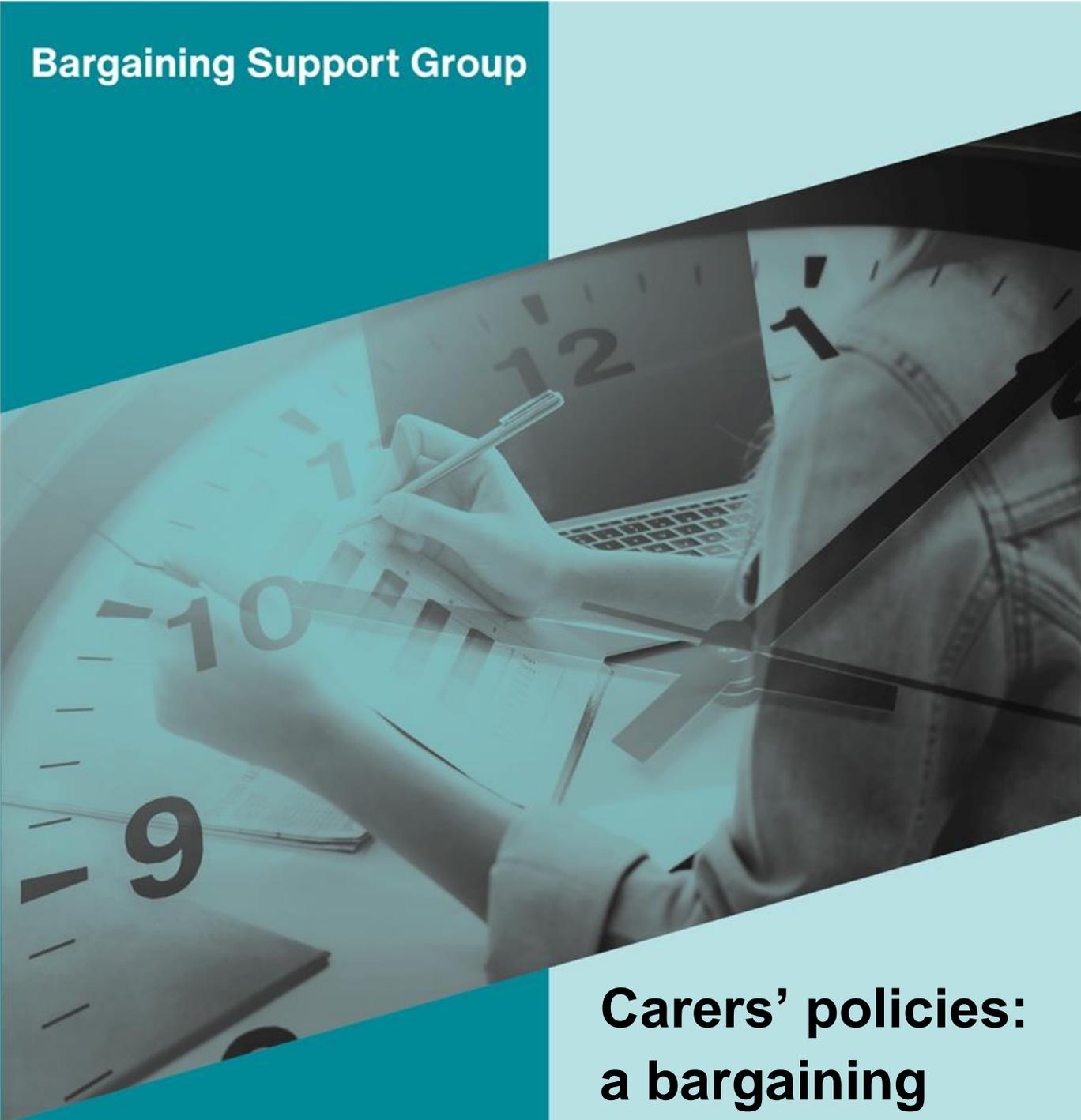


Bargaining Support Group



**Carers' policies:
a bargaining
guide and
model policy**

UNISON
the public service union



Carer's policies: A bargaining guide and model policy

Introduction

Branches and workplace reps have increasing demands on their time. But negotiating for better support for workers with caring responsibilities will have a wide-ranging benefit for your branch and workplace, as well as our members.

Many people, whether out of necessity or choice rely on unpaid carers, mostly family members. As well as caring for adult dependants, members may be struggling with balancing their work commitments with caring for their children and grandchildren. Many unpaid carers, whether of adults or children, are being driven from the workplace because their work/life balance is just too difficult.

Why negotiate a carers' policy?

- i. Most workers at some time within their working lives take on the responsibilities of caring for others, whether that is children, elderly relatives, partners or other dependant adults. This is the same for the members of your branch or workplace – perhaps it even directly affects you!
- ii. Caring responsibilities are a key reason that workers request flexible working or special leave but too often these are refused. Carers may also experience unfair treatment at work that could be discriminatory. By agreeing good carers' policies, the number of cases requiring steward representation could be reduced, freeing up steward time.
- iii. A good policy will highlight how UNISON values its members and recognises the daily challenges of juggling care responsibilities and work commitments, which could result in an increase in your branch's activist base.

- iv. Agreeing successful policies for a wide range of workers can be a useful recruitment tool, advertising the benefits of joining UNISON for all, as well as how UNISON reps have expert negotiation skills when dealing with employers.

If negotiators have any comments on this guidance or any experience of negotiations that could be usefully incorporated in the guidance, please contact Bargaining Support at bsg@unison.co.uk

Further guidance is available from bargaining support for branches and workplace reps www.unison.org.uk/bargaining-guides

Contact your regional education teams and / or LAOS to find out what training and resources are available to assist you with negotiating with your employer or promoting the issues in this guide with your members <https://learning.unison.org.uk>

Organising to Win

The outcome of any negotiation is in large part determined by the relative bargaining power of the parties involved. The most skilled, experienced, and informed UNISON officer, representative or organiser will only get so far without the backing of an organised and engaged membership and a readiness to deploy tactics designed to influence and persuade the employer.

Ultimately bargaining power is the ability to get an employer to do something they would not otherwise do – in this case, reach collective agreement with terms more favourable to UNISON members than would otherwise have been the case.

Bargaining on its own is not organising, until there is active engagement with members as a collective. Every bargaining aim must be seen as an organising opportunity, to build the union and achieve better bargaining outcomes.

The UNISON 5 Phase Plan to Win sets out the 5 phases of successful strategic organising campaigns to support a bargaining aim:

1. Research and development
2. Union base building
3. Launch issue-based campaign
4. Resolve the issue (and go to 5) or escalate and create a crisis (for the employer or ultimate decision maker).
5. Win, celebrate, review and sustain

A resourced and credible plan to win shifts the balance of power in negotiations in favour of UNISON. It enables the bargaining team to negotiate with confidence and win for members.

Where the plan requires member participation and supports the identification and development of activists, significant organising outcomes can be achieved to build the long-term strength of the Branch.

Ideally, bargaining goals can be achieved without the need to escalate campaigns to dispute. Where there is member support for escalation to deal with employer intransigence, further advice must be sought from the [regional centre](#).

