

# PREPARING FOR THE ACT



What you need to know and do before the Carer's Leave Act becomes law

The Carer's Leave Act 2023 could come into force as early as April 2024, by which time you need to be prepared to offer support to all unpaid carers in your workforce. Here we explain why caring matters; what the new law will mean for employers, no matter how large or small; and how you can prepare by identifying carers in your workplace and raising awareness of their needs.

We'll help you make sure you are equipped for when the law is in place.



## What is a carer?

Supporting an older, disabled or seriously ill family member or friend is something that we often just do without seeing ourselves as a carer. For some of us it's sudden: someone you love is taken ill or has an accident, your child is born with a disability. For others caring creeps up unnoticed: your parents can't manage on their own any longer, or your partner's health gets gradually worse.

More than **one in seven** people in any workplace is a carer. That's millions of people across the UK facing the daily pressures of juggling unpaid caring with work. **Yet, caring is often still invisible in many workplaces, with carers 'hidden in plain sight'.**



## Why does this matter?

**FACT:** On average, 600 people a day leave work to care because of these pressures. And if unsupported, many working carers also face being tired, stressed and struggling to manage their own health as well.

**FACT:** As our population lives longer with illness and disability, more and more workers will be caring. Already the average person has a 50:50 chance of caring by age 50 - long before they reach retirement, with half of women caring by age 46.

## What will the Carer's Leave Act mean for you?

This landmark new workplace law, covering employees in England, Scotland and Wales, 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
- 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 time off.

The Act will give rights to over 2 million employees in England, Scotland and Wales who are carers. It will also mean that employers will need to think about their employees with caring responsibilities and introduce support for carers.

## Three important ways in which you can prepare for the Act now



### ONE: Make caring visible in your workplace

- Be aware that many workers don't see themselves as carers and may therefore not come forward for support. Others may not think workplace support applies to them or feel uncomfortable about raising personal, sometimes emotionally difficult, issues at work. So, be explicit and **talk about caring, and carers, in your workplace.**
- Be clear about what you mean by 'caring' and 'carer' – use a simple and inclusive definition of this in your workplace, for example like the one used by our business forum Employers for Carers:

*Carers are employees with caring responsibilities that have an impact on their working lives. These employees are responsible for the care and support of ill, older or disabled family members, partners or friends who are unable to care for themselves.*

- Include caring, and carers, when talking about supporting staff with family responsibilities – as well as mentioning parents. Recognise that family responsibilities can include supporting older or disabled relatives or friends as well as covering childcare.

With in-house teams working with both employers and policy makers – and as a charity with the needs of carers at the heart of everything we do – Carers UK is uniquely placed to support you in making sure you are up-to-speed with your legal requirements under the Act.

## TWO: Talk about the support you offer

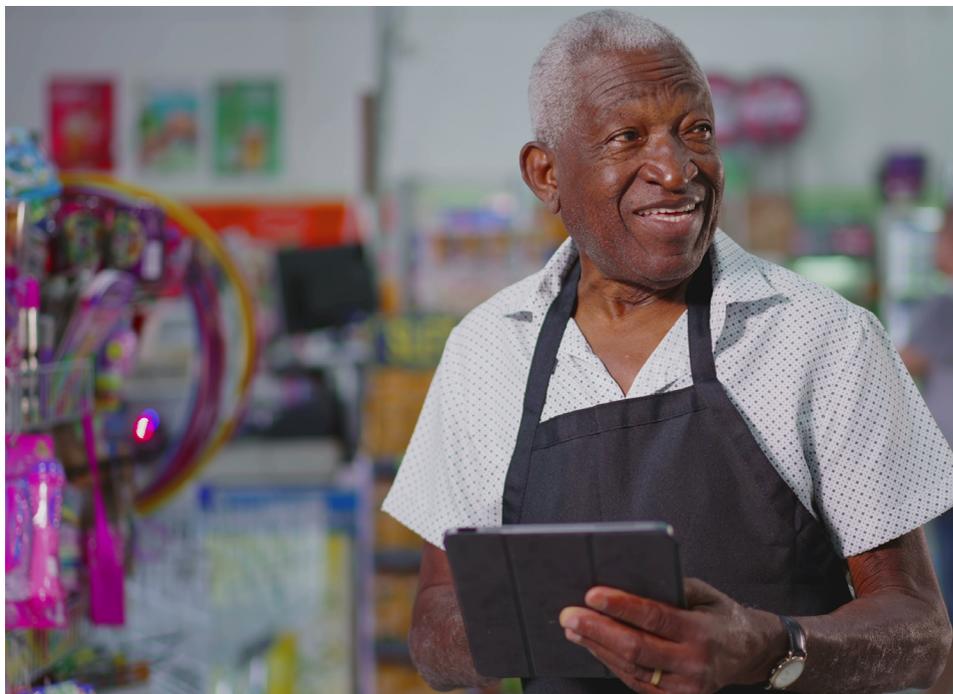
- Identify any existing workplace support that may be particularly helpful for staff with caring responsibilities. For example, this could include **flexible working** and **leave arrangements**, a **health and wellbeing scheme** or staff support groups.
- Talk about this support to managers and staff in your workplace, and how it may be relevant for anyone who may be caring. If you also offer any specific support such as **carers leave**, a **carers passport** or a **staff carers network**, highlight this too including why you offer this and how to take it up. This will help to prompt individuals to think about their own personal circumstances or those of colleagues in their team.



