

Make Work Pay:

Consultation on employment rights for unpaid carers and parents of seriously ill children

Consultation launch: 9 June 2026 – 09:30am

Closing Date: 1 September 2026 – 11.59pm

Foreword

Unpaid carers play an essential role in supporting friends, relatives, and loved ones across the country. Their contribution sustains families, strengthens communities, and provides vital care that might otherwise place significant pressure on public services.

We know that too many unpaid carers struggle to balance work and caring responsibilities. Many delay returning to work, reduce their hours, or leave the labour market entirely to provide the support others depend on, with an estimated cost to the economy of £37bn a year.¹ Supporting unpaid carers who want to work alongside their caring responsibilities is an important element of our plans to modernise the world of work, ensuring that there are good jobs for unpaid carers, and a skilled workforce for employers. As our population continues to age, more of us may need to take on caring responsibilities and getting this support right will become increasingly important for unpaid carers and employers alike.

At the same time, employers across the country increasingly recognise the value of attracting and retaining skilled staff, providing support to carers and creating workplaces that are compassionate, flexible, and responsive to individual circumstances.

The Carer's Leave Act 2023 gave employees a right to time off to care for someone who is disabled, needs care because of old age or has a long-term health condition. This consultation seeks to examine whether this measure, and employment rights for unpaid carers more broadly, remain fit for purpose and to identify whether there are improvements that could make a meaningful difference. It marks an important opportunity to take a fresh and detailed look at employment rights for unpaid carers.

¹ Department for Work and Pensions (2025), [The cost of working age ill-health and disability that prevents work](#)

We recognise that every caring situation is different, and that not all carers need the same forms of support. This is why this consultation does not recommend policy proposals but asks for views on a broad range of possible approaches. Any future reforms must strike the right balance between supporting unpaid carers to find and remain in work and carefully considering the impact on employers.

We also know that there are situations which provide particularly significant challenges, such as when a child becomes seriously ill. We understand that some parents and caregivers will find it very hard to remain in work when their child is suffering from a serious illness, and we recognise that this can add financial pressure and wellbeing challenges to a situation that is already incredibly hard. That is why part of this consultation also focuses specifically on potential measures to support families in this situation.

Employers also face significant challenges. They rely on having the right people, with the right skills, in place to deliver services, plan projects, and meet the needs of their business. Losing employees with valuable skills and experience because of caring responsibilities can place strain on teams, particularly for small employers, frontline services, and roles that are difficult to cover at short notice.

Meaningful change must be shaped by the people directly affected, and your insights and experiences will play a crucial role in shaping this work. By responding to this consultation, you will help ensure that the employment rights framework evolves in a way that is fair, sustainable, and responsive to the needs of unpaid carers, parents of seriously ill children and employers alike.



The Rt Hon Peter Kyle MP

*Secretary of State for Business
and Trade and President of the
Board of Trade*

Peter Kyle



Kate Dearden MP

*Minister for Employment Rights
and Consumer Protection*

Kate Dearden

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Introduction

An unpaid carer is anyone who looks after a family member, partner, child or friend who needs help because of long-term illness, disability or old age, but does so without payment and not as part of their job. They can also be referred to as informal carers or family carers. For the purposes of this consultation, the term “carer” will be used to refer to this group. This group is distinct from those employed in the social care sector, who are not the focus of this consultation. Different carers have different needs, with the term covering a range of challenging situations.

The vital contribution carers make in supporting those who rely on them brings significant benefits to families, communities, and the wider economy.² Employers who effectively support staff with caring responsibilities frequently report higher staff retention, reduced recruitment costs, and improved employee engagement.³ Carers themselves often say that being supported at work helps them to sustain employment, maintain their wellbeing, be more productive and balance their responsibilities more effectively.⁴

Respondents do not need to answer every question in this consultation but are encouraged to share relevant views and experience on each section. One chapter focuses on gathering evidence on potential approaches for further support for parents and caregivers of seriously ill children for example, but the insights of this group will be valuable throughout the whole consultation.

Government's priority is to gather evidence on different options to find a solution which is proportionate and workable for employers and workers alike. Consideration of the measures discussed in this consultation will be subject to a range of evidence, affordability and

² Cambridge Econometrics (2025), [The hidden cost of unpaid care: The economic price of locking carers out of work](#)

³ CIPD (2021), [Supporting working carers: How employers and employees can benefit](#)

⁴ CIPD (2021), [Supporting working carers: How employers and employees can benefit](#)

wider impacts and their inclusion here does not imply a commitment to take forward specific changes. Any future action would need to be affordable, proportionate, and represent value for money for taxpayers, as well as being workable for employers of all sizes.

The government is committed to reviewing employment rights for unpaid carers in partnership with businesses, trade unions, public sector employers, carers' organisations and civil society. A [terms of reference](#) for the review was published in November 2025, setting out the government's aims and activities for the review.