Further detail is outlined in the **5 Phase Plan to Win guide and template**, which is available as one of the resources of the Organising to Win series.

UNISON activists can access the resources via the [Organising Space](#) – UNISON’s online space for activists. Visit the Organising to Win tile at [OrganisingSpace.unison.co.uk](#) or contact your [Regional Organiser](#) for guidance and support.

UNISON staff can access the resources via the Organising to Win page on Pearl and can contact the National Strategic Organising Unit for guidance and support.

Had an organising win? Let’s learn the lessons and celebrate! Send a summary to WIN@unison.org.uk and we’ll be in touch.

Contents

Carers in the workplace – they’re everywhere!.....	6
Definitions of ‘carer’.....	6
Key facts about carers	7
Identifying carers in the workplace	8
Raising awareness.....	9
The law and carers	10
Proposed unpaid carers’ leave.....	10
Parental leave	11
Dependant’s leave	12
Flexible working	12
Disability discrimination by association	14
What sort of support helps workers with caring responsibilities?	18
Paid carers’ leave.....	18
More flexible working arrangements	19
More certain work patterns.....	21
Making sure carers are not treated less favourably in the workplace.....	22
A carers’ contact or ‘champion’ in the workplace	22
Making sure carers know about the support available	23
Quick checklist	25
A carers’ policy	27
External information, advice and support.....	29
Putting the case to employers	30
Model carers’ policy.....	32

Carers in the workplace – they’re everywhere!

It is **estimated** that there are at least 5.7 million unpaid carers in the UK. This means that around 9% of people are providing unpaid care. Over the period 2010-2020, every year, 4.3 million people became unpaid carers – 12,000 people a day, and numbers are increasing.

A caring responsibility may happen overnight with someone close to you suddenly taken ill, or else it may be a more gradual commitment as elderly or disabled loved ones need help to continue to live independently.

“Many carers want to stay in work - even more so now when the cost-of-living is so high - but sometimes juggling work and many hours of care can become too much to manage.

Employers can play a pivotal role helping their staff with caring responsibilities stay in work by introducing carer-friendly policies and offering five days of carer’s leave. They will see the benefits too – those employers who have already introduced carer’s leave have seen reduced recruitment costs and improved staff retention and wellbeing.”

Helen Walker, Chief Executive, [Carers UK](#)

It can be extremely challenging financially, emotionally and physically, balancing a carers’ role alongside work. Sometimes it can lead to burnout for some carers where they simply cannot continue doing both.

Definitions of ‘carer’

The Carers Trust <https://carers.org> defines a carer as “anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support”.

Carers UK www.carersuk.org defines a carer as someone “supporting a loved one who is older, disabled or seriously ill.”

Under the **statutory employment right for time off for dependants** if they are involved in an emergency, dependants are defined as a spouse, partner, child, grandchild, parent, or someone who depends on you for care.

To be eligible for Carers Allowance or Carers Credit, the emphasis of eligibility is on what sort of benefit (such as Personal Independence Payment, Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance) the person being cared for receives, rather than the relationship, more details from **Gov.UK** www.gov.uk/carers-allowance/eligibility

Key facts about carers

“4.7% of the population in England and Wales are providing 20 hours or more of care a week.

Over the period 2010-2020, every year, 4.3 million people became unpaid carers – 12,000 people a day (*Petrillo and Bennett, 2022*).

59% of unpaid carers are women (*Census 2021*). Women are more likely to become carers and to provide more hours of unpaid care than men. More women than men provide high intensity care at ages when they would expect to be in paid work (*Petrillo and Bennett, 2022*)

One in seven people in the workplace in the UK are juggling work and care (*Carers UK, Juggling Work and Care, 2019*).

Between 2010-2020, people aged 46-65 were the largest age group to become unpaid carers. 41% of people who became unpaid carers were in this age group (*Petrillo and Bennett, 2022*). According to the Census 2021, there are 2.5 million unpaid carers in employment (excluding full-time students) in England and Wales.

On average, 600 people a day leave work to care – with over 500,000 people leaving work to provide unpaid care pre-pandemic (*Carers UK, Juggling Work and Care*).

75% of carers in employment worry about continuing to juggle work and care (*Carers UK, State of Caring 2022*).

1 in 3 NHS staff provide unpaid care (*NHS staff survey, 2022*).

Between 2010 and 2020, more than 1.9 million people in paid employment became unpaid carers every year (*Petrillo and Bennett, 2022*)

Black, Asian and ethnic minority carers are more likely to be struggling financially. (*Carers UK, The Experiences of Black, Asian and minority ethnic carers during the COVID-19 pandemic, 2022*).

LGBT carers are more likely to more likely to feel lonely. 48% of bisexual carers and 45% of lesbian and gay carers often or always feel lonely, compared with 33% of heterosexual carers (*Carers UK, The Experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual carers during the COVID-19 pandemic, 2022*).

27% of carers who completed our State of Caring survey in 2022 said they had a disability.

The value of unpaid care is equivalent to a second NHS in England and Wales, which in 2020/21 received an estimated £164 billion in funding (*Petrillo and Bennett, 2023*).”

Source: *Carers UK*

www.carersuk.org/policy-and-research/key-facts-and-figures/

Caring responsibilities have a clear influence on people's working lives, and work has a clear influence on people's caring lives.

In the last 12 months [in 2019], more than a third of working carers had turned down a promotion or job offer because of their caring responsibilities.

Working carers struggle to fulfil their caring responsibilities because of tiredness, emotional exhaustion, and the amount of time they spend at work.

Only 40% of working carers regarded their employer as carer-friendly.

Source: CIPD (*the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development*) 2020 research, '[Supporting working carers: how employers and employees can benefit](#)'

Identifying carers in the workplace

Employees often do not identify themselves as a carer, particularly when the support they give is for unpredictable, non-routine and unplanned situations, or when it is for a close family member or for someone not living with them.

Raising the issue with their line manager or HR may also be difficult. Many workers may worry that employers will consider them less committed to their job and feel at risk if they request support, particularly in a workplace environment of cost-cutting and redundancies.

As well as encouraging an open culture of trust and communication, employers should train managers about the issues for carers. This should highlight why it is important that carers are supported, and how best to communicate with carers so that they know they are valued. It should also stress the need for personal information being treated confidentially.

An anonymous staff survey could help identify the extent of the issue in the workplace for the employer, as well as any specific difficulties encountered. A survey could also help in introducing to all the idea of 'carers' and 'caring' and the valuable unpaid work they do.

"Working carers represent a significant proportion of the working population and at the height of the pandemic, Carers UK estimated that over a quarter (26%) of all workers were juggling work and care. In some sectors the proportion is even higher, with one in three NHS staff juggling paid work and unpaid caring..."

The challenges of balancing work and care often have a negative effect on carers' careers, with our previous research finding that 40% of working carers had passed on opportunities at work and 25% had moved roles to help them manage.

Worryingly, 1 in 8 carers (13%) have had to reduce their working hours during the pandemic. In addition, almost a quarter (23%) of working carers have had their employment situation negatively affected during the pandemic; by reducing their

working hours, having their hours reduced by their employer, losing their job, losing business as a self-employed carer, or leaving their job due to concerns about catching COVID.

