SUPPORT FOR FAMILY CARERS

Working while caring: your rights at work and your money

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IN BRIEF

In England, employees have a day-one right to up to one week of unpaid carer's leave a year, the right to ask for flexible working, and the right to reasonable time off in an emergency involving someone who depends on them. You can also earn up to £204 a week after deductions and still get Carer's Allowance of £86.45 a week, if you care for at least 35 hours a week.



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Your rights at work as a carer

If you are an employee in England, three legal rights help you combine work with caring. All three apply from your first day in a job:

- **Carer's leave:** up to one week of unpaid leave a year to give or arrange care.
- **Flexible working:** the right to ask for a change to your hours, times or place of work.
- **Time off for dependants:** reasonable unpaid time off to deal with an emergency.

You are also protected from being treated badly or dismissed because you use these rights. Workers who are not employees, such as some agency staff and the self-employed, may not have all of them, so check your status with Acas if you are unsure.

Carer's leave: one week a year

The Carer's Leave Act 2023 gives employees up to one week of unpaid carer's leave in every 12 months.

- **How much:** one week is your usual working week. If you work three days a week, you get three days.
- **How to take it:** as a whole week, single days or half days, spread across the year.
- **Who it is for:** a dependant with a long-term care need. That can be a partner, child, parent, someone who lives with you, or anyone who relies on you for care. A long-term care need means an illness or injury likely to need care for more than three months, a disability, or care needs because of old age.
- **Notice:** at least three days for a half day or a day, or twice the length of the leave if longer. It does not need to be in writing, and no evidence is required.
- **Can your employer say no?** They cannot refuse, but they can postpone it if your absence would cause serious disruption. They must tell you in writing within seven days and give you a new date within one month.

Typical uses include going to a hospital appointment, settling in new care, covering a gap between carers or sorting out a care home visit. Some employers pay carer's leave or offer more than the legal minimum.

Example carer's leave request

A short email or message is enough. For example:

> Dear [manager's name],
>
> I would like to take carer's leave under the Carer's Leave Regulations 2024 on [date or dates], [a full day / the morning only]. I need the time to [arrange care for / go to a hospital appointment with] a dependant who has a long-term care need.
>
> I am giving notice on [today's date], which meets the notice period. Please let me know if you have any questions.
>
> Thank you, [Your name]

You do not have to say who the person is or give medical details, and you do not need to provide evidence.

Flexible working: ask from day one



Every employee can make a statutory request for flexible working from their first day. Options include part-time hours, compressed hours, flexitime, working from home, staggered start times, job sharing and annualised hours.

- You can make two requests in any 12 months.
- Put the request in writing, with the date, a statement that it is a statutory request, the change you want and when, and the date of any previous request.
- Your employer must discuss it with you before refusing, and must give a decision within two months, unless you both agree to longer.

- They can refuse only for one of the business reasons set out in law, such as extra costs, effects on customer demand or quality, or being unable to reorganise work.

The Employment Rights Act 2025 will add a requirement that any refusal must be reasonable. The government plans to bring this in from October 2027, so it is not yet in force.

Tip: make it easy to say yes. Explain how the work will still get done, and offer a trial period.

Example flexible working request

> **Subject:** Statutory request for flexible working
>
> Dear [manager's name],
>
> Date: [date]
>
> This is a statutory request for flexible working under the Employment Rights Act 1996.
>
> I would like to change my working pattern from [current pattern, for example Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm] to [new pattern, for example Monday to Thursday, 8am to 6pm, working from home on Wednesdays], starting from [date].
>
> I am asking because I care for [my father], who needs help at [times]. I believe the change can work for the team because [for example: my tasks can be completed in the new hours, I will be available on the phone and online, and colleague cover is not needed]. I would be happy to try it for [three months] and review it together.
>
> [I have not made a previous request.] / [My previous request was made on (date).]
>
> I would welcome the chance to discuss this with you.
>
> Yours sincerely, [Your name]

Time off for dependants in an emergency

You have the right to a reasonable amount of time off to deal with an unexpected emergency involving a dependant, such as a fall, a sudden illness, or a carer not turning up. This is unpaid unless your employer chooses to pay. Tell your employer as soon as you can, and how long you expect to be away. It is for dealing with the emergency and making other arrangements, not for ongoing care. You cannot be dismissed or treated unfairly for taking it.

