

Carer's leave policy template for UK employers

Carer's leave is a statutory, day-one right: every employee can take up to one week of unpaid leave in each rolling 12-month period to care for a dependant with a long-term care need. A "week" means the employee's usual working pattern over 7 days, the leave can be taken in half days or full days that don't have to be consecutive, and an employer can postpone a request with good reason but can never refuse it (gov.uk, Acas). The template below turns all of that into handbook-ready clauses - copy it, replace the [bracketed placeholders], and you're done.

What does a carer's leave policy need to cover?

Unlike TOIL, carer's leave has a statutory floor, so your policy's first job is simply to state the entitlement accurately: the amount, the day-one eligibility, who counts as a dependant, and what a "long-term care need" means. Its second job is the process detail the statute leaves to you - how to request it, how notice is counted, what happens on the rare occasion you postpone, and whether you enhance the (unpaid) statutory minimum. Get the postponement clause wrong and you drift into refusing a statutory right; get the notice clause wrong and managers will quietly invent their own rules. The template below covers both jobs in order.

The template

Copy everything from here to the end of clause 10 straight into your handbook, then replace each [bracketed placeholder] with your own details. No download needed - the page is the template.

1. Purpose

This policy explains how [Company name] provides carer's leave: statutory time off to care for, or arrange care for, a dependant with a long-term care need. It applies from [date]. We recognise that many colleagues balance work with unpaid caring, and this policy sets out both the statutory entitlement and how to use it here.

2. Who can take carer's leave

Carer's leave is available to all employees from their first day of employment - there is no qualifying service requirement. It applies to employees who need to provide or arrange care for a dependant with a long-term care need.

3. Who counts as a dependant

A dependant is the employee's spouse, civil partner, child or parent; a person who lives in the same household as the employee (other than as a lodger, tenant, boarder or employee); or a person who reasonably relies on the employee to provide or arrange care.

4. What counts as a long-term care need

A dependant has a long-term care need if they have an illness or injury (physical or mental) that requires, or is likely to require, care for more than three months; a disability under the Equality Act 2010; or care needs connected with old age.

5. How much leave

Employees may take up to one week of carer's leave in any rolling 12-month period. A "week" means the employee's usual working pattern over 7 days: an employee who works [5] days a week may take up to [5] days; an employee who works 3 days a week may take up to 3 days. The leave may be taken as half days or full days, in one block or spread out - the days do not need to be consecutive.

6. Pay and terms during leave

Statutory carer's leave is unpaid. [Company name] [pays carer's leave at [full pay / X%] as an enhancement to the statutory minimum / does not currently enhance carer's leave, which is unpaid]. All other terms and conditions of employment continue during the leave, and it does not affect continuous service, holiday accrual or other benefits.

7. How to request it

Requests go to [line manager] via [CoDash / the HR system / email]. Notice must be at least twice the length of the leave requested, with a minimum of 3 days: a half day or one day needs at least 3 days' notice, and a full week needs at least two weeks' notice. Requests do not need to be in writing to be valid, but recording them in [system] keeps everyone's record straight. We will not ask for evidence of the dependant's care need.

8. Postponement

We will never refuse a valid carer's leave request. In exceptional cases, where the leave would seriously disrupt the operation of the business, [Company name] may postpone it. If we do, we will: explain in writing why the postponement is necessary; consult the employee on new dates; and confirm a rescheduled date that falls within one month of the date originally requested. Postponement requires the approval of [HR / senior role], not the line manager alone.

9. Protection

No employee will suffer a detriment, or be dismissed, because they took or sought to take carer's leave. Concerns should be raised with [HR contact] or through the grievance procedure.

10. Review

This policy is owned by [HR / named role] and reviewed [annually], or sooner if the law changes. Questions go to [contact].

How to adapt it

Honest guidance on the choices the brackets leave open:

- Don't restate the statute wrongly. Clauses 2-5 and 7-8 track the statutory scheme on gov.uk and Acas. You can be more generous than these clauses, but never less - a policy that adds a service requirement, demands proof, or lets managers "decline" requests is promising something the law forbids.

- Pay is your one big decision. The statutory entitlement is unpaid, and many employees simply won't use an unpaid right. Some employers pay the week in full as a low-cost, high-trust benefit - one week per carer per year caps the exposure. Whatever you choose, say it plainly in clause 6 rather than leaving pay ambiguous.
- Keep postponement rare and senior. Routing postponement through HR (clause 8) is deliberate: "seriously disrupt" is a high bar, and a line manager under staffing pressure is the wrong person to judge it. A postponement without the written explanation and the rescheduled date within a month isn't a postponement - it's an unlawful refusal.
- Evidence: don't ask. Employees do not have to prove the care need, so the template says you won't ask. Trust is the point - carers who are interrogated stop asking and start calling in sick instead.
- Signpost the neighbours. Carer's leave sits alongside (not instead of) time off for dependants in emergencies, appointment time off, and flexible-working requests. A line in your handbook mapping which route fits which situation saves managers a lot of guesswork. For the current statutory pay figures across all leave types, see our statutory rates for 2026-27.

Running the policy day to day

The clause that fails first in practice is 5 - tracking a rolling 12-month window per person, in half days, across different working patterns, is exactly what spreadsheets get wrong. In CoDash carer's leave is a built-in statutory leave type: the balance follows each person's working pattern, half days are first-class citizens, and the rolling window resets itself. See time off and absence.

A free template from CoDash - codash.co.uk/templates. Edit it to match how your company actually works, and take advice on anything unusual.