



Carer's Leave Bill

HL Bill 100 of 2022–23

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The [Carer's Leave Bill](#) is a private member's bill that would amend the Employment Rights Act 1996 to give the secretary of state the power to create, by regulations, a new entitlement to carer's leave. This unpaid leave would be available to employees who need to provide or arrange care for a dependant with a long-term care need.

The new statutory entitlement would be a 'day one right' meaning that it would be available to employees no matter how long they had worked for their employer. Employees would not have to provide evidence in relation to any request for carer's leave and would be able to take the leave in increments of half-days or individual days, up to at least a week over a 12-month period.

Taking carer's leave would have the same employment protections as are associated with other forms of family related leave. This would include protection from dismissal or detriment as a result of having taken carer's leave.

The bill would extend to the whole of the UK. However, as employment law is devolved to Northern Ireland, it would only apply to England, Wales and Scotland.

The issue of leave for unpaid carers has been the subject of debate for several years and the government has previously committed to bringing forward legislation. However, no government legislation has been introduced to Parliament, with a minister recently suggesting that a government bill would be unnecessary because of the Carer's Leave Bill.

The bill was sponsored in the House of Commons by Wendy Chamberlain (Liberal Democrat MP for North East Fife). It passed its stages in the House of Commons unamended and received cross-party support. This included support from the government, with the then Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy preparing the [explanatory notes](#) to the bill.

The bill has also received support from a wide range of organisations, including the charity Carers UK.

The bill received its first reading in the House of Lords on 6 February 2023. It is sponsored by Lord Fox (Liberal Democrat) and is scheduled to have its second reading on 3 March 2023.

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I. What is the background to the bill?

I.1 Overview

Informal or unpaid carers are those who provide care to an older, disabled or ill family member or friend without pay. The charity Carers UK has estimated that there are over 7 million people in paid work who also provide unpaid care.¹

There is currently no specific statutory right for informal carers to take time off work to manage their caring responsibilities.² There are other rights which carers might rely on, but these differ in purpose from carer's leave:

- **Time off for dependants leave** is available for emergency caring situations and has no notice period requirement.
- **Unpaid parental leave** is limited to parents of children under the age of 18 and is available for general childcare.

As a result, various organisations, as well as the government, have highlighted that carer's can end up relying on their annual leave entitlement to manage their caring responsibilities.³ Some carers may also have to reduce their hours or give up work altogether. This situation has led to calls for the creation of a statutory entitlement to carer's leave to support unpaid carers to balance their work and caring responsibilities.

The government has previously committed to taking action in this area and has consulted on the issue. However, it has not introduced any legislation in either House of Parliament.⁴

The government has given its support to the Carer's Leave Bill and suggested that the creation of the bill has meant that it does not need to create its own legislation.⁵

I.2 Calls for a statutory entitlement to carer's leave

Carers UK campaign

The charity Carers UK has campaigned for employees to be given the right

¹ Carers UK, '[Right to carer's leave](#)', accessed 9 February 2023.

² [Explanatory notes](#), p 3.

³ As above, p 3.

⁴ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, '[Carer's leave consultation: Government response](#)', September 2021.

⁵ House of Commons Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee, '[Oral evidence: The work of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Department, HC 529](#)', 13 December 2022, Q145.

to carer's leave citing the "millions of people in the UK [who] juggle their unpaid caring responsibilities with paid employment".⁶ The charity has argued that balancing these responsibilities "can be a real struggle" and highlighted that many carers have reported that they are tired, stressed and struggling to manage their own physical and mental health.

In 2019, Carers UK explored these issues in its report 'Juggling work and unpaid care: A growing issue'.⁷ The key findings included that 1 in 7 of all workers were juggling work and care, a higher number than previously thought.⁸ It also reported that the number of carers giving up work in order to care had increased to 2.6 million, a rise of 300,000 people since 2013. However, the number of adults reducing their working hours because of caring responsibilities was reported to have decreased to just over 2 million, a fall of a third since 2016.

Focusing on what workers thought would be most helpful if they were caring alongside work, the charity found that the top three interventions were:

- a supportive employer/line manager
- flexible working
- additional paid care leave of between five and ten days.⁹

However, when asked what employment practices they had experienced, only 38% of respondents said they had flexible working and 12% said they had paid care leave. The charity also said that working carers were more likely to say that their employer offered none of the support options listed.