Source: [State of Caring 2021: A snapshot of unpaid care in the UK](#)

Raising awareness

Raising awareness in the workplace about carers, for example during **Carers Week** www.carersweek.org (usually in June each year) can also ensure that employees struggling with caring commitments still feel valued in the workplace.



Carers Week is an annual campaign to raise awareness of caring, to highlight the challenges carers face and recognise the contribution they make to families and communities throughout the UK.

Carers' Rights Day www.carersuk.org/news-and-campaigns/our-campaigns/carers-rights-day/ (usually at the end of November each year) brings organisations across the UK together to help carers in their local community know their rights and find out how to get the help and support they are entitled to.

National Dementia Carers Day www.nationaldementiacarersday.co.uk (usually in September during Alzheimer Awareness Month) aims to highlight the huge number of informal and family carers who provide innovative and compassionate support for relatives living with dementia every day.

Carers Week, Carers' Rights Day and National Dementia Carers Day activities could also provide an opportunity for your branch and workplace reps to initiate negotiations with the employer about better support for employees with caring responsibilities.

"Employers should adopt **Carers UK's Carer Confident benchmark**, run by **Employers for Carers** [www.employersforcarers.org], to move towards becoming a carer-friendly employer.

In Scotland, we recommend employers using **Carer Positive** run by **Carers Scotland** [www.carersuk.org/Scotland]."

Recommendation from Carers UK's report: [State of Caring 2022: A snapshot of unpaid care in the UK](#)

The law and carers

Carers have a limited number of different rights and protections in the workplace under statutory law, and these are listed below.

There may be a more generous provision at your workplace and if so, these are likely to be listed in the contract of employment or included in the workplace policies and procedures.

Carer's leave

From 6 April 2024, the '[Carer's Leave Act](#)' comes into force. However, it will not apply in Northern Ireland because the implementation of employment laws is devolved.

In England, Scotland and Wales it will introduce a right to one week's unpaid leave for employees caring for a dependant with a long-term care need.

Dependants are defined as:

- a spouse, civil partner, child or parent
- someone who lives in the same household other than the employee's boarder, employee, lodger or tenant
- someone who reasonably relies on the employee to provide or arrange care.

Those dependants with '**long term needs**' are defined as:

- Anyone with a condition that meets the definition of disability under the Equality Act 2010
- Illness or injury (physical or mental) that requires or is likely to require care for more than three months
- Old age.

The new law will

- introduce a new and flexible entitlement to **one week's unpaid leave per year** for employees who are providing or arranging care for a relative or dependant
- be available from the first day of their employment
- allow employees to take the leave flexibly for planned and foreseen caring commitments – leave can be taken in small amounts, in half-days or individual days and not necessarily on consecutive days
- offer the same employment protections to employees taking this leave that are associated with other forms of family-related leave, meaning they will be

protected from dismissal or any detriment because of having taken or sought to take or the employer believed that they were likely to take, carer's leave.

'One week' is defined as a normal working week for the particular employee (running Monday to Sunday) under their contract. Where this varies, a week is calculated by dividing by 52 the total amount of time normally required to be worked over the 12 months ending with the last day of the carer's leave requested.

Employees will need to give notice to take carer's leave, stating that they are entitled to this leave and have not used up their entitlement, and specifying times for the leave. Employees will not need to provide evidence, nor does the notification need to be in writing.

The notice period must be twice as many days as the period of leave required, or three days (whichever is longer), before the earliest day of the leave.

Employers will be able to postpone a request if they believe the operation of the business would be unduly disrupted. However, the employer must give notice of the postponement as soon as reasonably practicable before the leave was due to begin, but no later than whichever is the earlier of seven days after the employee's notice was given to the employer or before the first date in that notice.

The employer must explain why the postponement is necessary and should consult with the employee about a new date for the leave, which must be no later than one month after the first day of the leave period originally requested.

An employee will be able to make a claim for compensation to an employment tribunal if their employer unreasonably postpones a period of carer's leave or prevents or attempts to prevent them from taking it.

If an employer already provides contractual carer's leave, the employee is not entitled to exercise both rights separately, but the statutory rights will be enhanced by any contractual provisions that are more favourable.

Carer's UK have produced a booklet for employers with more information on preparing for the new law and why it is good practice to support carers in the workplace. www.carersuk.org/media/5btnaeni/prepare-for-the-act.pdf

Parental leave

Working parents are entitled to statutory maternity, maternity support (often referred to as paternity), adoption and shared parental leave and pay.

Additionally those with at least one year's continuous service are entitled to unpaid parental leave for up to 18 weeks per child (aged under 18). Although the statutory entitlement is unpaid, many organisations have agreements in place that provide some form of payment for at least some of the 18 week entitlement. They may also offer greater flexibility in how the leave is taken and the notice given. Statutory

entitlement only allows for the leave to be taken in blocks of at least one week up to a maximum of four (unless the child is disabled) and 21 days' notice must be given to the employer with specified start and end dates.

Find out more in the bargaining guide '[Negotiating for working parents](https://www.unison.org.uk/negotiating-for-working-parents)'
www.unison.org.uk/negotiating-for-working-parents

Dependant's leave

Employees have a legal right to take reasonable unpaid time off to take action:

- i. when the dependant is injured or assaulted, falls ill or gives birth
- ii. when the dependant who is ill or injured requires care arrangements to be made
- iii. or when their care arrangements are unexpectedly disrupted or ended
- iv. when the dependant has died
- v. to deal with an incident at the school or nursery which the employee's child attends.

The legal definition of a dependant is a spouse, civil partner, child, parent or person living in the same household (though not an employee, tenant or lodger). In addition it includes someone who reasonably relies on you for assistance such as an elderly neighbour, if they are ill or to make care arrangements for them.

Although the law does not specify how long the leave can be or how often it can be taken, [ACAS guidance](https://www.acas.org.uk/absence-from-work/time-off-to-help-someone-else) (www.acas.org.uk/absence-from-work/time-off-to-help-someone-else) suggests that "it's a good idea if the employer is as flexible as they can be, depending on the employee's circumstances."

Dependant's leave may be included in policies and contracts under the heading of 'Time off for dependants', 'Compassionate leave' (although this usually just covers those employees who have experienced the bereavement of a dependant), 'Special leave' or 'Emergency leave,' or within a separate 'Carers' leave' policy.

Find out more in the bargaining guide '[Bargaining on leave](https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2022/06/Bargaining-on-leave-1022.pdf)'
www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2022/06/Bargaining-on-leave-1022.pdf

Flexible working

Flexible working may be of particular benefit for workers who find it difficult to balance their worklife with their caring responsibilities (as well as other personal commitments).

Workers should be encouraged to consider asking for flexible working rather than just giving up work altogether.