Current Situation

Unpaid carers currently have access to several employment rights designed to help them balance their caring responsibilities with work. These include the statutory entitlement to [Unpaid carer's leave](#) and the right to [Time Off for Family and Dependants](#), as well as wider workplace rights that apply to all employees such as flexible working and annual leave. Additionally, the Equality Act 2010 protects some carers from discrimination by association in the workplace where caring intersects with disability, sex or age.

Employees with caring responsibilities have a statutory right to take up to five days (pro-rata) of unpaid Carer's Leave in a rolling 12-month period. This leave can be used to provide or arrange care for a dependant with a long-term care need. It may be taken as a single block of a week, or in individual days or half-days, offering flexibility in how carers manage short-term needs or pre-planned appointments. Employees do not need to provide evidence of their caring role, and employers must not unreasonably refuse a request, although they may postpone leave if business operations would be unduly disrupted.

All employees have a right to take a reasonable amount of unpaid time off to deal with emergencies involving a dependant, such as illness, injury, or an unexpected breakdown in care arrangements.

Time Off for Family and Dependents covers unforeseen, urgent situations and is designed to allow employees to take immediate action when needed. While employers cannot refuse reasonable requests, the amount of time deemed “reasonable” will depend on the circumstances.

These statutory entitlements sit alongside other employment rights that may support carers and organisational policies offering paid or unpaid carers’ support. In many workplaces, employers go above and beyond what is legally required to provide additional forms of support for their employees. These may include discretionary paid leave, compassionate leave policies, temporary adjustments to working patterns, or other organisational arrangements that help carers balance work and care.

Parents have access to wider workplace entitlements such as [Unpaid Parental Leave](#), which can be particularly useful for those whose child is seriously ill. Some parents will be entitled to [Neonatal Care Leave](#) and (if eligible) pay, which provides protected time away from work when a newborn baby requires neonatal care.

Alongside statutory employment rights, a range of in-work and organisational support can help people balance paid work with caring responsibilities, including for seriously ill children. Beyond legislation, workplace, peer and personal networks can reduce isolation, share practical solutions and build understanding between carers, managers and colleagues. Employer-led initiatives can help support organisations to develop carer-friendly policies, good practice and leadership commitment. Practical tools like carer passports can also be effective, providing a consistent, confidential way for employees to record their needs and agreed adjustments, which can be particularly useful during changes in role, line manager or working pattern.

This consultation seeks views on whether the existing entitlement to unpaid carer's leave is working effectively for both carers and employers, and what more government could do to ensure that carers are supported to remain and progress in work. It will look at options for statutory leave entitlements for carers and parents of seriously ill children, and other support measures such as improvements to guidance and communications. Government is exploring a range of potential approaches through this consultation, and we will review these responses before deciding whether to take any further action.

Different support is available to unpaid carers, parents of seriously ill children and employers across the nations of the UK. While this consultation applies to England, Scotland and Wales, we will continue to work closely with all devolved governments.

Parents of Seriously Ill Children (Hugh's Law)

This consultation includes consideration of the proposed Hugh's Law, which would provide financial support and leave for parents and caregivers in the days and months following their child being diagnosed with a serious illness. This comes as a result of campaigning by Ceri and Frances Menai-Davis and their charity It's Never You, founded in memory of their son Hugh.

Questions around Hugh's Law can be found in Chapter 3 of this consultation, reflecting the distinct and acute nature of this issue and the immediate and often prolonged disruption faced by parents following a child's diagnosis of serious illness.

However, we would also value the input of parents of seriously ill children and organisations representing them on the other approaches being considered in this consultation (Chapters 1 and 2), which may also benefit parents who find themselves in this challenging situation.

The Plan to Make Work Pay

The review of employment rights for unpaid carers forms part of our wider Plan to Make Work Pay. The government has set the country on the path of national renewal rooted in security, respect and opportunity.

That means building an economy that delivers for both working people and business – productive, profitable and growing.

Creating the best environment for business means ensuring that workplaces are productive, resilient, and able to retain skilled staff. Better job security and clearer employment rights reduce unplanned turnover, support workforce stability, and cut costs for employers. The Plan recognises that workers' security and business success are not in conflict: offering opportunity, stability and fair treatment for working people depends on profitable businesses that can invest and expand.

The world of work has changed significantly. Patterns of employment are more diverse, careers span multiple sectors, and new technologies continue to reshape how, where, and when people work. At the same time, demographic pressures mean more people are combining paid work with significant caring responsibilities. The Plan to Make Work Pay seeks to bring employment rights into the 21st century, extending the kinds of protections already offered by many leading employers to all workers, including those who provide unpaid care.

The Employment Rights Act 2025 represented a major milestone within this plan. It was the first phase of delivering a modernised framework designed to improve job security, raise living standards and strengthen fairness across the labour market. Many of these reforms will be introduced gradually over a two-year period, allowing employers time to prepare and ensuring that

implementation is careful, proportionate and supportive of business needs. This includes changes to the right to request flexible working, which can benefit parents and those with caring responsibilities.