In addition, Carers UK has noted that the number of people juggling work alongside unpaid caring has increased since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.¹⁰ It reported that prior to the pandemic, almost 5 million people were in this position, around 15% of the UK's population. However, it found that in 2020, the number of people providing unpaid care had increased to over 7 million. Commenting on this, the charity said:

The stresses and strain of having to juggle paid work alongside unpaid care has led to hundreds of thousands of people having to leave the labour market entirely. On average, 600 people a day leave work to care—with over 500,000 people leaving work to provide unpaid care in the two years before the Covid-19 pandemic.¹¹

⁶ Carers UK, '[Right to carer's leave](#)', accessed 9 February 2023.

⁷ Carers UK, '[Juggling work and unpaid care: A growing issue](#)', January 2019.

⁸ As above, p 5.

⁹ As above, p 7.

¹⁰ Carers UK, '[Right to carer's leave](#)', accessed 9 February 2023.

¹¹ As above.

Focusing on the future of the issue, it argued that:

As our population ages, and changes to the way we work occur as a result of Covid-19, the issue of people juggling work and care is only going [to] grow as a challenge. The UK already lags behind other countries when it comes to workplace rights for carers and it's time our workplaces reflect the reality of our lives.¹²

As part of its campaign, Carers UK has given its support to the Carer's Leave Bill, stating that it has been "working closely" with Wendy Chamberlain (Liberal Democrat MP for North East Fife) "to try and make sure this bill becomes law".¹³ In November 2022, its report 'State of caring 2022: A snapshot of unpaid care in the UK' urged the government continue to support the proposed legislation.¹⁴

House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee

In the 2017–19 parliamentary session, the House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee held an inquiry on employment support for carers.¹⁵ It published its findings in a report in May 2018.¹⁶

The committee found that "balancing care with paid employment is a tricky juggling act" which causes many carers to either give up work or reduce their hours.¹⁷ It said that this is costly to both the individual, who can lose financial security, and their employer, who loses their skills and experience and may need to recruit a replacement. In addition, it found that there was an economic cost as "productivity, and ultimately tax revenues, suffer from people who want to work, or work more, being avoidably unable to do so". The committee called for carers to be better supported to stay in, or enter into, employment and made recommendations as to how this could be achieved.

Focusing on the idea of statutory leave for carers, the committee argued that carers were "forced to use annual leave or sick days to fulfil caring responsibilities".¹⁸ Although it noted that the government had accepted the case for statutory carer's leave, the committee argued that to "ensure such a provision is affordable for all carers, it must be paid time off". It therefore recommended that the government introduce five days' paid carer's leave

¹² Carers UK, '[Right to carer's leave](#)', accessed 9 February 2023.

¹³ As above.

¹⁴ Carers UK, '[State of caring 2022: A snapshot of unpaid care in the UK](#)', November 2022, p 9.

¹⁵ UK Parliament, '[Committees: Support for carers inquiry](#)', accessed 9 February 2023.

¹⁶ House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee, '[Employment support for carers](#)', 17 May 2018, HC 581 of session 2017–19.

¹⁷ As above, p 3.

¹⁸ As above, p 3.

when resources allow and provide a full impact assessment for such a policy. The committee noted the government's backing of the Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Bill which it said showed the government's willingness to extend this model to support people in other circumstances.¹⁹

In response to the committee's report, the government said that it was committed to exploring the case for statutory carer's leave.²⁰ It highlighted a commitment made in its 2018 Carers Action Plan "to consider dedicated employment rights for carers, alongside existing employment rights (such as the right to request flexible working and the right to time off for family and dependents)".²¹ Responding to the committee's request that it provide a full impact assessment for statutory carer's leave, the government said that:

A full impact assessment would require extensive analysis and would need to be underpinned by practical considerations such as eligibility, extent of take up and process. Government is not at that stage of policy development.²²

The government said that it had set up an official level working group, involving several departments, to work on this.²³ It explained that this would include consideration of the practical questions that would arise from introducing dedicated employment rights "with the support of analysts so that any emerging carer's leave proposal is most effective".