Some examples of flexible working include:

Flexi-time	Employees' weekly hours may be set and they may have to work within 'core hours' depending on the business needs, however they have some flexibility in how they work their hours.
Homeworking or hybrid working	Where an employee will either spend all their time working from home or part of the working week. UNISON has a separate guide to homeworking and a model agreement. ¹
Job sharing	Where two employees will share the job role normally done by one person.
Part-time working	Employees may decide to request working shorter or fewer days each week.
Term-time working	When an employee does not work during the school holidays and will either take paid or unpaid leave. Some employers will calculate an employee's pay pro rata over the year to allow for this.
Shift-swapping or self-rostering	Employees agree to swap shifts between themselves and negotiate between colleagues when they need time off.
Staggered hours	When an employee has different starting and finishing times allowing a business to run outside normal working hours.
Compressed hours	When an employee can work their weekly hours over fewer days e.g. nine day fortnight.
Annualised hours	Annualised hours are often used for shiftworkers. They are useful with dealing with big variations in demand throughout the year. An employee's hours are calculated over a year and then they are split into fixed shifts and reserved shifts which can be agreed on a more flexible basis.

¹ www.unison.org.uk/working-from-home-and-hybrid-working-bargaining-guide-and-model-policy/

	<p>However in practice, some employers may use annualised hours as a way of cutting costs. At worst, they may involve workers doing longer hours, being required to come in at times that do not suit them, and receiving lower financial compensation than might have been available with a traditional weekly hours contract.</p> <p>They therefore need to be approached with caution by UNISON branches and reps.</p>
Voluntary reduced worktime, also known as V-time	<p>This is a temporary period of reduced working hours as agreed between the employer and employee, normally to cover a specific current or anticipated need of the employee.</p> <p>Employees can work fewer hours in exchange for reduced salary and benefits. The agreement is often set for a certain amount of time, reverting back to standard contractual hours at the end of the period.</p>

All qualifying employees who have worked continuously for their present employer for 26 weeks can apply to work flexibly, such as by changing their hours, the times they work or requesting they work from home.

From 6 April 2024, the Flexible Working (Amendment) Regulations 2023 is expected to come into force. (However, it will not apply in Northern Ireland because the implementation of employment laws is devolved.) These new regulations will remove the requirement that an employee must have 26 weeks' service in order to be able to make a flexible working request. Instead the right to request flexible working will become a day one right.

The employer must seriously consider the written request and provide good reasons for rejecting it.

It is automatically unfair to dismiss an employee or select them for redundancy because they have made a statutory request to work flexibly.

From 6 April 2024, the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023 will come into force. (However, it will not apply in Northern Ireland because the implementation of employment laws is devolved.)

This new Act will mean that:

- employees will be able to make two flexible working requests in any 12-month period (compared to just one under current law)

- employers must respond within two months (compared to three months currently)
- employees will no longer be required to explain the impact that granting their request would have on the organisation and how any such effect might be dealt with.

From this date, managers will not be able to refuse a request until they have consulted with the staff member (although the 'consultation' is not defined). The reasons why an employer can lawfully refuse a request remain unchanged.

Employers have to give a prescribed statutory reason for turning down any such request. By law, a request can only be turned down if:

- it will cost the business too much
- the employer cannot reorganise the work among other staff
- the employer cannot recruit more staff
- there will be a negative effect on quality
- there will be a negative effect on the business' ability to meet customer demand
- there will be a negative effect on performance
- there's not enough work for the employee to do when they've requested to work
- there are planned changes to the business, for example, the employer intends to reorganise or change the business and thinks the request will not fit with these plans.

Acas has produced a [Code of Practice](http://www.acas.org.uk/acas-code-of-practice-on-flexible-working-requests) on the topic www.acas.org.uk/acas-code-of-practice-on-flexible-working-requests. (In Northern Ireland, the Labour Relations Agency has the responsibility of promoting the improvement of employment relations. It has produced an [advisory guide for employers and employees](#) about how the right to request flexible working operates and the duty on employers to consider requests seriously.)

An employee can complain about procedural failings by the employer, where a tribunal may award up to 8 weeks' wages. There may also be inter-related discrimination claims to consider too.

Although employers do not have to offer a right of appeal against their decision under law, this is recommended in the Acas Code of Practice on Flexible Working.

Acas is currently updating its statutory code of practice on handling flexible working requests. They will also update their non-statutory guidance which sits alongside the code. The updated code aims to encourage a more positive approach to flexible

working, with an emphasis on fostering an environment in which requests are not rejected by default without open-minded consideration and meaningful dialogue.

Find out more in the bargaining guide **'Bargaining on leave'**

www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2022/06/Bargaining-on-leave-1022.pdf

Disability discrimination by association

Under the Equality Act 2010², it is unlawful to directly discriminate against an employee because they are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic (excluding marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity).

This means that someone who is caring for a disabled dependant would be included in this protection if they are treated unfavourably on the basis of their dependant's protected characteristic such as if they are disabled.

Under the Equality Act, a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial, long-term (i.e. having lasted or likely to last at least 12 months or more) adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Certain conditions or impairments such as HIV, cancer, multiple sclerosis or a visual impairment (if someone is certified as blind, severely sight impaired, sight impaired or partially sighted) are expressly included even if there are no adverse effects on day-to-day activities. In addition, someone with a progressive condition (such as Alzheimer's disease, motor neurone disease, muscular dystrophy and Parkinson's) is considered by law to have a disability as soon as it starts to have an effect on their normal day-to-day activities, as long as this is likely to be long-term.

Acas provides the following examples of potentially discriminatory treatment:

Example 1

Jo has a disabled child. Jo has needed to take several days off at short notice to take their child to medical appointments related to their disability. Jo overhears their manager say, "the amount of time off that child causes is not acceptable". The next day, Jo is dismissed. This could be discrimination by association.

Example 2

Pat volunteers at the weekends, driving a minibus that takes people with a learning disability on day trips. Pat's line manager sees Pat dropping the group members off.

² In Northern Ireland, this requirement is enshrined in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995

At work, the manager makes inappropriate and offensive comments about Pat and the people on the trip. The manager also starts treating Pat differently in other ways. For example, they say Pat cannot come to weekly team lunches any more because they need to cover the phone, when that's always been shared between the team. This could be discrimination by association as well as harassment.”

Other examples might be a refusal to grant time off or training, or lack of promotion because they are also caring for a disabled person.

However it does not necessarily mean that a carer of a disabled person should be treated more favourably, for example being provided with more time off than if they were requesting it for the care of a non-disabled person.

Case law

Follows v Nationwide Building Society

The employment tribunal found that requiring a senior manager who was the primary carer for her disabled mother to be office based, amounted to indirect disability discrimination by association. In addition, the tribunal found that the provision also constituted indirect sex discrimination as more women than men are primary carers for elderly relatives. The manager had been employed on the basis of a homeworking contract, but the building society had decided to rule this out in future for that role, without discussing alternatives or proper consideration that the role could continue as home-based.

Price v Action-Tec Services Ltd

The employment tribunal found that the employer discriminated against an employee who required time off because her husband was seriously ill.

Bainbridge v Atlas Ward Structures Ltd

The employment tribunal found that the employer discriminated against an employee when they decided not to renew a fixed-term contract because the employee had to take time off work at short notice due to his wife's disability.

Truman v Bibby Distribution Ltd

The employment tribunal found that the employer discriminated against an employee with caring responsibilities who was suddenly dismissed shortly after informing his employer that he would require more flexibility in his working hours.

What sort of support helps workers with caring responsibilities?

Negotiating **paid parental leave and paid dependant's leave** (improving on the statutory unpaid options), may be seen as the priority for the negotiations between branches and workplace reps and their employers in order to support members with caring responsibilities.

