



KareHero

The Carer's Leave Act Employer's Guide

Everything you need to know about the new employment law that came into effect on 6 April 2024.

Key Facts

- The Carer's Leave Bill received Royal Assent on 23rd May 2023 and became law on 6th April 2024.
- The Carer's Leave Act entitles all employees the statutory right to one week of unpaid leave to provide or arrange care for a loved one.
- It's vital that ALL companies incorporate this new legislation within their HR policies and practices as well as communicate its introduction to their employees.

Information in this guide

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Information in this guide is based on the [Carer's Leave Bill passed on the 23rd May, 2023.](#)

What is Carer's Leave?

Carer's Leave is when an employee takes time off work to arrange or provide care for a loved one with a long-term health condition.

According to Carers UK, over 7 million people are juggling work and care responsibilities at the same time in the UK.

Until now, many have been forced to use their annual leave and non-working hours to care for their loved ones. This has often led to Carer burnout, resulting in absenteeism, employees reducing their working hours or giving up their careers to provide care. The new bill aims to ease the strain by giving employees the time to care for their loved ones without the fear of it negatively impacting their career.



The Carer's Leave Act is now law. Have you reviewed and updated your carer policies?

How long is Carer's Leave?

- Carers Leave is one week of flexible unpaid leave per annum.
- The one week allotment can be used all at once or separated throughout the year in days or half days.

Who is eligible for Carer's Leave?

- Currently, only employees (not contractors) are eligible for Carer's Leave.
- All employees will be eligible from their first day of work. It is not restricted by the length of service or the industry worked in.
- Carer's Leave applies to any planned or unforeseen care provided for an employee's dependents only.
- The bill extends to the whole of the UK. However, as employment law is devolved to Northern Ireland, it currently only applies to England, Wales and Scotland.

Who is a Carer?

A Carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who cannot cope without their support, due to illness, disability, a mental health condition or ageing.

It's a simple fact of life that any one of us, at anytime, can become a Carer. The average person in the UK now has a 50:50 chance of becoming a Carer before the age of 50 - well before the age of retirement.

7.7M

people are estimated to be juggling work and unpaid care in the UK.

30+

90% of carers are over the age of 30 and in the prime of their careers.



60% of unpaid carers in the UK workforce are women.

Becoming a Carer can be one of the most complicated, sensitive and emotional events in a person's life. Every Carer's situation is different and highly personal. It's a role that can happen gradually over time as the health of a loved one declines. Or, as for many, it's a role that happens suddenly when a family member or friend suffers a major accident, health crisis or diagnosis.

The scope of care giving can also vary hugely. Some Carers might need to provide daily care for months or years, while others support their loved ones for shorter periods or more sporadically. Some of your team could be caring for someone who needs a bit of help with hospital appointments, housework, or managing their medical or financial affairs. While others might be providing hands-on care around the clock when they are not at work.

I work full-time in a senior role but spend much of my spare time caring for my dad, who has Parkinson's. I do this so that my mum can rest or get out of the house. My employer is supportive, but it's a lot to manage and I constantly feel a level of guilt that I'm not doing enough"

- Paul, 35

Hidden Carers in the workforce

Caring is often invisible in many workplaces, with 'Carers hidden in plain sight'. Many exhausted workers don't consider themselves as "Carers", but view themselves as helping out family members in need. Others may fear their workplace is not supportive, or talking about their care situation will impact their chances of promotion. As an employer looking to build a Carer-friendly workplace, it's important to take the stigma out of caring through education on the wider topic of caring and making employees aware of HR support.



Who classifies as a dependant?

A dependant can be:

- A family member (A spouse, civil partner, child or parent of the employee).
- A member of the same household as the employee (excluding boarders, employees, lodgers and tenants).
- Someone who reasonably relies on the Carer.

A dependant must:

- Have a physical or mental injury that requires (or is likely to require) care for more than three months.
- Their condition constitutes a disability under the Equality Act, or
- They require care because of their old age.

Why is supporting Carers good for business?

Supporting Carers has many positive benefits for employers. Those aged 40-55 are the fastest growing and largest cohort of employees. Providing Carer support for this cohort in particular ensures your business is fit for the future of work.