1.3 Government action

Since 2017, the government has said that it would introduce a statutory entitlement to unpaid leave for carers and consulted on the issue. The government announced plans for a bill in 2019.²⁴ However, to date it has not introduced legislation on the issue.

Manifesto commitments

In recent years, the Conservative Party's general election manifesto has included a commitment to introduce leave for carers. In 2017, the party said

¹⁹ UK Parliament, '[Parental Bereavement \(Leave and Pay\) Act 2018](#)', accessed 14 February 2023.

²⁰ House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee, '[Employment support for carers: Government response to the committee's thirteenth report](#)', 31 July 2018, HC 1463 of session 2017–19, p 8.

²¹ As above, p 8; and Department of Health and Social Care, '[Carers action plan 2018–2020: Supporting carers today](#)', June 2018, p 17.

²² House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee, '[Employment support for carers: Government response to the committee's thirteenth report](#)', 31 July 2018, HC 1463 of session 2017–19, p 8.

²³ As above, p 8.

²⁴ Prime Minister's Office, '[The Queen's Speech 2019](#)', 19 December 2019, p 43.

in its manifesto that “as the majority of care is provided informally, mainly by families, we will give workers a new statutory entitlement to carer’s leave”.²⁵ It repeated this commitment in its 2019 manifesto, stating that it would “extend the entitlement to leave for unpaid carers, the majority of whom are women, to one week”.²⁶

Carers leave consultation

In 2020, the government held a consultation which sought views on proposals to give employees a week of unpaid leave each year to provide care.²⁷ The consultation ran from 16 March 2020 to 3 August 2020 after being extended because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In its response to the consultation in September 2021, the government confirmed its intention to introduce an entitlement to carer’s leave.²⁸ It said that the consultation had shown that there was “clear support” for such a policy across the range of respondents.

Focusing on who would be eligible for the new entitlement to statutory carer’s leave, the government said that it would:

- be available to the employee irrespective of how long they have worked for their employer (a day one right);
- rely on the carer’s relationship with the person being cared for, which should broadly follow the definition of dependant used in the right to time off for dependants—a spouse, civil partner, child, parent, a person who lives in the same household as the employee (other than by reason of them being their employee, tenant, lodger, or boarder) or a person who reasonably relies on the employee for care; and
- depend on the person being cared for having a long-term care need. This would be defined as a long-term illness or injury (physical or mental), a disability as defined under the Equality Act 2010, or issues related to old age. There would be limited exemptions from the requirement for long-term care, for example in the case of terminal illness.

The government also outlined details of how the new leave entitlement would operate. It said that while it did not intend to put strict rules around the length of care need, it emphasised that the importance of the leave

²⁵ Conservative Party, ‘[Conservative Party manifesto 2017](#)’, 2017, p 65.

²⁶ Conservative Party, ‘[Conservative Party manifesto 2019](#)’, 2019, p 12.

²⁷ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, ‘[Consultation outcome: Carer’s leave](#)’, last updated 29 October 2021.

²⁸ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, ‘[Carer’s leave consultation: Government response](#)’, September 2021.

focusing on “long-term care needs”. As a result, it explained that the leave would be used for providing or arranging the provision of care for a dependant who required long-term care.

On how the leave could be taken, the government said that that the entitlement of one week (five working days) would be able to be taken flexibly, either in individual days or half days, up to a block of one week in each year. It also explained that employees would be required to give notice ahead of taking carer's leave and that no evidence requirement would be introduced so that employees can self-certify their entitlement.

In conclusion, the government said that it would introduce legislation to create the new entitlement for unpaid carers leave “when parliamentary time allows”. It also noted that the legislation would apply to England, Wales and Scotland, but not Northern Ireland as employment law is devolved.

Proposed legislation

The government has not introduced any legislation which would implement the plans set out in its consultation response. The December 2019 Queen's Speech contained an Employment Bill which would have introduced “the entitlement to leave for unpaid carers” amongst other measures.²⁹ However, the government did not introduce the bill in that session and it was not included in either the 2021 or 2022 Queen's speeches.³⁰

1.4 Recent developments: Private member's bills

Jack Brereton (Conservative MP for Stoke-on-Trent South) introduced a private member's bill in the 2021–22 parliamentary session that would have given employees who are unpaid carers the right to one week's unpaid leave for caring purposes.³¹ The Employment (Caring Leave) Bill was introduced in the House of Commons but did not receive its second reading and fell at the end of the parliamentary session.