However it should be recognised that much of a carer's responsibility may be ongoing and routine, and a form of leave to cover emergencies would not provide sufficient support to enable carers to fulfil commitments.

Forcing carers to use up annual leave for caring commitments such as accompanying a dependant to their routine medical or dental appointment, will mean that these employees will not fully benefit from the same amount of rest and recuperation offered to other employees through their paid annual leave.

Paid carers' leave

Wider campaigns to improve paid support for carers have been under way for a number of years, and it is hoped that eventually paid carers' leave will become a legal right as it is in many other countries.

From: ' **Holding on or moving up? Supporting carers and parents in employment**' (www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/holding-or-moving-supporting-carers-and-parents-employment)

International example: Paid leave for carers in Denmark

In Denmark, employees have the right to take paid leave for up to six months to care for a close relative who is disabled or seriously ill. The carer enters into an employment contract with the local authority who pays them either the salary they were receiving from their previous employer or DKK 22,504 (£2,600) per month, whichever is lower. They will continue to accrue holiday pay and pension benefits, and may divide the care leave up into two shorter periods of three months, or share it between several individual carers, if their employer agrees.

Employees who take up paid leave to look after sick relatives do not have a statutory right to return to their old job, though they cannot be fired for taking care leave either. The right to return to the same role tends to be specified in collective agreements, which cover the vast majority of Danish workers.

The Work and Pensions select committee recommended that the Government introduce **5 days' paid carer's leave** when resources allow, in their 2018 report³,

³ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmworpen/581/581.pdf>

recognising that “the Government’s backing for the Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Bill... shows its willingness to extend this model to support people in other circumstances.”

UNISON funded research undertaken by Coram Family and Childcare, **‘Holding on or moving up? Supporting carers and parents in employment’**

(www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/holding-or-moving-supporting-carers-and-parents-employment) found that “the most helpful interventions to support people to balance working and caring are thought to be paid carers’ leave of 10 to 20 days per year and greater control of working hours.”

In response to the UK government’s 2021 public consultation on carers’ leave, UNISON asked for:

- **10 days of paid carers leave for all workers** which can be taken in chunks of half days or hours (to cover appointments etc) as well as week or half-week blocks.
- A further right to a period of up to **6 months unpaid carers leave** to accommodate acute care or emergency transition periods.
- **Carers leave to cover caring for ill children** without a pre-existing physical or mental health problem. As outlined above, children are not legally, practically, or morally enabled to look after themselves when ill and no current childcare provision allows for leave over 2 days to be taken at short notice to look after an ill and dependent child.
- **No conditionality where a dependant relationship criteria is met** and for acute conditions to be specifically included rather than just chronic, long-term conditions.
- We also propose that this should be a day-1 right with **notice given proportionate to the amount of leave being taken and with no notice required for periods below 3 days.**

Further, we would strongly support the government offering web-based advice to employers, as it does on other HR issues, on best practice workplace carer’s policies. Many employers want to be supportive but do not have the HR resources to support them in implementing this kind of change.

More flexible working arrangements

Negotiating more fair and frequent approvals of flexible working requests could also be particularly helpful to keep carers in employment.

The 2018 report from the Work and Pensions select committee⁴ found that “Carers can find it hard to manage their caring responsibilities while rigidly tied to when, where or how they work. Flexible working arrangements are therefore often critical to balancing care and work successfully.”

‘Holding on or moving up? Supporting carers and parents in employment’ (www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/holding-or-moving-supporting-carers-and-parents-employment) reports that “four fifths (82%) of the public said that if they were a parent or a carer, having more control over their hours would help them to balance work and care .”

Employers are increasingly seeing the reputational benefits of being ‘seen’ as a flexible employer, which will inevitably attract better staff.

In the CIPD (the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) research **‘Flexible and hybrid working practices in 2023’** employees highlighted flexible working (53%) and remote working (53%) as key when considering a new job, only overtaken in importance by pay and benefits (77%).

The UK government’s 2021 consultation paper into flexible working, (covering England, Wales and Scotland only, as employment law is devolved to Northern Ireland) recognises the benefits to employers. “By removing the invisible restrictions to jobs, flexible working fosters a more diverse workforce – and the evidence shows that this leads to improved financial returns for businesses. Furthermore, workers who have more flexibility are more motivated at work and more likely to stay with their employer.”

If paid carer’s leave is not provided by the employer, then it is important for branches and reps to negotiate a more flexible approach to other leave arrangements, such as:

- flexihours allowing carers the ability to make up time off that they have taken to meet their caring responsibilities at another time
- providing matched leave against annual holiday entitlement (such as allowing each day’s leave for caring responsibilities to be counted as half a day’s carer leave and half a day’s annual leave)
- offering a temporary or permanent change in workplace if it would support an employee with caring responsibilities
- providing unpaid leave or a longer unpaid career break while the employee organises their caring responsibilities whilst keeping the job open to return to.

⁴ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmworpen/581/581.pdf>

In the poll of UNISON members undertaken by Coram Family and Childcare for **'Holding on or moving up? Supporting carers and parents in employment'** (www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/holding-or-moving-supporting-carers-and-parents-employment) "being able to take a career break with a guaranteed return to your job was viewed as helpful by 78% of carers and 91% of non-carers... as a way of balancing work and care."

More details on flexible working can be found in **'Bargaining on working hours'** www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2023/10/Working-hours-bargaining-guide.pdf

Further information from the UK government at www.gov.uk/flexible-working

More certain work patterns

Whilst the caring responsibilities of workers sometimes require flexibility, there may often be circumstances where carers, whether parents or carers of adults, require access to more certain work patterns so that they can better plan around rigid caring responsibilities.

But the increased use of zero-hours contracts and other casual work contracts, means that a worker's ability to plan care responsibilities around work commitments is difficult if not impossible.

In 2022, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimated around 4% of people in employment were on zero hours contracts (approx. 1.2m individuals), with a relatively steady increase over the previous two decades...

The core concern is whether zero hours contracts (ZHCs) are of mutual benefit to the employer and worker or are used in a way that is unfair, disproportionately advantaging employers at the expense of workers – so called 'one sided flexibility'...

Studies conclude that sections of ZHC workers report 'constrained choice' where they have no job alternatives, limited access to part-time working that fits with caring responsibilities, little or no additional financial or social support or because their industry has become dominated by ZHCs...

[ReWage Zero Hours Contracts policy brief, November 2023](#)

Choice [of work] is particularly constrained for unpaid carers who often find themselves unable to access affordable care provision. The costs of accessing care were a particular concern for carers from ethnic minority backgrounds [suggesting] that people from minority ethnic backgrounds are more likely to be trapped in insecure work due to a lack of affordable care for themselves or a family member.

Since women make up nearly 60% of unpaid carers in the UK, they're also more likely to consider balancing caring responsibilities when looking for work.

['Limiting choices: why people risk insecure work'](#) July 2023

Making sure carers are not treated less favourably in the workplace

“Carers are too often ‘nervous’, even ‘fearful’ of discussing their circumstances with their employer. Stigma still exists” reported the [Work and Pensions select committee](#).