Examining the employment rights framework for unpaid carers sits firmly within this wider agenda. Enhancing clarity, accessibility and usability of employment rights for carers will help more people remain in work, reduce economic inactivity, and support employers to retain experienced staff. In doing so, these reforms will:

- reduce costs associated with unplanned employee turnover
- improve retention of skilled workers and support productivity
- promote fair competition and higher employment standards
- contribute to sustainable economic growth

A full and comprehensive consultation is a key part of the review of employment rights for unpaid carers, to ensure reforms are effective, practical and beneficial for both carers and employers. By working together, we will support employers and ensure that unpaid carers receive the security, recognition and opportunities they deserve.

Consultation Details

Issued: 9 June 2026 – 09:30am

Respond by: 1 September 2026 – 11:59pm

Enquiries and Responses to:

unpaidcarers@businessandtrade.gov.uk

Write to:

Unpaid Carers Policy Team, Employment Rights Directorate
Department for Business and Trade
Old Admiralty Building
Admiralty Place
London
SW1A 2DY

Consultation reference:

Employment rights for unpaid carers and parents of seriously ill children

Audiences:

- unpaid carers
- parents of seriously ill children
- employers
- trade unions
- business groups or representatives
- workers
- non-governmental organisations
- members of the public
- all other interested parties

Territorial extent

The measures in this consultation will apply to Great Britain.
Employment entitlements, including carer's leave, are transferred to Northern Ireland.

How to Respond

Respond online – [Qualtrics](#)

or

Email to: unpaidcarers@businessandtrade.gov.uk

or

Write to:

Unpaid Carers Policy Team, Employment Rights Directorate
Department for Business and Trade
Old Admiralty Building
Admiralty Place
London
SW1A 2DY

We strongly encourage that responses are made via the online platform. Using the online survey will assist our analysis of the responses, enabling more efficient and effective consideration of the issues raised.

If you are responding in writing, please make it clear which question or paragraph number each comment relates to.

Your response will be most useful if it is framed in direct response to the questions posed, though further comments and evidence are also welcome.

When responding, please state whether you are responding as an individual or representing the views of an organisation.

Confidentiality and data protection

Information you provide in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be disclosed in accordance with UK

legislation (the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please tell us, but be aware that we cannot guarantee confidentiality in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not be regarded by us as a confidentiality request.

We are trialling Artificial Intelligence (AI) solutions to support the delivery of our functions. Unless made expressly clear to you, we will not solely use AI to either make or inform decisions about you. We will apply effective data minimisation techniques to all such uses of your data.

Your responses, including any personal data, may be shared with a third-party provider, or other government department or organisation acting on behalf of the Department for Business and Trade under contract or an equivalent agreement, for the purpose of analysis and summarising responses for us and they may use technology, such as artificial intelligence. Further detail on how AI is used, including its scope and safeguards and third-party sharing is available in our Privacy Notice.

An anonymised version of responses in a list or summary of responses received, and in any subsequent review reports may be published. We may also share your personal data where required to by law. You can leave out personal information from your response entirely if you would prefer to do so.

Wherever possible avoid including any additional personal data in free-text responses beyond that which has been requested or which you consider it necessary for DBT to be aware of.

We will process your personal data in accordance with all applicable data protection laws. See our [privacy policy](#).

We will publish a government response on GOV.UK.

Quality assurance

This consultation has been carried out in accordance with the government's [consultation principles](#). If you have any complaints about the way this consultation has been conducted, please email: enquiries@businessandtrade.gov.uk

About You

Please provide the following information to help us understand the context of your response:

Question 1 – Please indicate whether you are responding as [tick all applicable]:

- ☐ An individual
- ☐ An unpaid carer
- ☐ A parent of a seriously-ill child
- ☐ Someone who relies on unpaid care
- ☐ An academic, or on behalf of an academic or research organisation
- ☐ An employer
- ☐ A legal representative
- ☐ A business representative organisation (please specify)

- ☐ A trade union or staff association (please specify)
- ☐ A charity or interest group
- ☐ Other – please specify

Question 2 – If responding as an employer, business, business owner or business representative, approximately what is the size of your business? If responding as an individual or worker, what size workplace are you employed in?

- ☐ Micro (1 to 9 employees)
- ☐ Small (10 to 49 employees)
- ☐ Medium (50 to 249 employees)
- ☐ Large (250+ employees)
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Not Applicable

Question 3 – Which region are you located in?

- ☐ North-East
- ☐ North-West
- ☐ Yorkshire and The Humber
- ☐ East Midlands
- ☐ West Midlands
- ☐ East of England
- ☐ London
- ☐ South-East
- ☐ South-West
- ☐ Wales
- ☐ Scotland
- ☐ Northern Ireland

Question 4 – If responding as an employer, business, business owner or business representative, what sector are you based in? If responding as an individual or worker, what sector do you work in?