The Carer's Leave Bill was introduced by Wendy Chamberlain (Liberal Democrat MP for North East Fife) in the current parliamentary session. It has completed its stages in the House of Commons and is scheduled to have its second reading in the House of Lords on 3 March 2023.

In December 2022, the government suggested that due to private member's bills, including the Carer's Leave Bill, a government employment bill was no longer needed. In evidence to the House of Commons Business, Energy and

²⁹ Prime Minister's Office, '[The Queen's Speech 2019](#)', 19 December 2019, p 43.

³⁰ Prime Minister's Office, '[The Queen's Speech 2021](#)', 11 May 2021; and '[The Queen's Speech 2022](#)', 10 May 2022.

³¹ UK Parliament, '[Employment \(Caring Leave\) Bill](#)', last updated 4 May 2022.

Industrial Strategy Committee on 13 December 2022, Grant Shapps, the then secretary of state for business, energy and industrial strategy, said:

We have had five separate bills, which the department has helped sponsor through back benchers. I do not think we have an Employment Bill on the cards per se.³²

The government has given its support to the Carer's Leave Bill through its House of Commons stages. In addition, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy—which has become the Department for Business and Trade—prepared the explanatory notes for the Carer's Leave Bill.³³

2. What would the bill do?

2.1 Overview

The bill would amend the Employment Rights Act 1996 to give the secretary of state the power to create, by regulations, a new entitlement to carer's leave. This leave would be unpaid and available to employees who need to provide or arrange care for a dependant with a long-term care need.

The new statutory entitlement would be a 'day one right' meaning that it would be available to employees no matter how long they had worked for their employer. Employees would not have to provide evidence in relation to any request for carer's leave and would be able to take the leave in increments of half-days or individual days, up to at least a week over a 12-month period.

Taking carer's leave would have the same employment protections as are associated with other forms of family related leave, such as maternity, paternity, adoption, parental bereavement, shared parental and parental leave.³⁴ This would include protection from dismissal or detriment because of taking carer's leave.

In the explanatory notes to the bill, the government said that if the bill successfully completes all of its parliamentary stages in 2023, it expects regulations to be laid and commenced in 2024.³⁵

The government has also noted that it expected the bill to create a small cost for the exchequer resulting from employees taking unpaid leave

³² House of Commons Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee, '[Oral evidence: The work of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Department, HC 529](#)', 13 December 2022, Q145.

³³ [Explanatory notes](#).

³⁴ As above, p 2.

³⁵ As above, p 9.

becoming eligible for certain benefits.³⁶ For business, it estimated a one-off cost of familiarisation with the new policy of £4.7mn and an ongoing annual cost of £40mn due to greater staff absence, recurring administrative cost and recurring familiarisation.

2.2 Provisions of the bill

The bill contains three clauses and a schedule. The substance of how carer's leave would work is set out in the schedule.

Clause 1 would introduce the schedule, stating that:

- part 1 would create a statutory entitlement to carer's leave
- part 2 would contain related amendments

Clause 2 would allow the secretary of state to make regulations by statutory instrument which would provide for consequential amendments to this act. These regulations would be subject to the negative procedure and therefore become law on the day they are signed by the minister unless a motion, or a prayer, to reject it is agreed by either House within 40 sitting days.³⁷

Clause 3 would provide that the bill would extend across the UK. However, as employment law is devolved to Northern Ireland it would be for the Northern Ireland Assembly to decide if similar provisions should apply there.³⁸ As a result, the bill would in apply to England, Wales and Scotland. The clause would also provide for the bill's commencement and short title. Sections 1 and 2 as well as the schedule would come into force on a day appointed by the secretary of state via statutory instrument.

The schedule is made up of two parts:

Part 1 would amend the Employment Rights Act 1996 to insert five new clauses (80J to 80N). These would require the secretary of state to make regulations to create a statutory entitlement to carer's leave:

The secretary of state must make regulations entitling an employee to be absent from work on leave under this section in order to provide or arrange care for a dependant with a long-term care need.

