



Better Together Fact Sheets: Working Carers



Your rights at work as a carer

If you are balancing paid work with caring responsibilities, it is helpful to know what rights you have at work. The main rights below apply to employees in **England, Wales and Scotland**. Different legislation applies in Northern Ireland.

Flexible working

You have the **right to request flexible working from your first day of employment**.

You can make up to **two statutory flexible working requests in a 12-month period**. Flexible working could include:

- working from home or hybrid working
- changing your working hours
- part-time working
- flexi-time
- compressed hours
- job sharing
- term-time working
- different shift patterns

Requests should be made in writing. Your employer must consider your request and consult with you before refusing it, although they can refuse where there is a genuine business reason.

Carer's leave

Employees have the right to take **up to one week of unpaid carer's leave each year**, available from the first day of employment.

This applies if you provide care for a dependant who has a long-term care need because of disability, illness, a health condition or old age. A dependant could be a relative, partner, child, friend or someone else who relies on you for care.

Taking carer's leave should not affect your other employment rights, including your holiday entitlement or your right to return to your job.

Time off in an emergency

Employees can take a **reasonable amount of time off** to deal with an emergency or unexpected situation involving someone who depends on them.

This could include:

- care arrangements unexpectedly breaking down
- a dependant becoming ill or having an accident
- the death of a dependant
- arranging longer-term care following an illness or injury
- an emergency involving a child during school hours

This time off is normally unpaid unless your employer offers paid emergency or dependants' leave as part of your employment contract or workplace policy.

Protection from discrimination

If you care for someone who is elderly or disabled, you may be protected under the **Equality Act 2010** from direct discrimination or harassment connected with your caring responsibilities.

This is because the law can protect people who are discriminated against because of their association with someone who has a protected characteristic, such as age or disability.

Parental leave

If you are responsible for a child under 18, you may be entitled to **18 weeks of parental leave for each child**.

Since April 2026, this right applies from the first day of employment. Parental leave is normally unpaid unless your employer offers more generous arrangements. There are rules about eligibility, how leave can be taken and the notice you need to give.

It is worth checking your workplace policies too

These are your **statutory rights**, but your employer may offer additional support through your contract, staff handbook or HR policies. For example, some employers provide paid carers' leave or additional paid time off for emergencies.

Information source: This summary has been produced by Better Together using information from **Carers UK Factsheet UK1031 – *Your rights in work***, updated April 2026. The original factsheet contains more detailed information and links to further guidance. Carers UK notes that its factsheet provides helpful information and advice and is **not an authoritative statement of the law**.