- ☐ Accommodation & food service activities
- ☐ Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods and services-producing activities of households for own use
- ☐ Administrative & support service activities
- ☐ Arts, entertainment and recreation
- ☐ Agriculture, forestry and fishing
- ☐ Construction
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply
- ☐ Financial & insurance activities
- ☐ Human Health and social work activities
- ☐ Information & communication
- ☐ Manufacturing
- ☐ Mining and quarrying
- ☐ Production
- ☐ Professional, scientific and technical activities
- ☐ Public administration & defence; compulsory social security
- ☐ Real estate activities
- ☐ Services Sector
- ☐ Transportation & storage

- [] Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities
- [] Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles
- [] Other service activities

Consultation

Chapter 1 – Information on unpaid carers

Unpaid carers play a crucial role in supporting family members and friends, yet many do not recognise themselves as carers, have awareness about existing rights and other support available, or feel confident disclosing their caring responsibilities at work.⁵⁶

We want to explore people's experiences accessing information and support for carers, what helps employers understand how they can help support unpaid carers, and what information would make it easier for both employers and employees to engage in constructive conversations about the support required.

We have heard that access to information can depend on the size of the employer, and we want to ensure that all employers have access to information that makes it easier to support their employees. Additionally, there may be some situations which are particularly challenging where employers may benefit from specific guidance – such as supporting parents of seriously ill children.

By gathering insights from individuals, employers and advisory bodies, we aim to identify where current information is working well and where improvements could make a meaningful difference.

Question 5 – How easy is it for employers to access information on how to support carers in the workplace?

1. Very difficult
2. Moderately difficult
3. Neither difficult nor easy

⁵ Centre for Care (2023), "Am I a carer?" [Why self- and social identification of carers are becoming unavoidable topics](#)

⁶ Carers UK (2023), [Carers UK releases good practice briefing for supporting Black, Asian and minority ethnic carers](#) | Carers UK

4. Moderately easy
5. Very easy
6. Don't know

Question 6 – In your view, are there any factors that prevent employers from accessing information on how to support carers in the workplace?

Open text

Question 7 – What, if any, additional guidance or information would help employers support carers?

Open text

Question 8 – How easy is it for employees to access information on their rights that support their caring responsibilities in the workplace?

1. Very difficult
2. Moderately difficult
3. Neither difficult nor easy
4. Moderately easy
5. Very easy
6. Don't know

Question 9 – In your view, are there any factors that prevent employees accessing information on the rights that support their caring responsibilities in the workplace?

Open text

Question 10 – What, if any, additional guidance or information would help carers understand and use their rights in the workplace?

Open text

Question 11 – Would specific guidance on support for carers in particularly challenging situations help employers and carers in the workplace? (e.g. – parents of seriously ill children, those providing end-of-life care)

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Question 12 – If yes, what challenging situations should this guidance cover?

Open text

Chapter 2 – Employment rights for unpaid carers

This consultation seeks evidence to understand what is working well in the current system and where further measures may be required

to ensure that employment rights remain fit for a modern economy. The government is therefore inviting views from unpaid carers, employers, business representative organisations and charities on several potential approaches to build on the existing provisions of the Carer's Leave Act 2023.

In this section of the consultation, the objective is to continue to build an evidence base as to whether additional measures would deliver practical benefit for both carers and employers. Responses to this consultation will inform future decisions on whether any of these approaches should be taken forward as part of a modern, balanced framework of employment rights. Inclusion of an option does not imply that the government favours or intends to implement it. Any final decisions on changes to policy will need to balance the needs of carers and businesses with the wider economy. The government's priority is to gather evidence on different approaches to find a solution which is proportionate and workable for employers and workers alike.

Current entitlements

Unpaid carers currently have access to several employment rights designed to help them balance their caring responsibilities with work. These include the statutory entitlement to unpaid Carer's Leave and the right to Time Off for Family and Dependants, as well as wider workplace rights that apply to all employees such as flexible working and annual leave.

Question 13 – How aware are you of the employment rights currently available to unpaid carers?

1. Very aware

2. Somewhat aware
3. Not aware at all
4. Don't know

Question 14 – From your perspective, how effective are existing employment rights at helping unpaid carers balance work and care?

1. Very ineffective
2. Quite ineffective
3. Neither effective nor ineffective
4. Quite effective
5. Very effective
6. Don't know

Carer's leave eligibility

These questions seek insight on eligibility criteria for current and possible future leave entitlements for carers.

Under existing legislation, unpaid carer's leave can be used to provide or arrange care for a dependant with a long-term care need. A dependant may be a spouse, partner, child, parent, someone living in the same household, or a person who reasonably relies on the employee for care.