The new clauses would also define what is meant by 'a dependant of an employee' and a 'long-term care need'.

³⁶ [Explanatory notes](#), p 9.

³⁷ UK Parliament, '[Negative procedure](#)', accessed 9 February 2023.

³⁸ [Explanatory notes](#), p 5.

A dependant is a spouse, civil partner, child or parent of the employee or someone who lives in the same household “otherwise than by reason of being the employee’s boarder, employee, lodger or tenant”. It could also be someone who is reasonably reliant on the employee to provide or arrange care.

A dependant of an employee 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
- have a disability under the Equality Act 2010
- require care for a reason connected to their old age

The regulations provided for by these new clauses would also set out the extent of an employee’s entitlement to carer’s leave and when this leave may be taken. Under the schedule, the regulations must entitle an employee to at least a week’s leave during any 12-month period and provide for this leave to be taken “non-continuously”. The regulations could also include provisions on any “particular activities” that the leave could or could not be taken for.

The schedule contains no provisions that carer’s leave must be paid.

The new clauses would also require regulations to be made which set out an employee’s rights during and after carer’s leave. These regulations would need to set out the employee’s:

- rights regarding retaining their existing terms and conditions of employment whilst taking carer’s leave
- obligations in relation to those terms and conditions
- right to return to work once their carer’s leave period has ended and the nature of the job they are entitled to return to, as well as the terms and conditions applicable on return, on matters including seniority, pension rights and similar rights

In this context, terms and conditions would not be limited to contractual terms and conditions but would not include remuneration. The regulations would be able to specify what things should or should not be seen as remuneration for this purpose.

The new clauses would allow for the regulations to make special provision for the redundancy and dismissal of employees during or after a period of carer’s leave. They would state that this could include the consequences for failing to comply with the regulations, which could provide for a dismissal to be treated as unfair.

The new clauses would also set out several supplemental issues the regulations may cover. As part of this, the regulations would provide that an employer cannot require an employee to supply evidence in relation to a request for carer's leave.

In addition, the new clauses would mean that an employee may make a complaint to an employment tribunal if their employer has unreasonably postponed or prevented them from taking carer's leave. They would also set out time limits for such complaints to be made and allow the tribunal to award compensation. Any decision on compensation would be required to consider the employee's behaviour and any consequential losses sustained by the employer.

The regulations made under part I of the schedule would be subject to the affirmative procedure and would therefore need to be actively approved by both Houses of Parliament.³⁹

The government's delegated powers memorandum gave further information on the delegated powers in the bill.⁴⁰ It highlighted that one of the new subclauses in part I of the schedule, which would allow regulations to apply, modify or exclude existing legislation in relation to a person entitled to statutory carer's leave, would contain a Henry VIII power.⁴¹

Part 2 of the schedule would make consequential amendments to other pieces of existing legislation to account for the creation of the new statutory entitlement to carer's leave. It would include amendments to both the Employment Rights Act 1996 and the Income Tax (Earnings and Pensions) Act 2003.

3. What happened in the House of Commons?

The Carer's Leave Bill completed all its stages in the House of Commons unamended. It received cross-party support, including from the government, at all stages.

3.1 Second reading

The bill received its second reading in the House of Commons on

³⁹ UK Parliament, '[Affirmative procedure](#)', accessed 10 February 2023.

⁴⁰ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, '[Carer's Leave Bill: Memorandum from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to the Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee](#)', 2 September 2022.

⁴¹ A Henry VII clause is one which enables ministers to amend or repeal provisions in an Act using secondary legislation.

