



Do you have a caring responsibility?

Do you have to balance it with work?

A new employment right could help.

What is the new right and when will it be available?

From 6th April 2007, many carers who work will have the right to ask their employer for flexible working arrangements in order to help them deal with their caring responsibilities.

Who qualifies?

To qualify for the right, you must have been working for your employer for the last 26 weeks or more.

Your request must relate to the care of an adult spouse, partner, civil partner, relative or, alternatively, any adult living with you at your address.

The term “relative” covers any: parent, adopter, guardian, step-parent, parent-in-law, son, daughter, step-son, step-daughter, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother, sister, step-brother, step-sister, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, uncle, aunt or grandparent. It also covers adoptive relationships and relationships such as half-brother and half-sister.

The new law builds on the right to request flexible working already enjoyed by employees who are parents of young children under 6 or disabled children under 18.



How the new right works

1. Consider what work pattern would make it easier for you to care for someone.
2. Put the request in writing to your employer, explaining how you think the request can be accommodated.
3. If necessary, you can appeal the employer's decision.

Types of flexible working

- Annualised hours - agreeing the hours worked over a year and organising them to fit in with busier and less busy periods at work
- Compressed hours - working normal hours over a shorter period than normal, for example working 10 hours for 4 days instead of 8 hours for 5
- Flexi-time - choice about working hours, usually organised around set core hours
- Home-working - working from home, not necessarily on a full-time basis, possibly dividing work between home and the office in a way that best suits both your needs and those of your employer
- Job-sharing - sharing your job on a part-time basis with another person, so that both of you together cover a full-time post
- Shift working - suitable in some lines of work, enabling your employer to operate longer hours and you to organise your shifts in a way that better meets your caring responsibilities
- Staggered hours - allowing you and other employees to start and finish your day at different times, so more people are there to cover busy periods

What is flexible working?

Flexible working takes many forms. You might want to reduce the number of hours you work or rearrange the hours you already work to fit around the needs of the person you care for.

Possibilities for working flexibly might include coming into work earlier or leaving earlier, working longer hours on some days to allow you to finish early on others, or working from home on a few mornings or afternoons a week.

What does making a request involve?

You will need to tell your employer how you think the working hours you want can be accommodated. Perhaps you know an employee who is willing to job-share with you, or perhaps the hours you want to take off work can be made up at another time? Think about how your employer will deal with the change and make constructive suggestions.

When your employer receives your application, he or she will be required by law to give it serious consideration. He or she will only be able to turn it down if there are good business reasons why the arrangements you want cannot be accommodated. If the request is turned down, you can appeal.

Where to get more information

The Department for Employment and Learning has produced a guidance booklet ('ER36') on the right to request flexible working available at www.delni.gov.uk/erbooklets

Alternatively, if you want specific advice, you can telephone the Labour Relations Agency on 028 9032 1442