- Use specific awareness raising opportunities such as Carers Week and Carers Rights Day to highlight caring issues and support available. You could also use opportunities provided by other relevant awareness raising events such as National Inclusion Week, Mental Health Awareness Week etc to highlight caring issues.

### THREE: Help carers to identify themselves

Carers are a changing population – each year millions of people take on caring responsibilities whilst caring comes to an end for millions of others. So, be aware that a one-off awareness campaign, though important, may not be enough.



- Think about **different ways** of getting the right information to employees at the right time; people will often only take information about caring on board when it becomes relevant to them:

*For example, try using a range of different channels in your workplace to raise awareness and communicate support such as staff intranets, payslips, handbooks, all-staff bulletins and through internal social media platforms.*

- Think about the **language** you use when communicating support available for carers in your workplace. Try not to ask ‘Are you a carer?’ instead say something like ‘Do you look after someone because they are ill, older or have a disability? If so, you are a carer’ in order to help carers identify themselves.
- Encourage individuals to identify as carers via a staff **survey**. This can help you to identify carers and it also demonstrates that you are keen to support your staff. As a first step, including a question about caring within a wider survey can help raise awareness and capture some initial information about carers in your workforce. This could then be followed by a specific survey on caring issues to ask about support needs.
- Educate your **managers** by including information about caring, and supporting carers, within your manager training and resources. It is often hard for individuals to talk about their caring responsibilities at work so encouraging managers to be approachable and open to having a conversation is important.

Carers UK has led the campaign for a right to carer’s leave, and supported the Carer’s Leave Bill through Parliament. We can help you understand how you will have to provide support to unpaid carers within your workforce, the importance of creating an environment where carers feel supported and provide advice on ways to help carers identify both themselves and their needs.

## Recognising carers in your workplace makes great business sense

By starting to implement the three steps above to prepare for the Act, you and your employees could benefit hugely from raising awareness of caring in your workplace.

- Evidence from employers shows that Carer's Leave supports retention and recruitment, as well as the health and wellbeing of staff with caring responsibilities.
- Employers who offer Carer's Leave say that they have been better able to retain valued staff.
- Research shows that two-thirds of working carers who have taken unpaid Carer's Leave report that this has made their caring role easier, whereas without access to it 1 in 10 are at risk of reducing their hours or giving up work.



While the new right is to unpaid leave, a growing number of employers now offer paid (as well as unpaid) Carer's Leave. The Act is also likely to prompt other forward-thinking employers to go further than the law and introduce paid leave to help stay ahead with staff recruitment and retention.

## **What are the next steps for introduction of the law?**

The Carer's Leave Act 2023 has now received Royal Assent, with regulations to be published soon. The law could come into force as early as April 2024. Information on the latest developments will be published on our Carers UK, Employers for Carers and Carer Positive websites. Our Employers for Carers service or Carer Positive in Scotland, which help businesses and employers to support and retain carers in their workforce, will also be offering practical support to organisations who are members, to implement the new Act.

## **What should you do next?**

It's vital that you prepare for the introduction of this new legislation – and that your staff know that you support unpaid carers in the workforce. So, register your interest in hearing from Carers UK all the latest news, information and briefings, plus details of how you can access our standalone set of resources including training sessions, an implementation guide and manager training materials.

Visit [carersuk.org/carers\\_leave\\_act](https://carersuk.org/carers_leave_act) to register to hear more

## What will Carers UK do to support your organisation?

Carers UK is producing a standalone, paid for set of resources to support employers with the implementation of the Carer's Leave Act. Developed with the expert knowledge of our in-house team, these resources will get you ready and prepared for supporting carers in your workforce.

The standalone resource will be available once the regulations are published and will consist of three elements:

1. A detailed implementation guide which will include the key provisions of the Carer's Leave Act, practical pointers on applying the new legislation and FAQs.
2. An online training session for individual employers tailored to their sector and their audience to include:
  - the business case for supporting working carers
  - identifying carers and promoting caring issues in the workplace
  - the content of the Act
  - good practice examples.
3. A PowerPoint slide deck covering key training points for employers to roll out to their managers.

We will provide full information, including costs, when the regulations are published.

**To register for your organisation to hear more  
visit [carersuk.org/carers\\_leave\\_act](https://carersuk.org/carers_leave_act)**

*In advance of publication of the regulations we can offer sessions on request to help employers prepare for the Act more generally.*

## Other support from Carers UK



Informed by business and supported by the specialist knowledge of Carers UK, Employers for Carers (EfC) provides practical, 'hands-on' help to employers to support the carers in their workforce. Member services include a dedicated web platform with a range of practical resources including e-learning, toolkits, model policies and case studies, access to expert training and consultancy and employer networking events.

To find out more visit [employersforcarers.org](https://employersforcarers.org)



The Employers for Carers benchmarking scheme

EfC's UK-wide employer benchmarking scheme, Carer Confident, launched in 2019, assists employers to build a supportive and inclusive workplace for staff who are, or will become, carers and to make the most of the talents that carers can bring to the workplace. Carer Confident also seeks to recognise employers who achieve this, and to inspire others to follow suit.

To find out more visit [carerconfident.org](https://carerconfident.org)



Launched in 2014, Carer Positive works with employers across Scotland to develop a workplace culture and practice where staff with caring responsibilities are valued and supported.

To find out more visit [carerpositive.org](https://carerpositive.org)



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