21 October 2022.⁴² During the debate, it received support from across the House and was passed without division.

Introducing the bill, its sponsoring member, Wendy Chamberlain (Liberal Democrat MP for North East Fife), focused on the purpose of the bill.⁴³ She said that the bill would mean that:

For the first time ever, all employees from their first day of employment will be entitled to take time off to help manage caring responsibilities. That fills a gap in the current law whereby although employees can take limited time off for emergencies, and parents can take time off to care for their children, there is no provision for the day-to-day planned caring of adults.⁴⁴

Ms Chamberlain also spoke about the many acts that caring can include. For example, she said that it could be taking someone to appointments, doing the shopping, liaising with medical staff or arranging social carers visits.⁴⁵ She explained that the bill had been drafted to define the idea of caring responsibility widely “to include as much as possible”. She also said that it had been drafted to include as many caring relationships as possible and noted that it was designed so that leave could be taken flexibly:

The leave is flexible and incredibly light touch. It can be taken in half-day chunks, and it works through self-certification. The notice period is expected to be short, at twice the length of time to be taken plus one day. For most people, if they want a half day on Wednesday afternoon that means letting their employer know by Monday lunchtime. As flexible not emergency care, I believe that to be reasonable, and in line with current regulations for annual leave so easy for everybody to understand. Most importantly, employers cannot refuse a request for leave. They can ask for it to be postponed, but only in a manner that is reasonable.⁴⁶

Stating that she had met with the government to discuss the bill, Ms Chamberlain said that in some areas, “it does not potentially do everything that I would want it to do, if it were down to just me”.⁴⁷ For example, she expressed a preference that the rights contained in the bill be implemented by primary legislation rather than by regulations. She also said that she would like the leave entitlement to be longer and paid but accepted that the bill as drafted was a “vital first step in getting these rights on the statute book”.

⁴² [HC Hansard, 21 October 2022, cols 991–1006.](#)

⁴³ [HC Hansard, 21 October 2022, col 991.](#)

⁴⁴ [HC Hansard, 21 October 2022, col 992.](#)

⁴⁵ [HC Hansard, 21 October 2022, col 992.](#)

⁴⁶ [HC Hansard, 21 October 2022, col 992.](#)

⁴⁷ [HC Hansard, 21 October 2022, col 993.](#)

MPs from across the House also spoke in favour of the bill. Marion Fellows, the SNP spokesperson for disabilities, welcomed the bill saying its passing would be “a major step forward in recognising the enormous contribution that unpaid carers make to the care, health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities”.⁴⁸ She said that the SNP supported the bill and called for further work to support carers in the future.

Speaking for Labour, Imran Hussain, the shadow minister for work, said that his party supported the bill. However, he criticised the government for not introducing its own legislation:

The issue of carer's leave should have been addressed by the government long ago. We therefore support the bill, but it is disappointing that we have had to wait for it for so long while the government have continued to drag their feet to introduce statutory carer's leave.⁴⁹

Mr Hussain also argued that the bill “falls short of what unpaid carers really need, which is paid carer's leave”.

Responding for the government, the then minister for enterprise and markets, Dean Russell, confirmed that the government would support the bill.⁵⁰ He said that it would provide “invaluable support to unpaid carers” and that the government looked forward to working with Ms Chamberlain to support its parliamentary passage.

Following the bill's second reading, on 8 November 2022 the House of Commons approved a money resolution for the bill.⁵¹ This means that public spending related to the bill has been authorised.

3.2 Public bill committee

A House of Commons public bill committee sat on 9 November 2022 to consider the bill.⁵² No amendments to the bill were tabled.

Summarising the bill, its sponsor, Wendy Chamberlain, set out its key measures, noting that its provisions were similar to other existing leave entitlements to avoid adding complexity. Ms Chamberlain also focused on the broad approach taken, arguing that it was important because “a significant issue is simply getting carers to recognise themselves as such”.⁵³

⁴⁸ [HC Hansard, 21 October 2022, col 999.](#)

⁴⁹ [HC Hansard, 21 October 2022, col 1004.](#)

⁵⁰ [HC Hansard, 21 October 2022, col 1005.](#)

⁵¹ House of Commons, ‘[Votes and proceedings](#)’, 8 November 2022, p 2.

⁵² [HC Hansard, 9 November 2022, cols 1–16.](#)

⁵³ [HC Hansard, 9 November 2022, col 5.](#)

She expressed hope that the bill would start conversations and “show people the different forms that care can take”. Ms Chamberlain also outlined the bill’s overall objective was to “ensure that carer’s leave is available to those caring for someone with a significant and long-term care need, but flexibility and a light-touch administrative burden are fundamental features of the new entitlement”.⁵⁴

At public bill committee, Imran Hussein reiterated the opposition’s support for the bill.⁵⁵ However, he also repeated his concerns about the time taken to legislate on the issue and the unpaid nature of the new leave entitlement.