Diversity, equity, and inclusion



Unlocked lost productivity



Talent retention



Positive employer brand



Closing the gender pay gap



Workforce well-being

1.9 Million

working adults become unpaid Carers every year in the UK and are likely to reduce their working hours in order to cope.

2 in 5

working Carers quit work to provide care due to lack of support by employers.

Women are 4x more likely

to reduce their hours or give up work to provide care.

Are employees paid while on Carer's Leave?

No. Carers Leave is unpaid leave. However, a growing number of employers go beyond the law and offer paid Carer's Leave as part of their staff recruitment and retention initiatives.

How should employees ask to take Carer's Leave?

An employee does not need to notify their employer in writing regarding their request to take Carer's Leave, although they can do so if they wish to.

The notice period an employee needs to give to take the leave is twice the length of time that needs to be taken in advance of the earliest day of leave.

Employees are not required to present evidence but will need to self-certify that they qualify for Carer's Leave.

Can a Carer's Leave request be declined?

Employers cannot decline a request for Carers' leave. However, employers can recommend that leave is postponed during business-critical situations.

Carer's Leave protection against discrimination and fostering inclusivity

Carer's Leave protects employees from any repercussions associated with requesting or taking Carer's Leave. This sits alongside The Equality Act 2010. Employers cannot have policies or practices that disproportionately disadvantage carers, and must make reasonable adjustments to support Carers. This might include flexible working arrangements, such as part-time or home working, or allowing carers to take time off for caring responsibilities.

Having an equal opportunity policy in place is key. Employers may also be liable for the discriminatory acts of their employees towards any Carers in the workforce so it's important to foster a Carer inclusive culture.

My grandma had a hip replacement last year. Given I live the closest to her in my family I became her support as she recovered. Cooking, cleaning, taking her for check ups, making sure she was doing ok – plus making sure the rest of the family knew she was ok and cared for. At times I felt exhausted. I called in sick a few times just to recuperate”

- David, 28



Creating a Carer inclusive organisation fit for the future!

Here are 10 practical ways you can make your organisation Carer inclusive and compliant with the Carer's Leave Act.

- 1. Add the new Carer's Leave Act to your HR policy documents** and communicate the update to all employees.
- 2. Identify Carers in your workforce** Remember, many working Carers don't recognise themselves as Carers, so education to raise awareness is important! It can also prevent caregiver burnout before it happens.
- 3. Review your benefit portfolio** and consider which are Carer-friendly. Create a clear Carer's policy document that's accessible to all employees.
- 4. Review your existing flexible working policy.** 95% of carers believe flexible working is key to helping them manage their work and caring responsibilities.
- 5. Assess your Carer's Leave policy.** Is one week unpaid leave enough to make a difference? A growing number of employers are now offering paid (as well as unpaid) Carer's Leave.
- 6. Train people managers to recognise Carers and have meaningful support based conversations.** 89% of Carers said a supportive manager made them more loyal to a company and was key to being keep thriving at work while caring.
- 7. Create a peer support network to help Carers find each other.** Unlike new parents, Carers are often invisible in the workplace. Many Carers feel depressed and isolated as a result.
- 8. Provide an employee portal where Carers have access to reliable information** about services and support that is available to them inside and outside of your organisation.
- 9. Provide real practical solutions.** Providing and organising care for a loved one has many aspects including financial and legal implications. A Carer can spend up to 6 weeks outside of work just trying to figure out what to do or where to find care support.
- 10. Include your employees in policy creation and reviews.** Use feedback surveys and focus groups to find out what support Carers in your workforce value most and have the most impact.

"As a Carer for a close family member with dementia, it is tough to know who to ask for advice. There's more understanding these days, but what I really need are true care experts who can give me honest advice, so I know what to ask for and when."

- Emily, 42

Further information

KareHero offers dedicated care expertise and a full suite of solutions to help you, your organisation and your people to take the stress out of care support. We help executives build robust Carer inclusive organisations with future-proof policies and benefits that are inclusive of working carers and their family need.

For more information please contact us at:
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Sources:

Parliament.uk: [Carer's Leave Act](#) and [reading of the bill](#)

Chartered Institute of Personal Development: [Supporting Working Carers Report 2020](#)

[Carers UK](#)