Question 15 – In what circumstances should unpaid carers be able to take carer's leave entitlements? (tick all that apply)

- To provide personal and emotional support

- To provide practical support (for example cleaning, gardening, paying bills)
- To help with official or financial matters
- To provide personal and/or medical care (for example washing, dressing, administering medicine)
- To make arrangements for the provision of care
- To accompany people to appointments
- To allow the carer to rest and recuperate, take up carer support, and/or maintain their health and wellbeing
- Other (please specify)

Question 16 – From your perspective, who should a carer be able to take carer’s leave entitlements to support? (tick all that apply)

- A spouse or civil partner
- A child
- A parent
- Any person who lives in the same household as the employee (otherwise than by reason of being their employee, tenant, lodger, or boarder)
- Any person who reasonably relies on the employee for care, regardless of familial relationship or cohabitation.
- Other (please specify)

Extending Carer’s Leave

One approach to support carers could be to extend the existing entitlement, currently up to 5 days per year of unpaid carer’s leave, to allow unpaid carers to take more time away from work to manage their caring responsibilities. We welcome views on how this

potential approach could be used in practice and any unintended consequences that it could result in.

Question 17 – Would extending the existing unpaid carer’s leave entitlement be helpful for carers balancing work and care?

1. Not helpful
2. Slightly helpful
3. Very helpful
4. Don’t know

Question 18 – If the current entitlement of up to 5 days unpaid leave was to be extended, how many days of unpaid leave a year would be appropriate?

- 6 days
- 7 days
- 8 days
- 9 days
- 10 days
- Other (please specify)

Question 19 – From your perspective, what would be the impact of extending unpaid carer’s leave on employees with caring responsibilities?

Open text

Question 20 – From your perspective, what would be the impact of extending unpaid carer’s leave on employers?

Open text

A right to return

Another possible approach could be an extension of the existing entitlement to unpaid carer’s leave by introducing a statutory “right to return” after a longer period of unpaid leave. This could operate in a similar way to maternity leave, where the employee’s job, or a similar equivalent role, is protected for the duration of the absence. This may provide appropriate job security for carers who need time away from work during more intensive or prolonged caring periods. This approach could support those at risk of leaving work during challenging phases of care, ensuring they retain a link to work and that businesses can retain experienced staff in the long term.⁷ We welcome views on how this potential approach could be used in practice and any unintended consequences that it could result in.

Question 21 –Would a longer period away from work with a “right to return” be helpful in supporting carers to balance work and care?

1. Not helpful
2. Slightly helpful
3. Very helpful

⁷ Stakeholder engagement with unpaid carers throughout the review has emphasised that many carers only take unpaid leave as a last resort, often when they are at risk of dropping out of the labour market. Further external research on career returns can be found on the [career returners website](#).

4. Don't know

Question 22 – If a “right to return” were to be introduced, who should be eligible? (Choose all that apply if not selecting “all unpaid carers”)

- All unpaid carers
- Those providing end-of-life care for someone with 12 months or less to live
- Parents or primary caregivers providing care for seriously ill children
- Other (Please specify)

Question 23 – If a “right to return” were to be introduced, what form of evidence should employees have to provide to prove their eligibility?

- Self-certification (e.g. – written statement from employee)
- Certification from a relevant professional
- Other (Please specify)
- None

Question 24 – How long would be appropriate for an extended period of leave with a “right to return”?

- Less than 1 month
- 1 – 3 months
- 4 – 6 months
- 7 – 9 months
- 10 – 12 months
- Other (please specify)

Question 25 – In your view, what would be the impact of having access to a “right to return” on employees with caring responsibilities?

Open text

Question 26 – In your view, what would be the impact of a “right to return” for unpaid carers on employers?

Open text

Paid carer’s leave

Another potential approach the review is testing is the introduction of a short period of paid carer’s leave to be taken to fulfil caring responsibilities, during which the employee would receive some level of pay. Evidence gathered through speaking to those with lived experience, engagement with organisations representing carers, and commissioned research have indicated that financial barriers can prevent some carers from making use of unpaid entitlements.

In line with commitments in the Plan to Make Work Pay, the government is exploring whether paid leave could help carers to manage planned caring responsibilities (such as appointments or short hospital stays). We are particularly interested in whether this approach would be effective in enabling unpaid carers to enter into work, progress in work or remain in their job. We would also like to understand what long term benefits such interventions could bring, as well as potential costs or operational concerns from employers.

We welcome views on how such leave could operate and be funded in a way that is fair and sustainable for unpaid carers and employers whilst also considering public finances.

Question 27 – Would the introduction of a statutory paid carer's leave entitlement be helpful in supporting carers to balance work and care?

1. Not helpful
2. Slightly helpful
3. Very helpful
4. Don't know

Question 28 – If paid carer's leave was introduced, what evidence should employees have to provide to prove their eligibility for it?

- Self-certification (e.g. – written statement from employee)
- Certification from a relevant professional
- Other (Please specify)
- None

Question 29 - How long would be appropriate and reasonable for a potential paid leave entitlement? (per year, pro-rata depending on working hours)

- 1 – 2 days
- 3 – 4 days

- 5 days
- Over 5 days
- Other (please specify)

Question 30 – If paid carer’s leave was introduced, what baseline level of remuneration would be appropriate for those taking it?