The government reaffirmed its support for the bill.⁵⁶ The then minister for enterprise, markets and small business, Kevin Hollinrake, summarised the government’s policy by outlining the provisions in the bill. He also addressed comments by some MPs who had argued that carer’s leave should be paid:

I understand [the] view, but point out that this is a minimum entitlement, which sends a signal to employers who are currently not demonstrating that degree of compassion to people in need. I think many employe[r]s would provide paid leave as a matter of course. One benefit of the leave being unpaid is that it gives more flexibility about how that leave can be taken, including half-days and single days.⁵⁷

I would point out [...]—the cost to business. As set out in the explanatory notes, the cost to businesses is £4.7 million in set-up costs and then £40 million per annum to provide the leave [...] businesses are facing a pretty hard time right now and we have to be cognisant of the pressures they are under. If businesses do not pay for this, the cost would fall on taxpayers, who are also having a pretty hard time right now, but I think the bill strikes the right balance between flexibility and affordability.

Mr Hollinrake also acknowledged the time taken for the legislation to be brought forward and argued that the government was supporting several bills that would improve terms and conditions for employees.

3.3 Third reading

Third reading took place in the House of Commons on 3 February 2023.⁵⁸ Both the government and opposition reiterated their support for the bill, while other MPs also gave their support.

⁵⁴ [HC Hansard, 9 November 2022, col 6.](#)

⁵⁵ [HC Hansard, 9 November 2022, col 11.](#)

⁵⁶ [HC Hansard, 9 November 2022, col 12.](#)

⁵⁷ [HC Hansard, 9 November 2022, col 11.](#)

⁵⁸ [HC Hansard, 3 February 2023, cols 563–83.](#)

As with earlier debates, many members shared both personal experiences and stories from their constituents to demonstrate the reasons for their support of the bill. Some concerns were raised about the unpaid nature of the leave proposed and the potential impact on businesses. However, it was also argued that the bill would benefit both employees and employers.

4. What has been the reaction to the bill?

Alongside the political backing given to the bill, a wide variety of organisations have also expressed their support.

The charity Carers UK have long campaigned for the introduction of carer's leave. Reacting to the publication of the bill, the charity's chief executive, Helen Walker, expressed her support:

We are really pleased that Wendy Chamberlain MP has decided to focus on the needs of unpaid carers at such a crucial time. As we learn to live with Covid-19 and during the cost of living crisis, there has never been a more important time to ensure that carers are able to juggle work and care.⁵⁹

Carers UK has also highlighted that the bill has the support of leading employers, industry bodies, national charities, medical bodies and carers organisations.⁶⁰ For example, it has said that the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development, the Local Government Association, Age UK and the Academy of Royal Medical Colleagues are some of the organisations that have given their support.

A press report in August 2022 also suggested that over 100 organisations were supporting the bill along with 21 parliamentarians from across the political spectrum.⁶¹

However, there have been calls for carers leave to become a paid right. Carers UK have said that in the longer term it would like to see carer's leave become a paid entitlement.⁶² The MS Society has said that its "ultimate goal" would be for carers to receive up to two weeks paid leave.⁶³ Another

⁵⁹ Carers UK, '[Private member's bill seeks new rights at work for unpaid carers](#)', 14 June 2022.

⁶⁰ Carers UK, '[Right to carer's leave](#)', accessed 14 February 2023.

⁶¹ Hannah Carmichael, '[Widespread support for proposed legislation to aid unpaid carers](#)', Independent, 29 August 2022.

⁶² Carers UK, '[Private member's bill seeks new rights at work for unpaid carers](#)', 14 June 2022.

⁶³ MS Society, '[Carer's Leave Bill secures government backing and moves to the next stage](#)', 24 October 2022.

charity Carers First has also given its support to the bill but said that it would like to see up to 10 days paid leave for all carers.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Carers First, '[Carer's Leave Bill passes first crucial step towards landmark new right](#)', accessed 14 February 2023.

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