	21,473
East of England	261,202	211,516
Bedford	7,577	6,291
Cambridgeshire	27,209	22,301
Central Bedfordshire	13,100	10,674
Essex	62,438	50,248
Hertfordshire	51,644	41,492
Luton	8,046	6,711
Norfolk	37,605	29,950
Peterborough	8,044	6,820
Southend-on-sea	7,266	5,941
Suffolk	31,752	25,538
Thurrock	6,521	5,550
London	313,517	248,044
Inner London		
Camden	7,484	5,386
City of London	289	189
Hackney	8,140	6,341
Hammersmith and Fulham	5,701	4,263
Haringey	8,924	6,671
Islington	7,510	5,756
Kensington and Chelsea	4,655	3,266
Lambeth	10,579	8,315
Lewisham	10,814	8,736
Newham	10,471	8,640

By country, region and local authority	Number of carers in employment (excluding full-time students)	Number of carers who are employees (excluding full-time students)
Southwark	9,998	7,916
Tower Hamlets	8,610	7,078
Wandsworth	9,814	7,487
Westminster	6,448	4,691
Outer London		
Barking and Dagenham	6,873	5,809
Barnet	15,820	11,723
Bexley	10,123	8,473
Brent	11,866	9,335
Bromley	13,509	10,773
Croydon	15,820	12,965
Ealing	12,624	9,965
Enfield	12,347	9,849
Greenwich	9,839	8,040
Harrow	11,153	8,911
Havering	10,523	8,727
Hillingdon	11,970	10,000
Hounslow	10,351	8,334
Kingston upon Thames	6,386	5,013
Merton	7,594	5,941
Redbridge	11,519	9,123
Richmond upon Thames	7,356	5,337
Sutton	8,847	7,252
Waltham Forest	9,560	7,739
South East	380,971	303,604
Bracknell Forest	5,084	4,227
Brighton and Hove	11,037	8,178
Buckinghamshire	23,339	18,232

By country, region and local authority	Number of carers in employment (excluding full-time students)	Number of carers who are employees (excluding full-time students)
East Sussex	24,576	18,439
Hampshire	58,425	47,344
Isle of Wight	6,196	4,634
Kent	66,007	52,752
Medway	11,337	9,512
Milton Keynes	11,085	9,373
Oxfordshire	29,079	23,239
Portsmouth	7,667	6,497
Reading	5,968	5,065
Slough	5,565	4,719
Southampton	9,205	7,731
Surrey	49,299	38,465
West Berkshire	6,685	5,375
West Sussex	37,561	29,551
Windsor and Maidenhead	5,961	4,650
Wokingham	6,895	5,621
South West²¹	243,938	192,853
Bath and North East Somerset	7,776	6,180
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole	16,193	13,058
Bristol	17,636	14,699
Cornwall	25,405	18,975
Devon	36,584	27,251
Dorset	16,849	12,839
Gloucestershire	27,067	21,565
Isles of Scilly	-	-
North Somerset	9,436	7,668
Plymouth	11,193	9,594

²¹ The total figures for the South West do not include the Isles of Sicily as the data is not available for this local authority. For more information please see <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/methodologies/protectingpersonaldataincensus2021results>

By country, region and local authority	Number of carers in employment (excluding full-time students)	Number of carers who are employees (excluding full-time students)
Somerset	24,767	19,072
South Gloucestershire	12,840	10,890
Swindon	9,480	8,166
Torbay	6,416	5,052
Wiltshire	22,296	17,844
Wales	144,809	121,353
Blaenau Gwent	3,210	2,862
Bridgend	6,833	5,960
Caerphilly	8,697	7,682
Cardiff	14,175	11,987
Carmarthenshire	9,355	7,579
Ceredigion	3,393	2,380
Conwy	5,054	4,030
Denbighshire	4,423	3,612
Flintshire	7,615	6,549
Gwynedd	4,699	3,682
Isle of Anglesey	3,029	2,350
Merthyr Tydfil	2,878	2,566
Monmouthshire	4,557	3,565
Neath Port Talbot	7,195	6,410
Newport	7,262	6,364
Pembrokeshire	5,750	4,373
Powys	6,707	4,781
Rhondda Cynon Taff	11,347	9,977
Swansea	11,481	9,955
Torfaen	4,530	4,030
Vale of Glamorgan	6,330	5,262
Wrexham	6,289	5,397

Table 6: Carers UK analysis of the number of carers who are employees by Integrated Care Board in England (ONS Census 2021)

By Integrated Care Board area	Number of carers who are employees (excluding full time students)
NHS Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board	32,381
NHS Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board	33,260
NHS Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board	42,996
NHS Black Country Integrated Care Board	44,826
NHS Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board	33,257
NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board	57,133
NHS Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care Board	29,830
NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board	101,201
NHS Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Integrated Care Board	19,046
NHS Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care Board	33,107
NHS Derby and Derbyshire Integrated Care Board	41,065
NHS Devon Integrated Care Board	41,897
NHS Dorset Integrated Care Board	25,900
NHS Frimley Integrated Care Board	24,111
NHS Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board	21,565
NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care Board	99,588
NHS Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board	60,587
NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board	27,591
NHS Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Board	51,235
NHS Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board	56,722
NHS Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board	62,264
NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board	63,414
NHS Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Integrated Care Board	39,140
NHS Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board	25,799
NHS Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board	40,003
NHS Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board	33,948
NHS North Central London Integrated Care Board	39,385

By Integrated Care Board area	Number of carers who are employees (excluding full time students)
NHS North East London Integrated Care Board	53,650
NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board	110,658
NHS North West London Integrated Care Board	58,762
NHS Northamptonshire Integrated Care Board	27,121
NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board	44,536
NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care Board	18,890
NHS Somerset Integrated Care Board	19,072
NHS South East London Integrated Care Board	52,253
NHS South West London Integrated Care Board	43,992
NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board	50,972
NHS Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board	43,537
NHS Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board	32,826
NHS Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care Board	33,747
NHS Sussex Integrated Care Board	55,991
NHS West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board	81,678



Across the UK today 5.7 million people are carers – supporting a loved one who is older, disabled or seriously ill.

Carers UK is here to listen, to give carers expert information and tailored advice. We champion the rights of carers and support them in finding new ways to manage at home, at work, or in their community.

We're here to make life better for carers.

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