- 90% of pay
- 50% of pay
- Equivalent to Statutory Parental Pay – £194.32/week
- Equivalent to Statutory Sick Pay - £123.25/week
- Other (please specify)

Question 31 – From your perspective, what would be the impact of introducing paid carer’s leave on employees with caring responsibilities?

Open text

Question 32 – From your perspective, what would be the impact of introducing paid carer’s leave on employers?

Open text

Focus of government interventions

The government recognises the diversity of the challenges unpaid carers face in balancing work and caring responsibilities. There is no single measure that will meet the needs of all carers, and different approaches may offer different types of support at different stages of a caring journey.

At the same time, decisions about employment rights must carefully balance the needs of carers with the potential costs, operational impacts and administrative burdens for employers, particularly small and micro-businesses.

Any future action needs to be affordable, proportionate, and represent value for money for taxpayers. This includes understanding which options may deliver the greatest benefits and the appropriate timescales for implementing any changes.

This consultation therefore seeks not only to understand what forms of support would be helpful, but also to gather views on how different options compare in terms of impact and feasibility.

Question 33 – In your view, what should the main government focus be for any immediate action following the review?

- Helping employees to balance work alongside caring responsibilities
- Helping employers to support employees who are carers
- Helping carers to enter the workplace
- Reducing the risk of carers leaving work due to caring responsibilities
- Supporting carers to progress or develop skills at work
- Other (please specify)

Question 34 – In your view, which, if any, of the approaches discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 would best address this focus and why?

Open text

Question 35 – From your perspective, which potential approach might best help employers and carers balance work and care?

Open text

Chapter 3 – Employment rights for parents of seriously ill children (Hugh’s Law)

This chapter outlines proposals for a possible new statutory entitlement to leave and pay for parents of seriously ill children, often referred to as “Hugh’s Law”, a term used in recognition of the campaigning undertaken by the family of Hugh Menai-Davis, who died aged six from cancer in 2021. This term is used throughout this chapter but does not reflect an agreed legislative proposal.

While the wider consultation considers how employment rights might better support unpaid carers, including parents of seriously ill children, this chapter considers specific support for parents and primary caregivers in this particularly challenging circumstance. This includes the proposed leave and pay approach campaigned for by It’s Never You, set up by the family of Hugh Menai-Davis.

These situations typically arise suddenly, involve intensive medical intervention, and may require sustained parental presence. This can create immediate and significant disruption to work and family life.

The government is seeking views on the nature of the challenges families face, the awareness of current support, how a potential paid leave entitlement might operate in practice, and what the implications could be for employers, employees and the wider

labour market, including unintended consequences. This includes gathering evidence on who should be eligible, what level of leave or pay may be appropriate, and how any new entitlement could be implemented in a way that is workable, proportionate, and mindful of the pressures on employers, particularly small and micro-businesses.

Question 36 – How aware are you of the support currently available to parents of seriously ill children?

1. Very aware
2. Somewhat aware
3. Not aware at all
4. Don't know

Question 37 – Would the introduction of a paid leave entitlement for parents of seriously ill children help parents in this situation?

1. Not helpful
2. Slightly helpful
3. Very helpful
4. Don't know

Question 38 – If paid leave for parents of seriously ill children was introduced, how should we define “serious illness”?

Open text

Question 39 – If paid leave for parents of seriously ill children was introduced, who should be eligible to use this entitlement?

Open text

Question 40 – If paid leave for parents of seriously ill children was introduced, what form of evidence should employees have to provide to prove their eligibility?

- Self-certification (e.g. – written statement from employee)
- Certification from a relevant professional
- Other (please specify)
- None

Question 41 – If it were introduced, how long would be appropriate and reasonable for a one-off paid leave entitlement per child?

- 1 week
- 2 – 4 weeks
- 5 – 8 weeks
- 9 – 12 weeks
- More than 12 weeks
- Other (please specify)

Question 42 – If paid leave for parents of seriously ill children was introduced, what should be the baseline level of remuneration for those taking it?

- 90% of pay
- 50% of pay
- Equivalent to Statutory Parental Pay – £194.32/week
- Equivalent to Statutory Sick Pay - £123.25/week
- Equivalent of highest rate of Disability Living Allowance - £114.60/week
- Other (please specify)

Question 43 – Which of the following approaches to support parents of seriously ill children would be most helpful to parents, their families and employers?

- Guidance for employers on how to support parents of seriously ill children
- Flexible working
- A longer, unpaid period of time away from work to focus on looking after a seriously ill child with a right to return to the same or a similar role
- A shorter, paid period of time away from work to provide financial support in the immediate aftermath
- Other (please specify)

Question 44 – From your perspective, what would be the impact of introducing paid leave for parents of seriously ill children on parents in this situation?

Open text

Question 45 – From your perspective, what would be the impact of introducing paid leave for parents of seriously ill children on employers?