Sadly this stigma can manifest itself in a form of direct discrimination by association. Some workers when disclosing their care responsibilities suffer unfair and inconsistent treatment in the workplace.

Therefore it is essential that in any negotiations with the employer, branches and reps check that workplace policies clearly reflect the employer’s commitment to supporting carers. It is key that discrimination by association should be directly considered in the workplace equality and diversity policy and action plan, and also included in the harassment or dignity at work policy.

‘Holding on or moving up? Supporting carers and parents in employment’ (www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/holding-or-moving-supporting-carers-and-parents-employment) reported that “an understanding and trusting manager who takes an employee’s caring responsibilities into account was the kind of support most valued by many of the parents and carers we spoke to.”

In addition, it is important that carers are not indirectly disadvantaged. For example it would be key for any gender pay gap action plan to ensure that staff development training is accessible to all including those with caring responsibilities.

A carers’ contact or ‘champion’ in the workplace

To help raise the profile of the needs of carers, and encourage more to disclose their caring responsibilities and the impact on their working lives, employers could provide a specific person as a carers’ contact or carers’ ‘champion’. They would be specifically trained to support and offer assistance to employees with caring responsibilities.

This contact could then link with HR to put some support measures in place as well as signposting to external support.

UNISON reps could also become carers’ contacts and provide support to members with caring responsibilities. They could set up a carers’ network in the workplace, as well as negotiate with employers on behalf of individual members to assist them when changing working patterns to accommodate caring commitments.

Making sure carers know about the support available

Only 1 in 5 (22%) of UK workers have said they know a colleague who provides unpaid care⁵ even though research clearly shows there are many carers in the workplace. Even amongst those who currently work and care unpaid, nearly half (44%) said they did not know anyone else at work who is a carer.

The issue is too often hidden and carers in the workplace can particularly experience:

- a feeling of loneliness or isolation as a result of their caring responsibilities
- a feeling that colleagues and managers don't understand the impact of caring
- a fear of talking about their caring responsibilities.

Regularly raising awareness of the issues and the options of support available in the workplace amongst employees is key for the successful implementation of a carers' policy. This could take place during recruitment and induction periods, and at special events such as during **Carers' Week** (see section headed '**Raising Awareness**' above for more details).

Once a policy is agreed jointly with the staff side trade unions it should be circulated to all employees along with a list of national and local support agency contacts for carers. It could also include details of a workplace employee assistance programme if provided by the employer.

Ideally an employer will also provide training to all staff on this issue and explain the support it offers.

The Work Foundation's 2018 report '**Who cares? The implications of informal care and work for policymakers and employers**' (www.lancaster.ac.uk/work-foundation/publications/who-cares/) has a number of recommendations for employers including the following:

- Introduce 'Carer Champions'. This would raise awareness of working carers and destigmatise caring. It would reassure other working carers that they're not alone and encourage them to share experiences.
- Employers should seek to create a workplace culture where carers are supported with 'carer friendly' policies.
- Set up carers' peer groups or support forums, where carers can share experiences and advice. Businesses could signpost staff to external support forums.

⁵ www.employersforcarers.org/news/item/download/262_5628c11d6d364d537dd3158b943a4f0d

- Provide an online resource, through company employee benefit schemes or HR services, to help carers source practical advice and expert support on topics including care, legal and financial information.
- Offer online or telephone counselling, through services like Employee Assistance Programmes.
- Run workplace awareness campaigns.

Quick checklist

- Is the employer aware of the particular issues for unpaid carers within their workforce? An anonymous staff survey could help identify the extent of the issue as well as any specific difficulties encountered. It could also help in introducing to all the idea of 'carers' and 'caring' and the valuable unpaid work they do and encourage workers to identify themselves as carers.
- Raise awareness in the workplace about carers, such as carrying out activities coinciding with [Carers Week](#) or [Carers' Rights Day](#) or [National Dementia Carers Day](#).
- These activities could also provide an opportunity for your branch and workplace reps to initiate negotiations with the employer about better support for employees with caring responsibilities.
- Encourage the employer to consider adopting [Carers UK's Carer Confident benchmark](#).
- Clarify an agreed definition for carers with the employer, one that has no conditionality once a dependant relationship criteria is met. It should also include caring for dependants with acute conditions as well as chronic, long-term conditions.
- Negotiate the provision of paid carer's leave, ideally at least 10 days that can be taken in flexible periods of time from hours, half-days, full days, weeks of a single block.
- Negotiate the provision of a further period of up to 6 months unpaid carers' leave to accommodate acute care or emergency transition periods.
- Make sure this benefit is made available to all staff, from day one of their service.
- Negotiate a limited notice period to be given for the leave, with any amount required proportionate to the amount of leave being taken and ideally with no notice required for periods below 3 days.
- Make sure comparable provision is made for carers of ill children without a pre-existing physical or mental health problem, either within paid parental leave entitlements or inclusion in the carers' leave?
- Encourage the employer to develop a carers' policy.
- Does the flexible working policy need to be strengthened? Negotiate more fair and frequent approvals of flexible working requests.

- If paid carer's leave is not agreed, ensure the employer at least provides statutory unpaid carer's leave (coming into force in April 2024) and that all workers are aware of this new right.
- If paid carer's leave is not agreed, will the employer agree a more flexible approach to other leave arrangements, such as:
 - flexihours allowing carers the ability to make up time off that they have taken to meet their caring responsibilities at another time
 - providing matched leave against annual holiday entitlement (such as allowing each day's leave for caring responsibilities to be counted as half a day's carer leave and half a day's annual leave)
 - offering a temporary or permanent change in workplace if it would support an employee with caring responsibilities
 - providing unpaid leave or a longer unpaid career break while the employee organises their caring responsibilities whilst keeping the job open to return to.
- Negotiate more certain work patterns so that workers can better plan their work shifts around rigid caring responsibilities.
- Check that discrimination by association is directly considered in the workplace equality and diversity policy and action plan, and also included in the harassment or dignity at work policy.
- Encourage the employer to create carers' contacts or champions within the organisation who are specifically trained to support and offer assistance to employees with caring responsibilities, and who could then link with HR to put some support measures in place as well as signposting to external support.
- UNISON reps could also become carers' contacts and provide support to members with caring responsibilities. They could set up a carers' network in the workplace, as well as negotiate with employers on behalf of individual members to assist them when changing working patterns to accommodate caring commitments.
- Regularly raise awareness of the issues and the options of support available in the workplace amongst employees, and ensure that any policy is circulated to all employees along with a list of national and local support agency contacts for carers.
- Ensure the employer agrees to provide training and induction to all staff on this issue and explain the support it offers.

A carers' policy

Carers UK (www.carersuk.org/) strongly recommend that employers

“should put in place policies to support employees juggling work and care and raise awareness of the support available in the workplace so that carers feel included and supported at work.”

The CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) in their research [‘Supporting working carers: how employers and employees can benefit’](#), highlights how “supporting working carers has benefits for both employers and employees. Employers should develop policies and practices designed for this purpose, with the aim of becoming a ‘carer-friendly’ employer.”

Negotiating a specific carers' policy within the workplace – ideally including paid leave for carers and improved flexible working rights – will raise the profile of the vast amount of employees struggling with ongoing caring responsibilities alongside inflexible work commitments.