Protection from discrimination

The Equality Act 2010 protects you from direct discrimination and harassment at work because of your association with a disabled person, such as a parent with dementia or a partner with a disability. Your employer does not have to make "reasonable adjustments" for you as a carer, since that duty applies to disabled employees, but many will agree to sensible changes if asked.

How to talk to your employer

Many carers keep caring hidden at work until something gives. A planned conversation usually goes better than an emergency one.

- Read your employer's policies first: carers' leave, compassionate leave, flexible working, any employee assistance programme.
- Decide how much you want to share. You do not need to give medical details.
- Explain what is changing, what you need, and what you are proposing.
- Ask whether there is a carers' network or a named contact in HR.
- Follow up any agreement in writing.

If things become difficult, Acas offers free, impartial advice on employment rights on 0300 123 1100, Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm.

Carer's Allowance and earnings

Carer's Allowance is £86.45 a week in 2026/27. To get it, you must care for at least 35 hours a week for someone who receives a qualifying disability benefit, such as Attendance Allowance, the daily living part of Personal Independence Payment, or the middle or highest care rate of Disability Living Allowance.

You can work, but your earnings must be £204 a week or less after:

- Income Tax and National Insurance.
- Half of your pension contributions.
- Some care costs: up to half of your net earnings paid to someone (not a close relative) to look after the person you care for while you work.

The limit is strict. Earning even slightly over it means no Carer's Allowance for that week, or for that month if you are paid monthly. If your hours vary, earnings may be averaged, so speak to the Carer's Allowance Unit. Report changes straight away, because overpayments must usually be paid back.

In the Autumn Budget on 28 October 2026, the government announced it will replace this "cliff edge" with a taper, so Carer's Allowance is reduced by £1 for each £1 earned over the limit. This is not expected to start until 2030/31.

Other points to know:

- If you care for at least 20 hours a week but cannot get Carer's Allowance, Carer's Credit can protect your National Insurance record and future State Pension.
- If your State Pension is £86.45 a week or more, Carer's Allowance will not be paid, but having an "underlying entitlement" can still increase Pension Credit and other means-tested help.
- Universal Credit may include an extra amount for carers.

How to claim Carer's Allowance

1. Claim online through GOV.UK, or ask the Carer's Allowance Unit for a paper form on 0800 731 0297 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm).
2. Have ready: your National Insurance number (and your partner's, if you have one), your bank details, your employer's details and latest payslip, your P45 if you have recently left work, and details of pension contributions or care costs you pay while at work.
3. You will also need the date of birth, address and National Insurance number of the person you care for.
4. Claims can be backdated by up to three months, so claim as soon as you think you qualify.
5. Report any change in earnings or caring straight away.

Our guide to Carer's Allowance explains the rules in more detail.

When work and caring no longer fit

Before giving up work, pause and explore the options, because leaving can affect your income, pension and wellbeing for years.

- Ask about reduced hours, unpaid leave or a career break.
- Ask the council for a carer's assessment. The law requires it to consider whether you work or want to work.
- Look at paid care to cover your working hours, such as morning and evening visits or a live-in carer.
- Get benefits advice before you resign. The Carers UK helpline is 0808 808 7777.

Free helplines

- **Acas:** 0300 123 1100, Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm, for employment rights.
- **Carers UK:** 0808 808 7777, Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm, for carers' rights and benefits.
- **Carer's Allowance Unit:** 0800 731 0297, Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm.

What to do next

1. Check your contract and staff handbook for carers' leave and flexible working policies.
2. Make a written flexible working request if a change would help, using the example above.
3. Ask for a carer's assessment from the council where the person you care for lives.
4. Check whether you can claim Carer's Allowance or Carer's Credit.
5. Write an emergency plan, so a crisis at home does not become a crisis at work too.