Open text

Chapter 4 – General

This chapter provides an opportunity for carers, employers, and other respondents to share any additional information they believe is relevant to this consultation. We are particularly interested in hearing about experiences that may not be captured fully by the preceding questions, including wider context around the practical, emotional, and organisational challenges of balancing work and caring responsibilities. Submissions may also highlight the barriers employers face in supporting carers in the workplace, potential costs, impacts on small and medium sized businesses, examples of effective practice, or areas where current policies, guidance, or support mechanisms for carers or parents of seriously ill children could be improved.

Question 46 – Is there any other information that you think would be valuable to share on employment rights for unpaid carers, including parents of seriously ill children?

Open text

Next Steps

This consultation will close at 11:59pm on 1 September 2026. Following the closure of this consultation, we will

analyse all responses and publish a government response in due course.

Summary of consultation questions

1. Please indicate whether you are responding as [tick all applicable]:
 - An individual
 - An unpaid carer
 - A parent of a seriously-ill child
 - Someone who relies on unpaid care
 - An academic, or on behalf of an academic or research organisation
 - An employer
 - A legal representative
 - A business representative organisation (please specify)
 - A trade union or staff association (please specify)
 - A charity or interest group
 - Other – please specify

2. If responding as an employer, business, business owner or business representative, approximately what is the size of your business? If responding as an individual or worker, what size workplace are you employed in?
 - Micro (1 to 9 employees)
 - Small (10 to 49 employees)
 - Medium (50 to 249 employees)
 - Large (250+ employees)
 - Don't know
 - Not Applicable

3. Which region are you based in?

- North-East
- North-West
- Yorkshire and the Humber
- East Midlands
- West Midlands
- East of England
- London
- South-East
- South-West
- Wales
- Scotland
- Northern Ireland

4. If responding as an employer, business, business owner or business representative, what sector are you based in? If responding as an individual or worker, what sector do you work in?

- Accommodation & food service activities
- Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods and services-producing activities of households for own use
- Administrative & support service activities
- Arts, entertainment and recreation
- Agriculture, forestry and fishing
- Construction
- Education
- Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply
- Financial & insurance activities
- Human Health and social work activities
- Information & communication
- Manufacturing
- Mining and quarrying

- Production
- Professional, scientific and technical activities
- Public administration & defence; compulsory social security
- Real estate activities
- Services Sector
- Transportation & storage
- Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities
- Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles
- Other service activities

5. How easy is it for employers to access information on how to support carers in the workplace?

- Very difficult
- Moderately difficult
- Neither difficult nor easy
- Moderately easy
- Very easy
- Don't know

6. In your view, are there any factors that prevent employers from accessing information on how to support carers in the workplace? [Open Text]

7. What, if any, additional guidance or information would help employers support carers? [Open Text]

8. How easy is it for employees to access information on their rights that support their caring responsibilities in the workplace?

- Very difficult
- Moderately difficult
- Neither difficult nor easy
- Moderately easy
- Very easy
- Don't know

9. In your view, are there any factors that prevent employees accessing information on the rights that support their caring responsibilities in the workplace? [Open Text]

10. What, if any, additional guidance or information would help carers understand and use their rights in the workplace? [Open Text]

11. Would specific guidance on support for carers in particularly challenging situations help employers and carers in the workplace (e.g. – parents of seriously ill children, those providing end-of-life care)?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

12. If yes, what challenging situations should this guidance cover? [Open Text]

13. How aware are you of the employment rights currently available to unpaid carers?

- Very aware
- Somewhat aware
- Not aware at all
- Don't Know

14. From your perspective, how effective are existing employment rights at helping unpaid carers balance work and care?

- Very ineffective
- Quite ineffective
- Neither effective nor ineffective
- Quite effective
- Very effective
- Don't know

15. In what circumstances should unpaid carers be able to take carer's leave entitlements? (tick all that apply)

- To provide personal and emotional support
- To provide practical support (for example cleaning, gardening, paying bills)
- To help with official or financial matters
- To provide personal and/or medical care (for example washing, dressing, administering medicine)
- To make arrangements for the provision of care
- To accompany people to appointments
- To allow the carer to rest and recuperate, take up carer support, and/or maintain their health and wellbeing
- Other (please specify)

16. From your perspective, who should a carer be able to take carer's leave entitlements to support? (tick all that apply)

- A spouse or civil partner
- A child
- A parent

- Any person who lives in the same household as the employee (otherwise than by reason of being their employee, tenant, lodger, or boarder)
- Any person who reasonably relies on the employee for care, regardless of familial relationship or cohabitation
- Other (please specify)

17. Would extending the existing unpaid carer's leave entitlement be helpful for carers balancing work and care?

- Not helpful
- Slightly helpful
- Very helpful
- Don't know

18. If the current entitlement of up to 5 days unpaid leave was to be extending, how many days of unpaid leave a year would be appropriate?

