

FOR THE WORKPLACE

Caring and grief at work

For the people still turning up while looking after someone, or after losing someone.

WHAT IT IS

Unpaid care means looking after or supporting a family member, friend or neighbour because of illness, disability or problems related to old age.[1]

Bereavement is common at work: nearly a quarter of employees lost someone close in the past year.[5]

CARING ALONGSIDE WORK



1 in 7 people in work are also caring for someone older, ill or disabled.[2]

627,700
unpaid carers in Scotland in 2022, up 27.5% since 2011.[1]

600
people a day in the UK give up work to provide unpaid care.[3]

7.9m
employees in the UK, 24%, were bereaved in the past 12 months.[5]

WORKING CARERS



Carers UK and Carers Week surveys, 2024 and 2025; Irwin Mitchell, 2024.[2,8,11]

GRIEF

22 days average time off in the first six months for people in intense grief.[6]

51% of people would be scared of saying the wrong thing to someone recently bereaved.[7]

Shared as a place to begin a conversation. I am a guide and coach; for medical or legal advice, a GP, occupational health or a legal adviser is the right person. If you need someone now, NHS 24 is on 111 and Samaritans on 116 123, free, day or night.

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What caring and grief can bring to a working day

A person might be living with

- Two jobs in one day: 433,000 people in work in England and Wales also give 50 or more hours of unpaid care a week.[4]
- Reduced hours, or a career put on hold, to care.[8]
- Their own health coming last: working carers often struggle to put their own health needs first.[8]
- After a death, being less able to focus, and needing more time off.[9]
- Not wanting to be rushed back: bereaved employees value not being pressured to return before they are ready.[10]

A team might notice

- Colleagues unsure what to say: 51% would be scared of saying the wrong thing.[7]
- Flexibility holding people in work: two in five working carers say they would not have a job without flexible working.[12]
- A quieter season after a loss: most of grief's estimated £23 billion yearly cost to the UK economy comes from people unable to work at their usual level.[6]
- Midlife colleagues: there is a 50 / 50 chance of providing care by the age of 50.[2]

Worth knowing in Scotland

- Carer's leave: since 6 April 2024, employees in England, Scotland and Wales can take up to one week of unpaid carer's leave a year, from their first day.[11]
- Bereavement leave: the statutory right now covers parents who lose a child under 18 or have a stillbirth after 24 weeks. A new day-one right to unpaid bereavement leave for the death of a close relative, and for pregnancy loss, is expected from April 2027.[13]
- The Employment Rights Act 2025 will make flexible working requests harder to refuse, expected in 2027.[14]

WHERE TO FIND OUT MORE

Carers Scotland
carersuk.org/scotland

Sue Ryder
sueryder.org, grief support

Carers UK
carersuk.org

Hospice UK, Compassionate Employers
hospiceuk.org

SOURCES

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2. Carers UK; CIPD Professional (May 2025), Caring for carers. Carers UK State of Caring 2024.
3. Carers UK (2025). State of Caring 2025. carersuk.org
4. Carers UK. Unpaid carers in employment (Census 2021, England and Wales). carersuk.org
5. Sue Ryder (2024). Grief in the workplace. sueryder.org
6. Sue Ryder. Grief in the workplace report and campaign for paid bereavement leave. sueryder.org
7. Sue Ryder (2019). A better grief. sueryder.org
8. Carers Week 2025 polling of over 2,000 people; as reported by the ME Association. meassociation.org.uk
9. WPA (2025). Six ways employers can support employees through grief. wpa.org.uk
10. HRreview. Managing grief in the workplace, citing Sue Ryder research. hrreview.co.uk
11. Carers UK. The Carer's Leave Act 2023. carersuk.org. Irwin Mitchell (2024), The Carer's Leave Act: six months on. irwinmitchell.com
12. HRreview (2025). Two in five working carers "would not have a job" without flexible working, citing Carers UK. hrreview.co.uk
13. Littler (2026); DAC Beachcroft (2026). Government response on the new right to bereavement leave.
14. Hill Dickinson (2026). Employment Rights Act 2025 tracker. Mishcon de Reya (2026). Employment Rights Act timeline.

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