How we can help

Day and Nightcare is a CQC-registered home care provider, rated Good, supporting families since 2008. Across Oxfordshire we provide home care visits from one hour, sleep-ins and waking nights, and 24-hour care with carers working in shifts

anywhere in England, and we provide fully managed live-in care anywhere in England from £1,550 a week, so that someone is with your relative while you are at work. Call 01865 715780 for a free initial assessment and a written quote.

Common questions

Is carer's leave paid?

Not by law. The legal right is to up to one week of unpaid carer's leave in any 12 months. Some employers choose to pay for it, or offer extra paid carer's leave, so check your contract, staff handbook or carers' policy. While you are on carer's leave your other employment rights, such as holiday and the right to return to your job, are protected.

Can my employer refuse my flexible working request?

Yes, but only for a genuine business reason from the list set out in law, such as extra costs or an inability to reorganise work among other staff. Your employer must discuss the request with you before refusing it and must give you a decision within two months, unless you agree to extend that. Planned changes will require any refusal to be reasonable, expected from October 2027.

Do I need to prove I am a carer to take carer's leave?

No. You do not have to provide evidence of the person's care needs, and the request does not have to be in writing. You do need to give notice: at least three days for a half day or a single day, or twice the length of the leave for longer periods. Your employer cannot refuse, but may postpone it for up to a month if your absence would seriously disrupt the business.

Can I work full time and still get Carer's Allowance?

Only if your earnings are low enough and you still care for at least 35 hours a week. The earnings limit is £204 a week after tax, National Insurance and half of your pension contributions, and some care costs can also be deducted. Going over by even a small amount means no Carer's Allowance for that week, or that month if you are paid monthly.

What counts as an emergency for time off for dependants?

It covers unexpected situations, such as the person you care for falling ill or having an accident, care arrangements breaking down at short notice, or dealing with an incident. It is meant for the time needed to deal with the emergency and make other arrangements. Planned events, such as a hospital appointment you knew about in advance, are not covered; carer's leave or annual leave may suit those better.

Sources and further information

- GOV.UK: Carer's leave
- GOV.UK: Flexible working, applying
- GOV.UK: Time off for family and dependants
- Acas: Carer's leave
- GOV.UK: Carer's Allowance eligibility
- Carers UK: Carer's Allowance and the earnings limit
- GOV.UK: How to claim Carer's Allowance
- Which?: End to Carer's Allowance cliff edge announced in Autumn Budget 2026

Read next

PAYING FOR CARE AND REDUCING THE COST

Carer's Allowance: who can claim and how it affects other benefits

Carer's Allowance pays £86.45 a week in 2026/27 to people who care for someone at least 35 hours a week and earn £204 a week or less. Who qualifies, the effect on the cared-for person's benefits, Carer's Credit, underlying entitlement and how to claim step by step.

Read the guide →

SUPPORT FOR FAMILY CARERS

Carer's assessment: your rights and how to prepare

A carer's assessment is free and is your legal right under the Care Act 2014. What it covers, how to ask your council for one, how to prepare, and the support that may follow, from funded breaks and replacement care to a carer's direct payment.

Read the guide →

SUPPORT FOR FAMILY CARERS

Caring from a distance: staying close when you live far away

Supporting a parent or relative who lives miles away? How to stay informed, set up Lasting Power of Attorney and GP access, use technology sensibly, work with a care provider, build a local network, plan for emergencies and make every visit count.

Read the guide →

All guides in the information centre **Check what help you could get**

Talk to our care team: 01865 715780
enquiries@dayandnightcare.co.uk · Out of hours: 07775 686272
Day and Nightcare Live In Limited, 9 Hollow Way, Cowley, Oxford OX4 2NA
CQC overall rating: Good (report published 20 April 2018)

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This PDF was made on 1 November 2026.
Information, not advice: please check anything important with the organisation named.