- 6 days
- 7 days
- 8 days
- 9 days
- 10 days
- Other (please specify)

19. In your view, what would be the impact of extending unpaid carer's leave on employees with caring responsibilities? [Open Text]

20. In your view, what would be the impact of extending unpaid carer's leave on employers? [Open Text]

21. Would a longer period away from work with a “right to return” be helpful in supporting carers to balance work and care?

- Not helpful
- Slightly helpful
- Very helpful
- Don’t know

22. If a “right to return” were to be introduced, who should be eligible? (Choose all that apply if not selecting “all unpaid carers”)

- All unpaid carers
- Those providing end-of-life care for someone with 12 months or less to live
- Parents or primary caregivers providing care for seriously ill children
- Other (please specify)

23. If a “right to return” were to be introduced, what form of evidence should employees have to provide to prove their eligibility?

- Self-certification (e.g. – written statement from employee)
- Certification from a relevant professional
- Other (Please specify)
- None

24. How long would be appropriate for an extended period of leave with a “right to return”?

- Less than 1 month

- 1 – 3 months
- 4 – 6 months
- 7 – 9 months
- 10 – 12 months
- Other (please specify)

25. In your view, what would be the impact of having access to a “right to return” on employees with caring responsibilities?
[Open Text]

26. In your view, what would be the impact of a “right to return” for unpaid carers on employers? [Open Text]

27. Would the introduction of a statutory paid carer’s leave entitlement be helpful in supporting carers to balance work and care?

- Not helpful
- Slightly helpful
- Very helpful
- Don’t know

28. If paid carer’s leave was introduced, what evidence should employees have to provide to prove their eligibility for it?

- Self-certification (e.g. – written statement from employee)
- Certification from a relevant professional
- Other (Please specify)
- None

29. How long would be appropriate and reasonable for a potential paid leave entitlement? (per year, pro-rata depending

on working hours)

- 1 – 2 days
- 3 – 4 days
- 5 days
- Over 5 days
- Other (please specify)

30. If paid carer's leave was introduced, what baseline level of remuneration would be appropriate for those taking it?

- 90% of pay
- 50% of pay
- Equivalent to Statutory Parental Pay – £194.32/week
- Equivalent to Statutory Sick Pay - £123.25/week
- Other (please specify)

31. From your perspective, what would be the impact of introducing paid carer's leave on employees with caring responsibilities? [Open Text]

32. From your perspective, what would be the impact of introducing paid carer's leave on employers? [Open Text]

33. In your view, what should the main government focus be for any immediate action following the review?

- Helping employees to balance work alongside caring responsibilities
- Helping employers to support employees who are carers
- Helping carers to enter the workplace
- Reducing the risk of carers leaving work due to caring responsibilities

- Supporting carers to progress or develop skills at work
- Other (please specify)

34. In your view, which, if any, of the approaches discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 would best address this focus and why? [Open Text]

35. From your perspective, which potential approach might best help employers and carers balance work and care? [Open Text]

36. How aware are you of the support currently available to parents of seriously ill children?

- Very aware
- Somewhat aware
- Not aware at all
- Don't know

37. Would the introduction of a paid leave entitlement for parents of seriously ill children help parents in this situation?

- Not helpful
- Slightly helpful
- Very helpful
- Don't know

38. If paid leave for parents of seriously ill children was introduced, how should we define "serious illness"? [Open Text]

39. If paid leave for parents of seriously ill children was introduced, who should be eligible to use this entitlement?

[Open Text]

40. If paid leave for parents of seriously ill children was introduced, what form of evidence should employees have to provide to prove their eligibility?

- Self-certification (e.g. – written statement from employee)
- Certification from a relevant professional
- Other (please specify)
- None

41. If it were introduced, how long would be appropriate and reasonable for a one-off paid leave entitlement per child?

- 1 week
- 2 – 4 weeks
- 5 – 8 weeks
- 9 – 12 weeks
- More than 12 weeks
- Other (please specify)

42. If paid leave for parents of seriously ill children was introduced, what should be the baseline level of remuneration for those taking it?

- 90% of pay
- 50% of pay
- Equivalent to Statutory Parental Pay - £194.32/week
- Equivalent to Statutory Sick Pay - £123.25/week
- Equivalent of highest rate of Disability Living Allowance - £114.60/week
- Other (please specify)

43. Which of the following approaches to support parents of seriously ill children would be most helpful to parents, their families and employers?

- Guidance for employers on how to support parents of seriously ill children
- Flexible working
- A longer, unpaid period of time away from work to focus on looking after a seriously ill child with a right to return to the same or a similar role
- A shorter, paid period of time away from work to provide financial support in the immediate aftermath
- Other (please specify)

44. From your perspective, what would be the impact of introducing paid leave for parents of seriously ill children on parents in this situation? [Open Text]

45. From your perspective, what would be the impact of introducing paid leave for parents of seriously ill children on employers?

46. Is there any other information that you think would be valuable to share on employment rights for unpaid carers, including parents of seriously ill children? [Open Text]

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