Such a policy could provide a framework to show the employer's support for carers and help raise awareness of the unpaid work that carers.

It is important that a carers' policy:

- is developed in consultation with the trade union representatives, and with employees who have caring responsibilities so that it can be appropriate and useful
- includes a clearly stated commitment from the employer to set out the support on offer to their employees who have a caring responsibility in order to help them balance working and caring commitments
- contains the employer's definition of a carer as this will help ensure a shared understanding of the role, and outline the specific responsibilities for managers, human resources and employees
- is reviewed and monitored on a regular basis as this will allow the employer and staff side trade unions to gauge how the policy is working and identify any changes that would make the policy work better
- reassures employees that any information given by them will be treated confidentially and only shared with the express permission of the employee, and that managers are fully compliant with the data protection regulation.

Case studies

NHS Employers

Under the [Agenda for Change](#) terms and conditions of service, all [NHS employers](#) must have a carers' policy to address the needs of people with caring responsibilities and to meet the requirements of the 'right to request' flexible working legislation. This policy should emphasise the benefits of flexible working arrangements, balancing work and personal life and employment breaks.

Additional guidance www.nhsemployers.org/articles/supporting-staff-caring-responsibilities

Wheatley Housing Group

This employer provides 6 days' paid leave for employees within their Family Friendly policy.

Additionally, they have agreed a 'Carer's passport', designed to be similar to a reasonable adjustment passport, to help ensure that there is no need to continually repeat why time off is needed for caring responsibilities. This lists details of the worker's current caring situation and its impact on their work, the flexibility / reasonable adjustments that can be made to help support the worker with their caring responsibilities, any agreed actions for the worker or their manager such as applying for flexible working, referral to occupational health, or specialist counselling.

External information, advice and support

Carers UK www.carersuk.org The aim of this charity is to make life better for carers. They give expert information and advice, champion carers' rights and support carers in finding new ways to manage at home, at work, or wherever they are.

Carers Scotland www.carersuk.org/scotland

Carers Wales www.carersuk.org/wales

Carers NI www.carersuk.org/northernireland

Employers for Carers www.employersforcarers.org provides practical advice and support for employers seeking to develop carer friendly policy and practice and retain skilled workers; identifies and promotes the business benefits of supporting carers in the workplace; influences government and employment policy and practice to create a culture which supports carers in and into work.

Carers Trust <https://carers.org/> is a major charity for, with and about carers and work to improve support, services and recognition for carers.

NHS choices www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/ provides information from the NHS for carers and people who are planning for their future care needs, including details of the **Carers Direct Helpline** www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support/carers-direct-helpline/

Age UK www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/care/helping-a-loved-one provides sources of emotional, practical and financial support that are available to carers of older people.

Independent Age www.independentage.org/get-advice/family-friends-and-carers/support-for-carers provides information about the support available to carers.

Macmillan Cancer Support www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/audience/looking-after-someone-with-cancer.html provides support and advice to those caring for loved ones with cancer.

Alzheimer Research UK www.alzheimersresearchuk.org/about-dementia/helpful-information/support-for-carers/ provides details of information, support and care services to people with dementia as well as their families and carers.

Contact <https://contact.org.uk/> is a charity for families with disabled children providing guidance and information, bringing families together to support each other, to campaign, volunteer and fundraise to improve life for themselves and others.

There for You www.unison.org.uk/get-help/services-support/there-for-you/ Members experiencing financial and emotional difficulties can contact UNISON's welfare charity, There for You, which provides a confidential advice and support service for members and their dependants.

Putting the case to employers

Employers need to be made aware that they are very likely to have carers working for them already, whether they have told the employer or not. The statistics prove it (see section headed '[Key facts about carers](#)' above) and the numbers are increasing.

Those working in carer-friendly organisations are less likely:

- to consider reducing their hours or giving up their jobs completely
- to find it difficult to concentrate at work
- to have turned down a promotion or decided against applying for a job because of their caring responsibilities
- to have taken sick leave or unpaid leave to provide care.

...Support for working carers therefore has the potential to contribute to organisational goals, such as employee retention, effective talent management and productivity improvements

Source: CIPD (*the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development*) 2021 research, '[Supporting working carers: how employers and employees can benefit](#)'

The business case for agreeing a workplace carers' policy includes the potential to:

- Keep experienced staff within the workforce – the peak age for caring is between 50 and 64 therefore carers are likely to be among the most skilful and experienced employees.
- Reduce staff turnover and the high cost of recruiting replacement staff. Carers UK have found that too many employers in both the private and public sectors believe that caring responsibilities are a key but often hidden reason for people leaving work.

In contrast the Work and Pensions select committee cite research in their [Thirteenth Report of Session 2017-19](#) that shows that flexible workplaces (of particular benefit to carers) improve staff morale and satisfaction, business productivity, recruitment and retention, and ultimately profitability.

- Reduce the knock-on effect of a high staff turnover on customer service, customer retention and output.
- Reduce management time spent on dealing with absences if agreed policies and procedures are in place.
- Cut sickness absence brought on by the mental and physical impact of juggling demanding caring and work responsibilities – employees who have significant

caring responsibilities are much more likely than those without to be in poor health. Carers UK report that “carers working full time and providing 50 hours or more unpaid care per week are 2.4 times (men) and 2.7 times (women) more likely to have ‘not good’ health than those working full-time not providing unpaid care”.

- Help address any pay gap identified in gender pay gap reports – a strong contributing factor is women stepping out of the labour force to have children and the tendency for women to take on the caring roles for family members, therefore having to take on part-time, often lower paid work to be able to balance work with caring responsibilities.
- Raise productivity and improve loyalty and job satisfaction by ensuring staff are able to focus on work whilst at work, without constantly worrying about the needs of dependants and how they can be managed.
- Improve people management and staff morale across the organisation – this is likely to be of benefit to the majority of workers at some time in their working lives, including managers.
- Reduce operational costs – introducing flexible working practices for carers has been proven by employers to save them money with fewer stress-related absences, increased productivity and increased staff retention, as well as taking into account all the lost investment they have made into training and developing of staff members should they then leave due to work pressures.

And last but not least, it’s the right thing to do, and recognises that caring for others is part of being human!

Case study

In May 2019, Centrica and Carers UK called on the Government to introduce 5 to 10 days of mandatory paid carers leave for all employers. Centrica estimates show 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 those with caring responsibilities.

Centrica announced a change to its carers policy giving employees more paid for leave, without using annual leave allowances, to meet their caring responsibilities. It now offers 10 days paid leave to all its carers followed by another 10 days that can be taken if matched with annual leave. Previously, Centrica employees would need to take a day of annual leave to use one of their 20 days of paid for carers leave. The company also provides flexible working from day one of becoming a carer and a carers network which offers peer support.

Model carers' policy

The following model policy can be used in the workplace to help support carers. Please note that the text in square brackets [...] indicates where you need to complete information specific to your workplace, or else are notes for you to consider in relation to your negotiations.

Policy Statement

[Name of employer] recognises that employees with caring responsibilities may find it difficult at times to balance inflexible work practices alongside caring responsibilities and it is our policy to support these employees.

