



Campaigning
For Equality

Parents and Carers Not Enough Hours in the Day?



An advice leaflet
for Usdaw Members



Not enough hours in the day?

Most Usdaw members are juggling their jobs with looking after someone, but for many parents and carers, short and unpredictable hours of work can leave them without the hours they want and need to get by.

Regular rota changes and demands for even greater flexibility are putting working parents and carers under increased pressure and leaving them uncertain of their hours from one week to the next, making the already difficult job of balancing work and care that bit harder.

Worrying about balancing work and care shouldn't keep you up all night. This leaflet explains what rights are available for parents and carers who are looking for hours that better fit around their caring commitments.

What are my rights to hours that fit around care?

Employers must take into account your childcare and caring responsibilities when setting or changing your hours of work.

Ushaw understands that there are multiple pressures on parents and carers and many reasons why someone might need to ask for a change in their hours of work. This could include returning to work after maternity leave, struggling to make ends meet due to a change in family circumstances or having difficulty caring for someone on hours that regularly change.

It may sound obvious, but if you are having any issues with your hours it's always best to start by having a conversation with your manager, explaining what the problem is and asking if they are able to help. Your Ushaw rep can help discuss your circumstances and assist you in approaching your employer.

If the informal approach does not work and your employer says they cannot help, you may be able to make a formal application for a change in your working arrangements called the '**Right to Request Flexible Working**'.

Women

Women still shoulder the main responsibility for bringing up children and caring for older or disabled relatives. As a result, women are much more likely to be working part-time or on short hours contracts.

Seven in 10 workers contracted to less than 16 hours a week are women. Employers must take into account your childcare or other caring commitments when seeking to vary your hours of work or when considering a change you have requested. They can only refuse a change when they can show they have a good business reason for doing so.

Disabled Workers

Disabled workers have additional rights under the Equality Act (Disability Discrimination Act in Northern Ireland). If you are a disabled worker you have a right to reasonable adjustments in the workplace. This might include adjustments to your job duties, to the workplace environment or to your hours of work. Where your employer is looking to vary or make changes to your hours they must take into account any negative impact the changes might have on your condition.

The Right to Request Flexible Working

All employees with 26 weeks' service can make a formal application for flexible working. This means you have the right to request a change to your days/hours of work. Your employer must consider any request seriously and only refuse where there are clear business reasons for doing so.

A request can be made for any reason. Your request must be submitted in writing and any decision, including appeals must be made within three months. You can only make one request in any 12 month period.

While in many cases it will be used by people coming back from maternity leave looking to work more flexibly, it can be used in many other circumstances, including to ask for a change in your hours to fit around care or that your contract reflects your usual hours of work.

Usdaw's leaflet, *Flexible Working – Your right to have a say in the hours you work* (Leaflet 346) sets out in more detail who is eligible to make an application and guides you through the process of putting in your request and what to expect.

It is good practice for your employer to allow your Usdaw rep to accompany you to any meetings arranged to discuss your request. Even if your employer doesn't agree to this, we would always recommend discussing your request with your Usdaw rep before sending it to your employer.



Frequently Asked Questions

Q I'm a carer for my mum and struggling to make ends meet, I've been looking for more hours but my manager says there are none available, can you help?

A If you regularly work additional hours or overtime, you could put in a formal flexible working request for some/all of these hours to be made permanent. When permanent hours become available Usdaw would expect opportunities to first be offered to existing staff looking to increase their hours before being advertised externally. If you believe you are being repeatedly rejected by your employer when there are hours available, you should speak to your local Usdaw rep or Area Organiser.

Q A new manager has come into the store and says the rotas have to be changed so everyone works two nights and one weekend day. Can they do this – I'm a single parent with two young kids and I've never had to work nights or weekends before?

A What hours you can be asked to work will depend on your contract. However employers cannot change your contracted hours of work without going through the proper process and speaking to you. Your employer must seriously consider the implications for you and your young family before changing your hours. Looking after children and other relatives or having a second job are all valid reasons why you would be unable to agree a change to your hours/days of work.

Q I'm coming back after maternity leave and put in a request to reduce my hours. I've been told this is okay but I have to step down from my role as supervisor to general assistant, which means less money. What can I do?

A Managers need to work with you to explore every opportunity for you to return to your supervisor role even on reduced hours. This could mean making the role a job share or supervising a different section. Asking you to step down without any discussion about how they might accommodate your request for reduced hours whilst allowing you to continue in your role as supervisor is not reasonable. If this happens speak to your Usdaw rep or Area Organiser without delay.

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Creating Opportunities

There is plenty of evidence that workers on short hours contracts are more likely to be passed over for training and development opportunities at work than those in full-time work. Usdaw wants all workers to have the opportunity to progress if they want to and aims to support members looking to gain additional skills or qualifications.

The Union has a network of Lifelong Learning Reps in workplaces across the country who can help you access training and education to develop your skills. Many courses are now offered online, giving you access to learning that fits around your work and care.

To find out more speak to your Union Learning Rep or local Usdaw office. Contact details are at the end of this leaflet.

Usdaw's Supporting Parents and Carers Leaflets

Usdaw produces a range of leaflets to support parents and carers and provide guidance on your rights at work. The leaflets cover a variety of topics including:

- *Flexible Working – Your right to have a say in the hours you work* (Leaflet 346). This is where to go to find out more about your rights and how to make a change to the hours you work.

- *Working Parents – Know Your Rights* (Leaflet 381). This leaflet explains the rights parents have at work and the key benefits available to them.
- *Working Carers – Know Your Rights* (Leaflet 343). Helping you to understand how the coming benefit changes will affect you and the person you care for.
- *Time off for Family Emergencies* (Leaflet 349). A guide to your right to take time off work in the event of an emergency involving a dependant.
- *A Better Deal for Dads* (Leaflet 426). This leaflet explains the rights fathers and same sex partners currently have to time off work for family reasons.
- *Looking After Grandchildren?* (Leaflet 422). More and more older members are balancing paid work with caring for grandchildren. This leaflet will help you understand your rights as a carer.
- *Supporting Disabled Members* (Leaflet 383). A guide to the rights of disabled members at work.
- *Maternity and Parental Rights 2018*. A comprehensive and up-to-date guide to parental rights and your rights at work.

All these leaflets and more are available to download on the Usdaw website. You can order copies by contacting your local Usdaw office (contact details are on the back page).



Usdaw contacts

For help with any of the issues raised in this leaflet, or to discuss your situation further, you can speak to your Usdaw rep or contact your local Usdaw office:

South Wales and Western Division

Cardiff Office
Tel: 029 2073 1131
email: cardiff@usdaw.org.uk

Eastern Division

Waltham Cross Office
Tel: 01992 709280
email: walthamx@usdaw.org.uk

Midlands Division

Redditch Office
Tel: 01527 406290
email: redditch@usdaw.org.uk

North Eastern Division

Leeds Office
Tel: 0113 232 1320
email: leeds@usdaw.org.uk

Scottish Division

Glasgow Office
Tel: 0141 427 6561
email: glasgow@usdaw.org.uk

Southern Division

Morden Office
Tel: 020 8687 5950
email: morden@usdaw.org.uk

North West Division

Warrington Office
Tel: 01925 578050
email: warrington@usdaw.org.uk

Equalities Section

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Improving worker's lives –
Winning for members
www.usdaw.org.uk/equalities

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