# Carers campaign for legal right to regular breaks backed by striking London protest



Steve Lewis, a 64-year-old carer from Tottenham, stood outside the Houses of Parliament in London, participating in a protest campaign via an LED screen as he was unable to attend in person due to his caring duties. This poignant image, captured during a demonstration organised by Carers Trust and Uncommon Creative Studio, shines a spotlight on the significant challenges faced by unpaid carers across the UK, many of whom rarely get the chance to step away from their responsibilities. Recent figures underscore this reality, revealing that one in three unpaid carers have no legal right to time off and are frequently unable to leave their caregiving roles.

The campaign demands that the UK government grant all unpaid carers the legal right to regular breaks. Advocates highlight that without such rights, carers risk physical exhaustion and deteriorating mental health, as continuous caregiving places immense strain on their wellbeing. The petition circulated by Carers Trust pushes for a clear and enforceable entitlement to regular breaks, supported by appropriate funding measures to prevent burnout and sustain carers’ health.

In parallel, Carers UK has called for statutory changes under the Employment Rights Bill to grant working carers one week of paid leave annually. Research indicates that over half of working carers are deterred from exercising their current entitlement to carers’ leave due to financial constraints, meaning unpaid leave is often not a viable option. These proposed changes aim to alleviate the economic burden on carers, enabling them to balance work commitments with their caregiving responsibilities without the fear of lost income.

Supporting this stance, further studies reveal that 56% of carers cannot afford to take unpaid leave, underscoring the financial obstacles undermining the effectiveness of existing statutory provisions. Carers Trust has praised government announcements to extend leave options for working carers but stresses the importance of these extensions being paid, rather than unpaid, to genuinely support carers in managing their dual roles. The organisation also emphasises the need for flexible leave arrangements that can accommodate the varied and often unpredictable demands faced by carers.

Media coverage has increasingly acknowledged the grave pressures on unpaid carers, highlighting the limited support available and the potentially deadly consequences of stress and burnout. Recent government measures such as additional funding for social care services and increased Carer’s Allowance earnings thresholds seek to provide some financial relief, but critics argue that more comprehensive reforms are necessary to address the full scope of challenges faced by carers.

The protest in London forms part of a broader public awareness movement, reflecting the urgent need to improve legal protections and support systems for unpaid carers. The striking image of Steve Lewis participating remotely from his home due to caregiving duties symbolises the ongoing struggle of millions who juggle demanding responsibilities without sufficient recognition or respite.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/gallery/2025/jul/22/immigration-agents-in-new-york-and-protests-in-london-photos-of-the-day-tuesday), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/gallery/2025/jul/22/immigration-agents-in-new-york-and-protests-in-london-photos-of-the-day-tuesday)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](https://carers.org/news-and-media/petition-give-all-unpaid-carers-the-legal-right-to-a-break)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/carers-uk-calls-for-right-to-one-weeks-paid-leave/), [[5]](https://carers.org/news-and-media/news/post/145-carers-trust-responds-to-government-plans-introducing-more-leave-for-unpaid-carers-who-work)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://hrreview.co.uk/hr-news/employment-law/more-than-half-of-carers-cant-afford-to-take-unpaid-carers-leave/377991), [[5]](https://carers.org/news-and-media/news/post/145-carers-trust-responds-to-government-plans-introducing-more-leave-for-unpaid-carers-who-work)
* Paragraph 5 – [[7]](https://metro.co.uk/2024/11/02/little-support-unbearable-stress-deadly-cost-facing-unpaid-carers-21853406/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/gallery/2025/jul/22/immigration-agents-in-new-york-and-protests-in-london-photos-of-the-day-tuesday), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/gallery/2025/jul/22/immigration-agents-in-new-york-and-protests-in-london-photos-of-the-day-tuesday)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/gallery/2025/jul/22/immigration-agents-in-new-york-and-protests-in-london-photos-of-the-day-tuesday> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://carers.org/news-and-media/petition-give-all-unpaid-carers-the-legal-right-to-a-break> - Carers Trust is campaigning for the UK Government to grant all unpaid carers the legal right to regular breaks. They highlight that many carers are at risk of physical exhaustion and mental health struggles due to the lack of time off. The petition aims to secure a clear legal entitlement to regular breaks, with funding to support carers' well-being and prevent burnout.
3. <https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/carers-uk-calls-for-right-to-one-weeks-paid-leave/> - Carers UK is urging the government to extend carers' statutory rights under the Employment Rights Bill, advocating for one week of paid leave per year for working carers. Research indicates that financial implications prevent over half of working carers from accessing their entitlement. The proposal aims to help carers balance work and caregiving responsibilities without financial strain.
4. <https://hrreview.co.uk/hr-news/employment-law/more-than-half-of-carers-cant-afford-to-take-unpaid-carers-leave/377991> - Research by Carers UK, supported by TSB Bank, reveals that 56% of working carers cannot afford unpaid leave, hindering their ability to utilise statutory Carer's Leave. The study underscores the financial challenges carers face, with many unable to take time off without pay. The findings highlight the need for paid leave options to support carers effectively.
5. <https://carers.org/news-and-media/news/post/145-carers-trust-responds-to-government-plans-introducing-more-leave-for-unpaid-carers-who-work> - Carers Trust responds to the government's announcement of an extra week's unpaid leave for working carers, expressing support for the initiative. However, they advocate for paid leave to alleviate financial burdens on carers. The organisation emphasises the importance of flexible leave options to help carers balance work and caregiving responsibilities.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/gallery/2025/jul/22/immigration-agents-in-new-york-and-protests-in-london-photos-of-the-day-tuesday> - The Guardian's photo gallery features images of federal immigration agents patrolling the Jacob K. Javits federal building in New York, where several undocumented immigrants were reportedly detained during proceedings. The gallery also includes a vigil outside Stockwell Underground station in London, marking the 20th anniversary of Jean Charles de Menezes' death, and a protest outside the Houses of Parliament by Steve Lewis, a 64-year-old carer from Tottenham, highlighting the challenges faced by unpaid carers.
7. <https://metro.co.uk/2024/11/02/little-support-unbearable-stress-deadly-cost-facing-unpaid-carers-21853406/> - An article in Metro News discusses the challenges faced by unpaid carers in the UK, highlighting the lack of support and the stress leading to severe consequences. It mentions the government's announcement of additional funding for social care services and increased earnings limits for Carer's Allowance, aiming to support carers financially. The article underscores the need for comprehensive support to address the issues faced by unpaid carers.