[Name of employer] is committed to developing a workplace culture that supports employees with caring responsibilities in order to help them balance their working and caring commitments, and continue to be effective in their job, in order to help us recruit and retain these employees.

[Name of employer] will not tolerate discrimination, victimisation or harassment on the basis of a person's caring responsibilities and we aim to give carers the same recruitment, training and career opportunities.

This policy is part of **[name of employer]**'s commitment to family friendly working, and it seeks to benefit the welfare of individual members of staff; retain valued employees; improve morale and performance and enhance the reputation of **[name of employer]** as an employer of choice.

Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all staff who are employed at **[name of employer]** regardless of length of service.

This policy is supported by and developed with the trade unions representing the employees.

Definition of a carer

[Name of employer] defines carers as any employees who care, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction needs their help to live independently.

These caring responsibilities may be wide ranging and include (but are not limited to):

- personal care
- help with the dependant's mobility

- assistance with the management of medication
- practical support such as housework, help with financial matters and administration
- emotional support.

A caring responsibility may happen overnight with someone close to you suddenly taken ill, or else it may be a more gradual commitment, such as for elderly or disabled dependants who need help to continue to live independently.

Employees are encouraged to let their line manager or HR know that they have caring responsibilities so that appropriate support is provided. Such information will be treated confidentially and in accordance with **[name of employer]**'s data protection policy.

Support for carers

[Name of employer] recognises that caring responsibilities can be unpredictable, demanding and impact on the carer's health and wellbeing, and we aim to provide as much support as is reasonably practicable for individuals.

Employees with caring responsibilities for children should find out about the parental leave available, outlined in the **Parental Leave and Pay policy** which can be found **[include a link or signpost to the appropriate policy. However this assumes there is an entitlement to paid parental leave that includes caring for ill children without a pre-existing physical or mental health problem, and which can be taken at short notice and for flexible periods ranging from part-days to full weeks.]**

Employees with caring responsibilities for adult dependants can apply for the following options for support:

- a) **Flexible working** (including options for flexitime, compressed hours, homeworking, job-sharing, part-time working, term-time working, annualised hours, shift-swapping, voluntary reduced time **[amend as appropriate]**), more details to be found in the '**Flexible working policy and procedure**' at **[include a link or signpost to the appropriate policy]**.
- b) **Paid [if paid, if not this could be one of your priorities for negotiation] emergency leave** for dealing with unexpected issues at short notice, more details to be found in the 'Emergency leave policy' at **[include a link or signpost to the appropriate policy]**.
- c) **Paid carers' leave** – in addition to emergency leave, carers may need time off work to fulfil other caring responsibilities such as (but not limited to):
 - i. attending medical appointments with a dependant

- ii. dealing with a dependant's discharge from hospital
- iii. to look after someone who is recovering
- iv. providing emotional and/or practical support to a dependant who is particularly vulnerable physically or mentally.

Line managers may grant employees paid time off up to 10 days (20 in exceptional circumstances) ***[this could be negotiated, perhaps in line with any paid parental leave provided]*** in one leave year.

Carers' leave may be taken:

- as a single block
- as a number of shorter periods of hours (to covers appointments etc) and half days, full days, half-week and week blocks.

Staff should contact their line manager as early as possible to inform them of the particular caring commitment and to request leave. Where an employee has to accompany someone to a planned appointment, they should give their line manager as much notice as possible. ***[Ideally any notice required is proportionate to the amount of leave being taken and with no notice required for periods below 3 days.]***

For staff who have ongoing caring responsibilities for a dependant, these will be dealt with on an individual basis. Any difficult to resolve situations should be referred to the HR department for advice and support.

- d) ***Unpaid [this could be negotiated so ideally not entirely unpaid, perhaps in line with any long-term sickness absence pay with a provision for periods of reduced pay before being completely unpaid or if unpaid in line with any specified periods of sabbatical offered to staff] extended carers' leave*** – where the leave requested by an employee with caring responsibilities is for an extended period, such as when the carer is looking after someone who is recovering from a serious illness or who is terminally ill, additional unpaid leave up to a period of 6 ***[or more as negotiated]*** months in total will be provided.

Any situation where an employee requires more than 6 months off will be considered sympathetically and practical, feasible alternatives considered, such as flexible hours and/or working at home.

Members of staff wishing to apply for extended carer's leave should apply in writing to their line manager in the first instance with full reasons for the request and length of anticipated absence. Any difficult to resolve situations should be referred to the HR department for advice and support.

[Name of employer] will provide temporary staff cover wherever possible, where there is a lengthy absence due to caring responsibilities.

- e) **Other arrangements** – the needs of employees with caring responsibilities may be very simple and may not require time out of the workplace, but may require other arrangements, such as (but not limited to):
- i. the need to have predictable, regular work patterns to be able to plan for caring needs well in advance
 - ii. the need to leave work on time
 - iii. the need to have access to a telephone during the day in a private space
 - iv. information made widely available including on the staff intranet or external sources of support.

Confidential support is available for individual employees from the **employee assistance programme** and this may include counseling if appropriate, in addition to practical information and advice. ***[include a link or signpost to further information.]***

Responsibilities of managers

Line managers should ensure that all employees are aware of this policy and understand their own and the employer's responsibilities. Training on carers' issues will be provided to all managers.

Line managers should encourage employees to disclose that they have caring responsibilities by encouraging discussion around carers' issues and highlighting the support available.

Line managers (with the support of HR where requested) should discuss the carers' support options available for employees with caring responsibilities and encourage them to access the support offered.

Line managers will consider all requests for carers' support sympathetically and will not discriminate against those employees who have caring responsibilities. All employees must be treated fairly and consistently. Employees need to be confident that they will not be treated less favourably if they take up any support available to carers.

[Name of employer] will take seriously and investigate any complaints of discrimination, harassment or victimisation, using the agreed procedures and respecting confidentiality.

All requests for carers' support must be dealt with confidentially and in accordance with the data protection policy.

Line managers will support employees in informing their colleagues about the situation if appropriate.

Responsibilities of employees

Employees are encouraged to inform their manager if they are caring for someone and need any support, so that they can best balance work and care commitments.

Employees should report any instances of harassment, victimisation or discrimination experienced because of their caring responsibilities.

If an employee is found to have harassed, victimised or discriminated against another employee in relation to their caring responsibilities, then they will be seen as having committed a disciplinary offence.

Trade union involvement

Consultation will take place with the recognised trade union on the implementation, development, monitoring and review of this policy.

Union reps will be given training equal to that of managers and supervisors and sufficient time to carry out their duties.

Review and monitoring

[Name of employer] will ensure that all new employees, supervisors and managers will receive induction on the policy.

Adequate resources will be made available to fulfil the aims of this policy. The policy will be widely promoted, and copies will be freely available and displayed in **[name of employer]'s** offices and through the staff intranet **[amend as appropriate to your workplace]**.

This policy will be reviewed jointly by unions and management, on a regular basis.

Further information

Carers Trust <https://carers.org>

Carers UK www.carersuk.org

Signatories

This agreement is made between **[name of the employer]** and UNISON, a registered trade union.

This agreement comes into force on:

Date:.....

This agreement will be reviewed on:

Date:.....

SIGNED for ***[name of the employer]***

DATE

SIGNED for UNISON

DATE